

Program Evaluation Report for
Sulphur Springs Independent School District
Project STYLE (Students and Teachers Yearning to Learn Effectively)
2004-2005

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from a program evaluation conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Schools Attuned program in a north Texas school district. Schools Attuned was developed by a professor of pediatrics, Dr. Mel Levine (2002), as a professional development model to train teachers to identify cognitive and psychomotor strengths and weaknesses of students in order to accommodate individual differences in classroom instruction. The Schools Attuned program has been shown to reduce the number of students referred to special education and has provided tools for teachers in working with struggling students. Recommendations in this evaluation indicated that teachers became more aware of individual differences and felt better prepared to accommodate learning differences as a result of the Schools Attuned program.

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Evaluation

Project STYLE is a program designed by Sulphur Springs Independent School District (SSISD) to meet the needs of struggling students. The program, in 2004-05, was in its fourth year of implementation. The district requested an external evaluation utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the program's effectiveness. The purposes of this evaluation were to (a) analyze the program impact on students attending Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School, (b) report on the teacher perceptions of the program implemented at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School, and (c) verify the status of specific objectives set forth in Project STYLE.

Program Description

Project STYLE was initiated by the Travis Elementary staff in 2001 to address concerns regarding student performance and numbers of student referrals for special educational evaluations. The program has expanded to seven of eight campuses during the past four years. A major component of Project STYLE is the Schools Attuned training model provided by the All Kinds of Minds Institute (2003) and based on Dr. Mel Levine's research on the neurodevelopmental constructs of learning. The training equips teachers to identify learning differences, produce individualized plans, and implement strategies to address specific student needs. A desired outcome of Schools Attuned is to improve teacher awareness and understanding of individual student strengths and learning needs. Project STYLE incorporates several components including the five-day Schools Attuned training, individual management plans, tutoring support, parent resources, classroom materials, tutorial software, two program

coordinators, and instructional aides to support teachers and students at participating campuses in the district.

In the 2004-2005 school year, 108 students at the participating campuses were formally identified as program students. Students were identified based on a primary neurodevelopmental dysfunction. Forty students were identified as having weaknesses in memory, while 37 students required accommodations for attention control.

Evaluation Plan

District staff and external evaluators formulated goals for the program evaluation. Focus areas identified for the evaluation included (a) teacher training, (b) program effectiveness, (c) impact on student achievement in grades 3-8, and (d) program strengths and areas of concerns.

Multiple methods to collect data were utilized. Focus group interviews, document reviews (i.e. staff development records, purchase orders, program plans), a teacher questionnaire, site visits, and individual interviews were used to assess the impact and implementation of Project STYLE. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a state-wide assessment program for grades 3-11, was used to analyze student achievement in grades 3-8 in the subject areas of Reading and Math. Measurement of student mastery of curriculum objectives by the TAKS test has acceptable reliability and validity measures as reported by the Texas Education Agency. Data from other measurements were verified through the process of triangulation.

Findings

Approximately 28% of the professional teachers in the district have participated in the Schools Attuned training. Almost all participating staff and faculty members believed that the five-day initial Schools Attuned training was beneficial and that the program strategies have

helped faculty members become better teachers. Many believed that all district faculty members should be included in future training. Specific suggestions provided by teachers for improving the training included a review of the program terminology to reduce information overload and a reduction in paperwork related to identification and planning.

Most teachers believed that the program is effective and has helped improved the classroom climate for all students. While many teachers believed that fewer students have received a label for special education services as a result of Project STYLE, almost 38% of the teachers disagreed. A similar number of teachers (40%) indicated that Project STYLE did not impact their referral decisions for further testing for special programs. Overall, teachers perceive the training to be useful and worthy of classroom implementation.

Quantitative analyses of student achievement data on the TAKS indicated that students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 have shown incremental progress each year for the past three years in all tests given. District students scored higher than the average students in Region 8 districts in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The cohort trend analyses and the grade level trend analyses indicate that more 5th and 6th grade students are scoring at higher levels each year. Although growth is occurring at other grade levels, the progress is most distinct in these areas. The fifth grade subgroup analysis indicates that large numbers of at-risk populations within the district are meeting standards.

Approximately one-half of the students in the district are economically disadvantaged and a significantly higher number of these students are meeting standards as compared to state averages. Overall, the students served in program schools in grades 1-8 appear to be making progress each year and results in fifth and sixth grades indicate that intervention efforts

implemented at Travis Elementary four years ago are correlated with increasing student achievement.

Numerous strengths were noted in the impact and implementation of Project STYLE. Diligent records have been maintained and detailed plans have been implemented by program staff. Thirty-nine additional teachers were trained during the past year bringing the total to over 100 trained teachers within the district. The district has also secured status as a regional training site for the Schools Attuned program. Teachers from seven campuses and central office, in addition to university faculty members, have received training.

An increased number of students (108) were identified as program students this past year which indicates that efforts to expand implementation at all campuses have been successful. Moreover, students identified in elementary schools in past years are transitioning into Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School. Teachers at secondary level campuses within the district continue to receive program training and exert efforts to meet individual needs of previously identified program students. Teachers at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School report having specific beliefs that support learners with individual differences. Teachers are generally positive about including students with special needs in the general education classroom. Such values have likely supported the implementation of the Schools Attuned program and individual student accommodations.

While a coordinate effort has been made to expand the program to several campuses over the past four years, some common concerns were expressed during the evaluation. Teachers were divided in their perception of administrative support. They indicated a desire for administrative understanding of the time commitment involved and the need for administration to help provide additional support in completing paperwork and attending follow-up training. Teachers indicated

that all or almost all campus and district professional staff members should be included in the program and its training.

Referrals and placements for special education have declined slightly, but the district percentage of students in special education (13.9%) remained above the state average (11.6%). Some teachers (40%) did not perceive that Project STYLE had helped to reduce these numbers or helped with referral decisions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Project STYLE is a program that has impacted many teachers and students at many of the Sulphur Springs campuses during the past four years. Teachers continue to attend the five-day summer training and willingly implement the strategies in their classrooms. Program personnel and materials generally support program implementation. Teachers overwhelmingly believe in the value of the program and its impact for students with learning differences. The following recommendations are offered to support continuation of Project STYLE:

1. Maintain current personnel support for Project STYLE and expand support positions as the program grows and more students are served.
2. Continue to provide follow-up training at the campus and district level at least twice during the school year. Provide time for staff to complete management plans and to confer with other district staff about strategies to help learners succeed. Integrate Project STYLE with district and campus improvement plans and staff development initiatives.
3. Conduct a discussion with Schools Attuned developers to suggest ways to improve standardized training by sharing district teacher input about vocabulary, information overload, and paperwork as reported in this evaluation.

4. Explore reasons why some teachers (35%) reported a lack of interest in future Schools Attuned training even though they believed in the effectiveness of the program.
5. Consider strategies that could increase perceptions of support by central office and campus administrators of the Project STYLE program. Some of these could include attendance at training, allotted time at staff meetings for sharing, release time for teachers to complete reports and conferences, and reinforcement of student success through various communication channels at the campus and district level.
6. Conduct a more detailed analysis of special education data to review appropriate placement decisions for individual students. Consider strategies to communicate with professional teachers about referrals and the role of Project STYLE in assisting learners with special needs, particularly in light of NCLB provisions and the revised IDEA implementation guidelines for Texas schools.
7. Recognize and celebrate the efforts of grades PK-6 staff for the continued and significant progress of district students over the past five years. More students are meeting standards each year, including high numbers in identified at-risk subgroups.
8. Conduct a qualitative study to determine the resources, programs, and factors that are contributing to the success in fifth and sixth grade programs. Replicate these efforts as appropriate to other levels.
9. Provide additional remediation for 2005-06 fifth grade students that did not make adequate progress as indicated in the TAKS 2005 fourth grade test analyses.
10. Conduct a qualitative study to determine factors that led to lower than expected TAKS scores in 4th and 8th grades.

Program Evaluation Report for Sulphur Springs Independent School District
Project STYLE (Students and Teachers Yearning to Learn Effectively) 2004-2005

Overview of the Evaluation

Purpose of Evaluation

Project STYLE is a program designed by Sulphur Springs Independent School District (SSISD) to meet the needs of struggling students. The program, in 2004-05, was in its fourth year of implementation. The district requested an external evaluation utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the program's effectiveness. The purposes of this evaluation were to (a) analyze the program impact on students attending Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School, (b) report on the teacher perceptions of the program implemented at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School, and (c) verify the status of specific objectives set forth in Project STYLE.

Audience

This evaluation was primarily written for district staff in the Sulphur Springs Independent School District (SSISD). In addition, the school district will share the evaluation with The Brown Foundation Inc., the grant-funding organization.

Evaluators

Drs. Julie Combs and Sherion Jackson were the evaluators for this project. Both are employed as Assistant Professors in Educational Administration at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Both have taught research and evaluation courses at the university. Both have conducted program evaluations and understand the standards for program evaluation developed by The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994). Jackson and Combs

have served as teachers and elementary principals in the public school setting within the past five years.

Contents of Report

This report provides an overview of the Project STYLE program, a description of the evaluation procedures, findings of the evaluation, conclusions, and recommendations related to the program's effectiveness and implementation.

Project STYLE Program Description

Program Philosophy

Project STYLE was developed by Sulphur Spring ISD staff members in 2001 to address concerns regarding student academic performance and the increase in student referrals for special educational evaluations. After reviewing various programs, staff members selected the Schools Attuned staff development program developed by the All Kinds of Minds Institute under the direction of Mel Levine, M.D. Following, staff applied for a grant and the Brown Foundation funded their plan. The intent of Project STYLE is to provide resources to teachers in the form of training, student assessment, teaching strategies, personnel assistance, and on-going collaboration in order that teachers might increase achievement for students with learning differences. A major component of the program is the Schools Attuned training model provided by the All Kinds of Minds Institute. This training is based on Dr. Mel Levine's research on the neurodevelopmental constructs of learning. The five-day initial training equips teachers to identify learning differences, create individualized plans, and implement strategies to address specific student needs. A desired outcome of the Schools Attuned training is to improve teacher awareness and understanding of individual student strengths and learning needs.

Characteristics of the Instructional Setting

Sulphur Springs Independent School District (SSISD) is located in northeast Texas in Hopkins County and covers about 305 square miles. Professional teachers numbered 365 and averaged 13.6 years of teaching experience. They have taught in the district for an average of 9.7 years. In the 2004-2005 school year, eight campuses served a student population of 4175. Table 1 gives an overview of the campuses and enrollments. The district provides one early childhood learning center containing early childhood and Kindergarten. Four elementary campuses serve grade one through grade four and one intermediate school houses all fifth grade students. Grade six through grade eight are served in one middle school building with grade nine through grade twelve housed in a high school campus.

Table 1

2004-2005 Campus Enrollments for Sulphur Springs ISD

Campus	Enrollment	Grades
High School	1149	9-12
Middle	915	6-8
Austin	205	1-4
Bowie	350	1-4
Douglas	301	5
EC Center	606	EE-1
Lamar	289	1-4
Travis	360	1-4
Total	4175	

Table 2 indicates the ethnicity and economic characteristics of the district’s student population. While white students comprise 69% of the population, Hispanic and African American students rank within the next largest groups at 17% and 13% respectively. The Hispanic population increased 1% from the prior year evaluation (Combs & Jackson, 2004). Approximately 48% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches and are considered economically disadvantaged during this evaluation year. This number has increased 4% from the previous year (44%). There was an increase of 1.4% in the number of students with limited English proficiency as compared to the previous year’s evaluation. These growth rates are similar to those found state-wide in Texas. Table 3 below displays the current number of students that qualify as economically disadvantaged at the district and state level.

Table 2

Student Demographics for Sulphur Springs ISD

Demographic	Count	%
African American	547	13
Hispanic	727	17
Native American	8	0.2
Asian	18	0.4
White	2875	69
Eco Disadvantaged	1984	48
Limited English	267	6.4

Table 3

Students with an Economic Disadvantage

Year	District %	State %
2000-01	38.8	49.3
2001-02 (1st yr)	40.2	50.5
2002-03 (2nd yr)	41.5	51.9
2003-04 (3rd yr)	43.7	52.8

Table 4 includes enrollments in special education for a four year period for the district as compared to the state. Project STYLE was initiated in 2001-2002 at Travis Elementary. Students served in special education decreased during the first and second year of the program in the district. During the third year of implementation, the rate of enrollment in special education increased slightly. Overall, special education rates for the district are somewhat higher than state averages.

Table 4

Students Served in Special Education Programs

Year	District %	State %
2000-01	14.1	11.9
2001-02 (1st yr)	14.0	11.7
2002-03 (2nd yr)	13.7	11.6
2003-04 (3rd yr)	14	11.6

Table 5 includes enrollments in special education for the 2003-04 school year for each campus in the district. The high school served the highest number of students with special

education services at 168 students. Schools with the highest percentages of students served in special education were Douglas Intermediate (19.4%) and Middle School (16.9%). The school with the lowest percentage of special education needs students was the Early Childhood campus. Special education rates for the campuses in SSISD are slightly higher than state averages.

Table 5

Student enrollment in Special Education Programs

Campus	Number of Students	%
High School	168	13.9
Middle	148	16.9
Austin	22	12.2
Bowie	41	11.5
Douglas	57	19.4
EC Center	55	9.5
Lamar	39	14.3
Travis	52	13.5
Total	582	
Average Percentage		13.9

Program Background

Project STYLE was initiated at Travis Elementary in 2001 and has been expanded to include seven campuses during the past four years. During the 2004-2005 school year (year number 4), Project STYLE incorporated several components including the five-day Schools

Attuned training, individual management plans, tutoring support, parent resources, classroom materials, tutorial software, and funding for two program coordinators and two instructional aides to support teachers and students at participating campuses in the district. The two program coordinators and instructional aides provided support at all campuses by working with program students, purchasing classroom materials, meeting with parents, assisting teachers, conducting follow-up training, modeling strategies in classrooms, and maintaining program records.

Approximately 85% of program students received services in addition to Project STYLE during the 2004-2005 school year. These services included Speech, Reading Recovery, ESL, Title 1, tutoring, Content Mastery, and Special Education. Of the 108 program students, 18 received no additional services other than Project STYLE.

Project STYLE is funded through a grant. A large portion of this grant was used to fund the Schools Attuned five-day teacher training. Approximately 28% of the professional teachers in the district have participated in the Schools Attuned training and attended two follow-up training sessions offered each year. Follow-up training was required for all trained teachers during Saturday sessions. Table 6 reports the numbers of professional teachers (classroom and specialists) trained as compared to the total professional teacher population at each participating campus. Travis Elementary has had the opportunity to offer the training each of the four years and has 73% of its professional staff members trained. Douglas Intermediate, in its second year of implementation, has the second largest number of trained teachers at 64%, an increase from last year of 7%. This past year, the district achieved the distinction of becoming a training site for the School Attuned program and has greatly increased capacity to train additional teachers from the area.

Table 6

Professional Teachers Participating in Schools Attuned Training

Campus	Trained	% of Campus Trained
Travis	26	73%
Douglas	20	64%
Lamar	14	45%
Bowie	15	42%
Middle School	17	20%
Austin	4	16%
High School	3	3%
Other	2	
Total	101	
Average Trained within District		28%

Program documents show evidence that a planning and evaluation cycle has been followed during the past four years. The Program Narrative states the goal for Project STYLE as: to further improve teaching strategies at Travis, Austin, Bowie, Lamar Elementary Schools, Douglas Intermediate, and Sulphur Springs Middle School using *All Kinds of Minds* and *Schools Attuned* initiatives. Through this sustained effort and expansion into the district, more children, especially those with learning differences, will be able to experience real academic success (Program Narrative 2004-05, p.4).

Specific objectives for the 2004-2005 year four implementation were stated as follows:

1. Train 40 more teachers in SSISD to expand and strengthen the Schools Attuned program at Travis, Austin, Bowie, and Lamar Elementary Schools, Douglas Intermediate, and Sulphur Springs Middle School.
2. Establish Sulphur Springs as a regional training site for Schools Attuned training.
3. Enable 60 educators and administrators from Northeast Texas to participate in the Schools Attuned training in Sulphur Springs, Texas.
4. Obtain the knowledge, skills, and innovative tools necessary to meet the needs of all students.
5. Enrich the manner in which all children are educated.
6. Decrease distractible behaviors that affect individual and whole classroom learning.
7. Individualize instruction and increase effective learning strategies through the use and purchase of the research based *A+ Learning Software*.
8. Purchase high interest leveled reading texts and hands-on resources in order to build a strong foundation in science.
9. Provide sustained staff development opportunities that focus on Science TEKS.
10. Help every child understand his or her own strengths and weaknesses
(Program Narrative 2004-05, p.5).

The stated goals and objectives were discussed and revised as evaluation questions and are detailed in the Evaluation Design section of this report.

Program Student Characteristics

In the 2004-2005 school year, approximately 3% of students in the district were identified as Project STYLE students (also called program students); however, during the focus group sessions teachers reported helping many additional students with the Schools Attuned strategies. Table 7 lists the number of students served in the Project STYLE program. Grades five and six have the largest number of program students, with 24 at each of these grade levels. Middle School, in its first year of implementation, served the most students in grades 6-8 with 31 students. Travis Elementary, in its fourth year of implementation, served 26 students and Douglas Intermediate, in its second year of implementation, served the third largest number with 24 students. During 2004-05, the program increased services to 33 additional students, serving a total of 108 students. During 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years, 32 and 75 students were served, respectively. Male students make up 68% of those served in Project STYLE.

Table 7

2004-2005 Program Students

Grade	Travis	Lamar	Austin	Bowie	Douglas	Middle	Total
1st	0	1	1	3			5
2nd	5	3	1	2			11
3rd	12	3	1	5			21
4th	9	2		5			16
5th					24		24
6th						24	24
7th						5	5
8th						2	2
Total	26	9	3	15	24	31	108

During the initial Schools Attuned training session, teachers identified a student with a neurodevelopmental dysfunction using a diagnostic tool developed by Dr. Levine. The checklist is used to gather information from the student's teachers and parents. Next an individualized learning plan was written for each student. For clarity in this report, attuned students are termed "program students." As the program expanded, individual student plans were provided to the next grade level teacher. During the planning phase, the teacher identified a student, developed an individual plan, and identified a primary and secondary learning dysfunction. Table 8 shows the primary dysfunctions of 2004-2005 program students. Of the 108 students participating in Project STYLE, 40 were identified as having weaknesses in memory and 37 in attention control. During 2003-04, 27 students were identified as having weaknesses in attention control and 25 had memory concerns (Combs & Jackson, 2004). Third and fourth grades contained the most program students at 38, followed by grades 6-8 with 30 students.

Table 8

Primary Neurodevelopment Dysfunction of Program Students

Dysfunction	Grades 1-2	Grades 3-4	Grade 5	Grade 6-8	Total
Attention	5	14	8	10	37
Language	1	5	2	2	10
Memory	5	15	10	10	40
Motor	3	3	2	3	11
Spatial	1				1
Temporal	1	1		5	7
Higher thinking			2		2
Social cognition					0
Total	16	38	24	30	108

Evaluation Design

Evaluation Objectives

This evaluation has been conducted in order to assess program implementation and program impact of Project STYLE. The evaluators used standards to guide the review based on The Program Evaluation Standards authored by The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994), the CIPP evaluation model developed by Stufflebeam (2003) and The Evaluation Center located at Western Michigan University (2004). Generally, program evaluations should focus on one or more of the following five areas: (a) the need for the program, (b) the design of the program, (c) program implementation, (d) program impact, and (e) program efficiency (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Implementation and impact are the focuses of this evaluation.

The evaluators met with two Project STYLE coordinators and the central office grants administrator in November 2004 to plan the goals and objectives of the evaluation. District staff requested that the evaluation be similar in format to the 2003-04 report but with a different focus. Because the program was expanded into intermediate and middle school grades, district staff wanted to know the impact and perceptions of the program at grade levels 5-8. The following questions were selected to guide the evaluation:

1. What are intermediate and middle school teachers' perceptions of the initial five-day training?
2. What strategies introduced in the training are regarded as useful by teachers at the intermediate and middle school?

3. What is the impact on student outcomes in grades 3-8 as measured by the state assessment (TAKS)?
4. What are the program's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of effectiveness and implementation?

The evaluation questions are summarized in these topic headings of (a) teacher training (b) program effectiveness, (c) impact on student achievement in grades 3-8, and (d) program strengths and areas of concerns.

Evaluation Methods

Multiple methods to collect data were utilized to answer the evaluation questions. The methods for data collection were selected to allow for minimal disruption to students, classroom teacher and school staff. Existing data were used when possible. Focus group interviews, document reviews (i.e. staff development records, purchase orders, program plans), teacher questionnaire, site visits, and individual interviews were used to assess the impact and implementation of Project STYLE. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a state-wide assessment program for grades 3-11, was used to analyze student achievement in grades 3-8 in the subjects of Reading and Math for all schools in the district as compared to state averages. Measurement of student mastery of curriculum objectives by the TAKS test has acceptable reliability and validity measures according to the Texas Education Agency. Data from other measurements were verified through the process of triangulation.

Question 1: Teacher training

Focus groups, staff development records, and a teacher questionnaire were used to assess the impact of the Schools Attuned training. Focus groups consisted of three one-hour sessions held at the intermediate and middle school campuses. Thirteen interviewees were randomly

selected from the population of trained staff members at each site by the Project STYLE coordinator. Guiding questions for focus groups were developed to collect information regarding the evaluation objectives and are offered in Appendix A.

The teacher questionnaire consisted of 28 questions and is included in Appendix B. Of these 28 questions, 25 questions required a response on a Likert scale and included choices of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The remaining three questions were open-ended and qualitative in nature. Basic information about the participant was requested regarding school assignment, grade level taught, and years experience with Project STYLE.

The questionnaire was divided into subsections representing the objectives of the program evaluation. These sections consisted of questions related to training, impact of the program, implementation issues, and beliefs of teachers. The *training* subsection contained five questions related to the initial five-day training and follow-up training provided to participants. The *impact of the program* subsection included 12 questions to explore the teachers' perceptions of the Schools Attuned program's effectiveness for improving their teaching or students' learning. The third subsection, implementation issues, included three questions to assess the overall implementation of the program. The last section, beliefs, contained five questions to assess teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching students with learning differences. At the end of the questionnaire, three open-ended questions were asked to gather additional information about the program through the perceptions of participants.

The instrument was developed by the evaluators and reviewed by the Project STYLE coordinators. Revisions were made to the instrument after review. In February 2005, the program coordinators distributed the instrument to all teachers that had participated in Schools Attuned training at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School. Confidentiality and anonymity

were ensured as names and other identifying information were not requested from participants. The coordinators collected the instruments and returned to the evaluators for analysis.

In addition to the focus groups and teacher questionnaire, site visits, document reviews, and interviews with Project STYLE coordinators, campus principals, and counselors were conducted.

Question 2: Program effectiveness

Methods used to determine perceptions of program effectiveness included the focus group interviews, teacher questionnaire, and campus site visits as described in the previous section.

Question 3: Impact on student achievement for grades 3-8

The analyses for this evaluation will include data from the 2004-2005 administrations in grades 3-8 in the subjects of Reading and Math for the program schools including Travis Elementary, Bowie Elementary, Lamar Elementary, Austin Elementary, Douglas Intermediate, and Sulphur Springs Middle School.

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is a state-wide assessment program for grades three through eleven to measure student progress in the academic subjects of reading, math, writing, science, and social studies. Test results provide information about individual student performance regarding the state curriculum and are used to monitor school and district performance. Educators are required by law to provide instructional intervention for students performing below state mastery levels.

Validity of the TAKS assessment has been addressed by its developers by involving numerous educators during all phases of the process prior to its first administration in the 2002-2003 school year. Groups reviewed objectives, items, and field testing data. Currently, TAKS scores are reported as raw scores and scaled scores. Test items are equated using the Rasch

Partial Credit Model, which is related to the Rasch one-parameter Item-Response Theory model (Rasch, 1980). The Rasch scale allows for comparisons of the same grade level across years and assists in equating different forms of the test. TAKS reliabilities are reported in the range of .80s to low .90s based on internal consistency measures of the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) and the stratified coefficient alpha. One limitation in using the TAKS data relates to the effect of the regression toward the mean for scores at the extreme ends of the distribution.

The results of TAKS for an individual student are reported among three categories. The performance levels identified by a state advisory include *Commended Performance*, *Met the Standard*, and *Did Not Meet the Standard*. The *Commended Performance* is a category describing high academic achievement. Students performing at this level are considerably above the state passing standard and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills measured at grade level. The *Met the Standard* category describes satisfactory academic achievement. Student performing at this level are at or somewhat above the state passing standard and demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the knowledge and skills measured at the grade level. The category of *Did Not Meet the Standard* describes students that have shown unsatisfactory academic achievement. Students performing at this level are below the state passing standard and demonstrate an insufficient understanding of the knowledge and skills measured at this grade (TEA, 2003, p. 85).

Question 4: Program Strengths and Areas of Concerns

Methods used to draw conclusions regarding program strengths and areas of concern included the focus group interviews, teacher questionnaire, campus site visits, TAKS analyses, and document reviews.

Limitations

The evaluators have attempted to address conditions that would bias the evaluation process. Limitations related to data collection processes included the teacher questionnaire, the number of participants, the degree of honesty from participants, and the limitation of data requested. The teacher questionnaire was constructed based on a review of research regarding the Schools Attuned program and was reviewed and validated by trained district staff. Teachers who received the Schools Attuned training at two campuses were given the questionnaire and the return rate was 70%, with 29 questionnaires being returned. Although measures were taken to ensure participant confidentiality during the focus group interviews, the social dynamics of the small groups could have impacted the degree of honest feedback. In addition, only the subject areas of Reading and Math on the TAKS assessment were reviewed in this report. The TAKS test yields scores with a high degree of reliability, but the assessment only measures a small set of skills addressed with limited items.

Evaluation Findings

Teacher Questionnaire Findings: Quantitative Data

The teacher questionnaire was completed by 29 of the 37 trained staff members at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School during the months of January and February 2005. Teachers were provided with written instructions for the completion of the questionnaire. The instrument required approximately 15 minutes to complete. The instruments were distributed and collected by district staff. Teachers were also given the option of directly mailing the instrument to the external evaluators. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B and results presented in graphs are located in Appendix C.

The quantitative portion of the questionnaire was divided into four subsections. The first subsection, questions one through five, measured teachers' attitudes regarding the initial Schools Attuned training which was held locally in June during the summer of 2004 and in Fort Worth during the summers of 2001-2003. Bar graphs displaying results of the survey can be seen in Appendix C. All participating teachers believed that the training was informative and helped them understand student learning needs (questions 1 & 2). Participants all agreed that the tools presented were effective strategies for helping students with learning differences in their classrooms (questions 3 & 4). Although all teachers indicated agreement or strong agreement with the usefulness of the training, almost 35% indicated that they would not want to participate in additional Schools Attuned training (question 5).

The second subsection of the instrument measured the *impact of the program* and included questions 6-15 and 18-19. These questions focused on perceptions of the Schools Attuned program's effectiveness for improving teaching or students' learning. All 29 teachers indicated agreement that they had gained strategies to assist students in their classroom as a result of the program (question 6). Furthermore, almost 80% indicated that they used the strategies on a consistent basis in their classroom (question 7 & 15), and that it has helped them reach and teach all students (question 9). In addition, most teachers (90%) believed that the program improved the classroom climate for all students.

Levine (2002) advised teachers to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses through a term called "demystification." By giving students the awareness and terminology, the teacher can reduce student apprehension about his/her learning differences and needs. Such support is believed to empower the student to become a responsible participant in his/her own learning. Almost 90% of the participating teachers perceived that students were

more aware of their strengths and weaknesses than before the program (question 10). Most participating teachers (96%) believed that the program helped them accommodate the needs of the learners with attention control issues, motor dysfunctions, and memory concerns (questions 11-13).

Children traditionally served in special education programs are another focus of the Schools Attuned program. Levine (2002) believes that many of these identified children could be served more appropriately with specific accommodations provided by the classroom teacher. A portion of the Schools Attuned training is designed to give teachers the identification tools and strategies to meet specific needs which could lead to decreased referrals for assessment and fewer placements in special education programs. Two questions were designed to assess teacher perception of the impact on referrals to special education as a result of the Schools Attuned program. In question 18, only 58% of the teachers believed that fewer children had received a special program “label” as a result of the Attuned program. Almost 38% of the teachers disagreed that fewer children had received special program labels. More teachers (60%) believed that the program had helped them with referral decisions for special education programs although 40% did not feel the program impacted their decisions (question 19). Overall, most teachers (96%) believed that the program had made a positive difference in their teaching (question 14).

The third subsection included three questions to assess the overall implementation of the program. Question 16 assessed the teacher perception of administrator support of the Schools Attuned program. This question had more variance than most on the instrument with 36% in strong agreement, 50% in agreement, and 14% in disagreement with the statement of administrative support. Question 17 had similar results pertaining to the coordination of the

program within the district. Most teachers agreed that the program had been well coordinated, while 18% disagreed with this statement. Another effort of coordination provided by the district included the practice of model lessons presented by the program coordinator. Almost all teachers (93%) believed that these lessons were beneficial (question 20). Overall, implementation efforts of the program throughout the district appear to be moderately successful and will be addressed more in the recommendation section of this report.

The last section, *beliefs*, contained five questions to assess attitudes and beliefs about teaching students with learning differences. Systematic programs such as Schools Attuned that require change in teacher actions or behaviors are believed to be influenced by the values and beliefs held by the professionals. Teachers were asked to rate their beliefs about teaching students with different individual needs. Almost all teachers (96%) participating believed that a student should have the flexibility to learn in his/her own style and time (question 21). Question 22 assessed the norms of the school regarding inclusion of students with special learning needs. Almost 90% agreed that staff members in their school were encouraged to include all students and almost all teachers (97%) believed that a student with a single disability could succeed in general education (question 24). Question 23 was designed to assess the teacher's willingness to include a student with a disability in his/her classroom. This question yielded mixed results. After analysis of participant comments, evaluators decided to eliminate the question due to its lack of validity. It was noted that wording of the question was somewhat confusing to some participants. Almost all teachers (90%) believed that students, regardless of disability, should have a chance to participate in the general education classroom (question 25). From these questions, it appears that the teachers believed that children with special learning needs can be

served in general classrooms. The following section will address the qualitative section of the teacher instrument.

Teacher Questionnaire Findings: Qualitative Data

At the conclusion of the teacher questionnaire, participants were invited to respond to three open-ended questions. These questions were designed to solicit overall perceptions of the program and areas of improvement. An additional question requested advice for schools initiating a similar program. Almost all participants provided comments on the open-ended questions. Of the 29 returned instruments, 27 responded to at least one of the questions in this section. The responses were categorized and themes were developed to capture the essence of the comments.

The most frequent opinion expressed was that the Schools Attuned training program was beneficial to the individual in becoming a more effective teacher. One teacher expressed that the program “has helped me understand that not all students learn the same way.” Others believed that the program “has strengthened my teaching ability” and “has helped me understand the learning styles of my students, and has helped me learn to teach based on these individual differences.” Another teacher stated that the program “has been good in more ways than one. A child helping himself is more beneficial than anything and this program encourages that.” Over half of those submitting open-ended responses commented on the beneficial nature of the program.

Other comments were organized into six remaining categories. All of these categories focused on suggestions for program improvement. These categories include the need to involve all staff in the program, the resource of time, coordination of the program, information overload, amount of paperwork, and support of administrators.

Almost half of the teachers providing comments believed that efforts should be made to include almost all campus staff in the training and program implementation. Project STYLE has been implemented in the SSISD on a voluntary basis over the past four years. Additional schools have been added each year after the approval of campus administration and the campus decision-making team. Incentives such as classroom resources and pay for time at summer training have been provided. Some of the comments were “get as many of the faculty as involved as possible” and “success comes in numbers—the more co-workers a person can turn to for help the more successful a program” and “the school needs to have 100% participation so the concepts are used and encouraged through-out the building.” Getting more teachers involved on a campus and in the district was a suggestion provided by many of the teachers.

Another category dealt with the resource of time. One teacher believed that “I need more time to work with the students on an individual basis to get more benefit from the program.” Suggestions included providing weekly time for the program, additional time for attuning (assessing) students, and time during the school day as ways to help teachers utilize the program more.

Coordination of the program was another theme that included comments regarding follow-up training, role of the coordinator, and administrator involvement. The program coordinator was specifically mentioned by name in the comments as possessing people skills that enabled her to provide good coordination to her assigned schools. One teacher commented that “her class lessons are awesome and the students love them.” Another issue, as mentioned previously, involved the “training for all and not just a few.” Finally, several commented on the need for “a ‘united front’ [such as] more support in other areas like music, PE, and administration.”

Another common concern expressed by participants dealt with the Schools Attuned terminology. Levine (2002) uses many terms unfamiliar to most educators such as *neurodevelopmental dysfunction, mental energy control, spatial and sequential ordering, and metalinguistics awareness.*” Based on the nature of several of the comments, responses were labeled “information overload.” One teacher commented that the program “has some great components but I find the terminology stilted and hard to grasp.” Other teachers shared strategies to deal with the program concepts by writing “if I made a quick reference chart of [the terminology] with quick tips, I think it would help me to implement the strategies even more” or “I need to review the information on the constructs to refresh my memory.” When asked to provide suggestions for other teachers in the initiation stages of Schools Attuned, experienced teachers suggested that one “take it slow and don’t get bogged down” and “stick with it and you will eventually understand what they are talking about.” Another teacher encouraged new participants to remember that the “program is a process and you will learn more as you stay with the program. Be open to try new strategies with students.”

The last two categories were mentioned less frequently than others. These concerns dealt with the amount of paperwork and perception of administrative support. Some teachers believed that the amount of paperwork involved in assessing an individual student and developing an individual accommodation plan was excessive. Seven comments specifically mentioned that less paperwork was desired. One requested that repetitive paper work be modified or more time be given to complete the paperwork.

Several comments indicated that teachers desired administrators to be more involved and aware of Project STYLE. One requested that “the administration be clearly informed of the time commitment it requires of the teachers to make sure they are willing to work with the teachers.”

Another stated “I was disappointed when the district did not follow thru with their agreement of 1/2 day to work on management plan and I had to use 1/2 of my work day and additional personal time.” Although many resources have been provided to teachers to help them attend training and implement the strategies in their classrooms, continued administrative awareness and support are essential to the success of programs such as Schools Attuned. The next section will review the findings from the interviews conducted with small groups of teacher participants.

Focus Group Interviews Findings

Focus group interviews were used to gather additional qualitative information in order to arrive at a greater understanding of the perceptions Project STYLE yielded among the faculty and staff. Focus group interview sessions consisted of three groups of participating staff members scheduled at three different times at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School. These sessions were held during the day on Friday, February 18, 2005. Participants teaching duties were covered by assigned staff members or substitute teachers in order for them to attend the interviews. The interviews were conducted at the campuses of the staff members in a conference room for one hour to discuss Project STYLE.

According to focus group processes described by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), evaluators began by introducing themselves and setting the stage for the focus group interview by (1) briefly explaining the general purpose of the discussion, (2) discussing reasons that the participants were selected for the interview, (3) assuring the participants of confidentiality and that at anytime they may comment “off the record” or withdraw (4) reviewing the ground rules, and (5) asking for final questions concerning procedures. Evaluators used questions which fell into the following three categories; open-ended, think back, and probing for clarification. The

interview questions (See Appendix B) tended to move from general to very specific and evaluators were free to include spontaneous questions if the occasion arose (Kreuger, 1988).

Focus group interviews revealed three major evaluation themes: (1) expectations or goals of the participant, (2) effectiveness or usefulness of the training, and (3) future effectiveness of the program. The categories and the accompanying interview questions can be viewed in Table 9.

Table 9

Questions Associated with Evaluation Themes

Themes	Interview Questions
Expectations of Participants	1, 2, 3
Effectiveness/Usefulness of Program	4, 5, 6
Future Effectiveness of Program	7, 8, 9, 10

Overall, participants for the school year 2004-2005 felt that Project STYLE was highly effective for all students, although only selected students were the only assessed. These participants also felt that the program was well worth the time invested in the training. One teacher noted that, “A lot of students struggle in different areas. If you’ve got a plan or formula, they [students] can see the end result, and they aren’t defeated before they ever get started.”

Expectations of Participants

Although teachers perceived the training to be somewhat stressful, their expectations were focused on the perceived final rewards and incentives. Due to there being several previous years of training for others, many participants went into the program feeling anxious about the learning experience and expected to feel overwhelmed. The money allotted for resources, supplies, and the classroom modeling provided to each participant seemed to ease this resistance

to training. Many noted that the expectations of the training anxiety were somewhat true, stating, [It was] “overwhelming, time consuming,” “so much stuff,” “a lot of information in a short time,” “time-consuming,” and “. . . it was intense because of other things happening.”

Participants also noted that it was “a very pleasant experience,” that “the people that were conducting it were –I felt like excellent presenters...” and “Schools Attuned put it in better format to be able to get to it faster.” One participant noted that the training was interesting, and “kind of gives you a different aspect of teaching.” In the end one participant noted that, “It’s a different path to get to the end but, you know, it’s pretty much no more paperwork than we really do anyway.”

Effectiveness/Usefulness of Program

From the focus group interviews, participants suggested that their effectiveness in the classroom had changed due to Project STYLE, and that the program impacted not just the program students but the entire school in some manner. Several participants noted that it gave them strategies to try, “more alternative assessments” to use, a built-in expectation for student differences and “tolerance and flexibility” enhancement in the classroom. One participant stated, “You don’t expect for everyone to be at the same place at the same time.” Another participant was able to sum up these group thoughts by stating, “In the beginning I was anticipating when I started, well, you can’t do all this for one student, but then after you get through with one student you find that you are applying it to the classroom and not to the student, and that turned out to be a really positive thing.”

Some participants alluded to the notion that students found it to be beneficial and this idea was supported by statements such as, “I think it helps the [program] student feel like they have more control instead of feeling completely defeated.” Such statements as, “But I don’t think

it would be nearly as effective a program that it is if it didn't have [name of person]. ... we know we can go to [her/him] if we have questions or need support on something," provided information about the effectiveness of coordination and modeling component in the classroom.

Future Effectiveness of Program

Within the focus group interviews, there were several suggestions that would impact the future effectiveness of the program. Participants felt that a deeper understanding of Schools Attuned Program could be achieved if the vocabulary was either changed or they were allowed to be exposed to the vocabulary in a different manner before-hand. One participant supported this perception with this statement, "They [Levine] really need to work on getting a more teacher-friendly vocabulary rather than a neurology vocabulary." Several other suggestions were mentioned such as, "a checklist that you go through per day," "notes already written down," "transcripts to go along with the video," "cut down on repetition," and "I didn't care for the role-playing." These reactions were representative in suggesting ways to improve motivation and to reduce anxiety associated with attending training and attuning students.

Overall, the participants in the focus group interview seemed to feel more positive about the training and implementation of the program as more district schools and participants became involved in the program. One participant concluded strongly, as heads nodded in agreement, "And I really think for it to be an effective program district-wide, everybody in the district's going to have to be attuned in this," suggesting that more staff need to be trained and more students given the opportunity to participate in the Schools Attuned training program.

Student Achievement for grades 3-8

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data from 2004-2005 were used to determine program impact. Students in grade three and five complete the Reading TAKS in

March. Third grade students that fail the reading test during the March administration have two additional test dates to meet the state standards. Under the state legislated Student Success Initiative, third and fifth graders are required to pass the reading test for promotion to the next grade. Likewise, fifth graders are also required to pass the math test within three attempts. All third, fourth, and fifth graders took the Reading and Math TAKS in March/April. The test was administered under controlled conditions that were identified in the testing coordinator manuals provided by the Texas Education Agency.

Student Performance on TAKS

Table 10 indicates performance for all TAKS tests given to students in grades 3-8 in the SSISD for the past three years. In grades 3-8, students take Reading and Math. In addition, grades 4 and 7 students take a Writing test. Grade 5 students take a Science test and grade 8 students take a History test. In 2003, the Texas State Board of Education established a phase-in plan for TAKS standards. In 2003, the standard was set at two standard errors of measurement below the panel recommended score. In 2004, the standard was increased to one standard error below the panel recommended score. Generally, each standard error accounts for two to four test questions. In 2005, the passing score was elevated to the recommended level set by the panel, sometimes referred as a “panel recommendation.” To provide an analysis of equivalent scores over a three year period, data for the panel recommendation were used in this evaluation. The *Met the Standard* category describes satisfactory academic achievement. Student performing at this level are at or somewhat above the state passing standard and demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the knowledge and skills measured at the grade level.

Grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 have shown incremental progress each year in all tests given. Grades 4 and 8 showed a 10 and 9 percentage point decline in the 2005 school year. Table 11

displays the 2005 TAKS results for SSISD compared to all 48 districts included in Region 8.

Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 district students scored higher than schools in Region 8. The *Commended Performance* is a category describing high academic achievement. Students performing at this level are considerably above the state passing standard and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills measured at grade level. Students in SSISD scored at approximately the same level in this category as other students in Region 8. Overall, the students served in program schools are making progress each year.

Table 10

*District TAKS % Met Standards for All Tests Taken for 3 years**

Grade	2005	2004	2003
3	88	86	75
4	72	82	82
5	63	61	32
6	82	81	63
7	64	60	58
8	52	61	58

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Table 11

District and Region % Met Standards and Commended Performance for 2005

Grade	<u>District</u>		<u>Region 8</u>	
	% Met ^a	% Comm ^b	% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
3	88	19	83	19
4	72	7	71	8
5	63	9	61	9
6	82	25	72	20
7	64	5	63	5
8	52	7	57	8

^a% meeting passing standard. ^b% receiving commended performance.

Tables 12 through 17 show Reading and Math results for program schools for the past three years. Grade 3 students, as shown in Table 12 have consistently outsourced other grade levels in the district for the last three years. The students in 2005 scored better than students in 2004 or 2003 in both subjects in the category of Met Standards. Third graders in 2004 scored higher in the category of Commended Performance, with 43% in Reading and 34% in Math. It is important to note that different groups of students are tested each year, so group to group comparisons should be made with caution. On the other hand, progress and concerns related to instructional programs, resources, and teacher effectiveness can be reflected in annual trend comparisons.

Table 12

*Grade 3 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	250	98	38	245	89	29
2004	268	96	43	265	88	34
2003	234	91	30	237	78	14

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Table 13

*Grade 4 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	261	82	21	261	85	27
2004	224	90	28	230	90	21
2003	206	91	25	210	90	17

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Grades 5 and 6 (See Table 14 and 15) have made large gains in the three year period, indicating that program improvements have been successful in helping more students achieve at higher levels. These two grade levels also contained the highest number of program students, at 24 students each, being served in Project Style in each grade level. In 2005, 95% of fifth grade

students met standards in Reading, up 6% from 2004. Math scores showed the greatest gains in the three year period, with 93% of students meeting standards in Math, up 10% from 2004. About one-fourth of the students met the commended performance levels in 2005 in both subjects. More students were tested in 2005 in 5th grade than in 2004 or 2003.

Sixth grade students also showed steady progress. Students meeting standards in the area of math increased 20% from 65% in 2003 to 85% in 2005. Reading scores increased 13% from 80% 2003 to 93% in 2005. Noteworthy is the progress in the percent of students meeting commended performance levels. Grade 6 had the highest performance levels in the district in 2005 in the area of Reading and Math with 51% and 32% of the students earning this distinction.

On the other hand, grade 4 students in 2005 (See Table 13) showed a decline for the school year. In 2004, as third graders, (See Table 12), 90% of the students met the standards in Reading, compared to 82% meeting standards as fourth graders, indicating an 8% drop. In Math, scores also dropped 5% to 85% of students meeting standards. Noteworthy was the percentage of students meeting commended performance in Math that increased 6% to 27%.

Table 14

*Grade 5 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	238	95	26	241	93	27
2004	226	89	39	230	83	26
2003	234	90	29	238	84	16

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Table 15

*Grade 6 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	237	93	51	238	85	32
2004	252	94	41	252	82	20
2003	244	80	30	239	67	15

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Seventh graders in the district improved in 2005, as shown in Table 16, with 93% of the students meeting standards in Reading and 65% meeting standards in Math. Five students were identified as program students in seventh grade. Eighth grade students' performance decreased in 2005 by 5% in Reading and 10% in Math, as shown in Table 17. Only 2 students were identified as program students in grade 8.

Table 16

*Grade 7 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	260	93	30	263	65	8
2004	261	82	24	261	62	3
2003	205	85	18	211	63	7

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Table 17

*Grade 8 Reading and Math TAKS 3-year comparison**

Year	# Tested	<u>Reading</u>		# Tested	<u>Math</u>	
		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b		% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
2005	263	85	44	264	55	12
2004	213	88	23	214	65	7
2003	247	84	31	250	62	4

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

To study the progress of the same students from year to year, Tables 18 through 20 include data for cohort groups that have been served in program elementary schools for the past two or three years. Table 18 notes the performance of 2005 grade 6 students. Over the past three years, more students met the standards as sixth graders than as fifth graders. Likewise, more students scored at the commended performance levels than in prior years. These scores indicate that students are making above average progress each year in the area of Reading. Table 19 displays scores for 2005 grade five students. More students met the standards for Reading in 5th grade than in 3rd or 4th grade. As third graders, 30% of the students met the commended performance levels as compared to only 26% as fifth graders.

Table 20 shows results for 2005 grade 4 students. Fewer students met standards as fourth graders (82%) than as third graders (96%). Additionally, 43% of this group made commended performance as third graders, as compared to 21% as fourth graders.

Two of the cohort groups have made steady progress and displayed impressive gains. Each of these groups in fifth and sixth grades contained 24 program students served in Project STYLE. Program students represent about 10% of each of these groups and their scores are

included in the analyses. Many of these students have been served for at least two years. Some were identified in the early elementary grades when Travis Elementary initiated the program in 2001. The data from the 5th and 6th grade students, both in the form of a cohort trend analysis and a grade level trend analysis indicate that more students are scoring at higher levels, even with steady growth rates. While growth is occurring at other grade levels, the progress is most distinct in these areas.

Table 18

*2005 6th grade Cohort TAKS Reading 2-year comparison**

Grade	Year	# Tested	% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
6	2005	237	93	51
5	2004	226	89	39
4	2003	206	91	25

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

Table 19

*2005 5th grade Cohort TAKS Reading 3-year comparison**

Grade	Year	# Tested	% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
5	2005	238	95	26
4	2004	224	90	28
3	2003	234	91	30

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards

Table 20

*2005 4th grade Cohort TAKS Reading 2-year comparison**

Grade	Year	# Tested	% Met ^a	% Comm ^b
4	2005	261	82	21
3	2004	268	96	43

^a % meeting passing standard. ^b % receiving commended performance.

* For equivalent comparisons, scores reported for 2003 & 2004 are based on Panel Recommendations standards.

An analysis of subgroups is presented in Tables 21 and 22 for 2005 grade 5 students. Fifth grade was highlighted for this analysis as one of the purposes of the evaluation was to report on progress made at Douglas Intermediate School. All fifth grade students in the district attend Douglas and the campus serves one of the largest groups of Project Style students. The cumulative scores take into account all administrations or retests given in 5th grade in both Reading and Math. The subgroup analysis shows impressive results, with large numbers of at-risk populations meeting standards. In Texas, the subgroup performance of the Economically Disadvantaged, Title I, and At-risk groups have traditionally lagged behind those of the White subgroup. Almost all students in the Economically Disadvantaged and Title I subgroups met standards in Reading (97%) and Math (96% and 98%, respectively).

To compare the district subgroup performance of fifth grade students with the state, the first administration of the Reading and Math test results were used. As shown in Table 22, the state performance of the Economically Disadvantaged was significantly lower (64%) than the district (84%) in both Reading and Math. Likewise, African American students and Hispanic students in SSISD scored significantly higher than the state averages in fifth grade.

Table 21

2005 5th grade Cumulative Subgroup Performance for Reading and Math

Group	<u>Reading</u>			<u>Math</u>		
	# Tested	# Met*	% Met*	# Tested	# Met*	% Met*
All Students	238	230	97	241	235	98
African American	31	28	90	30	28	93
Hispanic	34	34	100	35	33	93
White	172	167	97	174	173	99
Economically Disadvantaged	109	97	97	101	97	96
Title I	238	230	97	241	235	98
At-Risk	42	38	90	45	40	89

* % or # meeting passing standard.

Table 22

2005 5th grade Subgroup Performance, District and State

Group	<u>Reading</u>		<u>Math</u>	
	<u>February Test (1st administration)</u>		<u>April Test (1st administration)</u>	
	<u>District</u> % Met*	<u>State</u> % Met*	<u>District</u> % Met*	<u>State</u> % Met*
All Students	98	75	98	75
African American	71	64	71	64
Hispanic	85	66	85	66
White	92	88	92	88
Economically Disadvantaged	84	64	84	64

* % meeting passing standard.

Summary of Findings

The following questions were used to focus the program evaluation. Through the teacher questionnaire, the open-ended questions, focus group interviews, site visits, and analysis of testing data, the final review revealed the following findings to answer these evaluation questions.

Question 1: Teacher training

Almost all participating staff members believed that the five-day initial Schools Attuned training was beneficial and that the program strategies have helped them become better teachers. They believed that the tools have been useful and a large majority indicated they had applied the training in their classrooms. Some believed that all district staff members should be included in future training. Specific suggestions provided by teachers for improving the training included a review of the program terminology to reduce information overload and a reduction in paperwork. Though teachers perceived the training to be somewhat stressful, they were motivated to attend based on perceived benefits, supplies, and monetary incentives. At the same time, 35% indicated that they would not attend additional training for the Schools Attuned program.

Question 2: Program effectiveness

Most teachers believed that Project STYLE has helped them become better teachers and has improved the classroom climate for all students. Most teachers believed that more students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses than before the program. While many teachers believed that fewer students had received a label for special education services as a result of Project STYLE, almost 38% of the teachers disagreed with this statement. A similar number of staff (40%) indicated that Project STYLE did not impact their referral decisions for further testing for special programs.

Question 3: Impact on student achievement for grades 3-8

Students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 have shown incremental progress each year in all tests given. District students scored higher than the average in the Region 8 districts in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The cohort trend analyses and the grade level trend analyses indicated that more 5th and 6th grade students are scoring at higher levels each year. Although growth is occurring at other grade levels, the progress is most distinct in these areas. The fifth grade subgroup analyses suggested large numbers of at-risk populations were meeting standards. About one-half of the students in the district are economically disadvantaged and a significantly higher number of these students are meeting standards as compared to state averages. Overall, the students served in program schools are making progress each year.

Question 4: Program Strengths and Areas of Concerns

Numerous strengths can be noted in the impact and implementation of Project STYLE. Program coordinators have kept diligent records related to teacher training, expenditures, and student profiles. Staff members have followed the detailed plans that have been submitted to the Brown Foundation during the past year.

More teachers (39) have been trained during the past year. The total number of trained staff in the district reported for this past year was 101. The district has also secured status as a regional training site for the Schools Attuned program and has several district staff that now serve as regional trainers. Teachers from seven campuses and central office, in addition to university faculty members, have received training. Teachers perceive the training to be useful and worthy of classroom implementation.

Project STYLE staff continue to refine program goals and objectives each year and have included plans to improve district Science TAKS assessment scores through reading materials

and staff development. Such efforts indicate a willingness to consider current needs and data and tailor the program to support student achievement across all subjects and levels.

An increased number of students (108) were identified as program students this past year which indicates that efforts to expand implementation at all campuses have been successful. Moreover, students identified in elementary schools in past years are transitioning into Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School. Teachers at the secondary campuses are receiving the training and continuing the efforts to meet individual needs of previously identified program students. Teachers believe that students have become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses based on program concepts. This was facilitated by the program coordinator conducting model lessons with all students at Douglas Intermediate last year and this year.

Teachers at Douglas Intermediate and Sulphur Springs Middle School report having specific beliefs that support learners with individual differences. Teachers are generally positive about including students with special needs in the general education classroom. Such values have likely supported the implementation of Project STYLE and individual student accommodations.

Specific areas of concern have been organized into categories including implementation, training, and special education. While the program has been coordinated in order to expand to several campuses over the past four years, some common concerns were expressed during the evaluation. Teachers were divided in their perception of administrative support. One asked for a more 'united front', including administration, and others requested that administration understand the time commitment and provide additional support in completing paperwork and attending follow-up training.

The success of further implementation depends somewhat on teacher perception of the initial training and commitment to be a participant in Schools Attuned. A common concern

expressed (by over 50% of participants) was to involve all or almost all campus and district professional staff members in the program and its training. At the same time, some of these teachers (35%) indicated that they were not interested in attending additional Schools Attuned training. Teachers described the initial training as being improved from past years but still overwhelming in terms of content and vocabulary. Several others noted that the paperwork for identification and planning was too much.

Reducing referrals and placements in special education programs was one incentive that initially motivated Travis Elementary to seek additional information about the Schools Attuned program. Referrals and placements have declined slightly, but the district percentage of students in special education (13.9%) remains above the state average (11.6). Some teachers (40%) did not perceive Project STYLE had helped to reduce these numbers or helped them with referral decisions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Project STYLE is a program that has impacted many teachers and students in almost all of the SSISD campuses during the past four years. Teachers continue to attend the five-day summer training and willingly implement the strategies in their classrooms. Program personnel and materials have supported program implementation. Teachers overwhelmingly believe in the value of the program and its impact for students with learning differences. The following recommendations are offered to support continuation of the Project STYLE program.

1. Maintain current personnel support for the Project STYLE program and expand support positions as the program grows and more students are served.
2. Continue to provide follow-up training at the campus and district level at least twice during the school year. Provide time for staff to complete management plans and to

confer with other district staff about strategies to help learners succeed. Integrate Project STYLE with district and campus improvement plans and staff development initiatives.

3. Conduct discussions with Schools Attuned developers to suggest ways to improve standardized training by sharing district teacher input about vocabulary, information overload, and paperwork as reported in this evaluation.
4. Explore reasons why some teachers (35%) reported a lack of interest in future Schools Attuned training even though they believed in the effectiveness of the program.
5. Consider strategies that could increase perceptions of support by central office and campus administrators of the Project STYLE program. Some of these could include attendance at training, allotted time at staff meetings for sharing, release time for teachers to complete reports and conferences, and reinforcement of student success through various communication channels at the campus and district level.
6. Conduct a more detailed analysis of special education data to determine if above average numbers are justified. Consider strategies to communicate with professional teachers about referrals and the role of the Project STYLE in assisting learners with special needs, particularly in light of NCLB provisions and the revised IDEA implementation guidelines for Texas schools.
7. Recognize and celebrate the efforts of grades PK-6 staff for the continued and significant progress of district students over the past five years. More students are meeting standards each year, including high numbers in identified at-risk subgroups.

8. Conduct a qualitative study to determine the resources, programs, and factors that are contributing to the success in fifth and sixth grade programs. Replicate these efforts as appropriate to other levels.
9. Provide additional remediation for 2005-06 fifth grade students that did not make adequate progress as indicated in the TAKS 2005 fourth grade test analyses.
10. Conduct a qualitative study to determine factors that led to lower than expected TAKS scores in 4th and 8th grades.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Interviews

Focus Group Questioning Interview Protocol
Schools Attuned Program
2004-05

Make participants comfortable. Go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves and tell their professional affiliation ("ice-breaker;" gets them comfortable talking into the tape recorder) Have them number off as they are doing this.

1. Think back to when you first decided to participate in the *Attuned Program*. What did you expect to get out of your participation?

Probe: ... in terms of professional development goals?

Probe: ... in terms of student learning goals?

Probe: ... in terms of discipline issues in the classroom?

2. Please describe for us any "pre-Attuned" training that you attended that were somewhat similar to the Attuned Program.

Probe: ... in what way(s) was that helpful?

Probe: ... what could we do differently or better to make the program more effective in the future?

3. What was the Attuned Training like for you?

- a. Describe the activities - how it went and your role?

- b. What did you like best about it? Least? Why?

- c. Could it be changed or improved in some way?

4. How are you using what you learned from in the training in your classroom? with students? staff?

5. If you are not using the training or applying the concepts: Why or why not?

6. How have your goals changed as a result of your participation in the Attuned program.

- a. in terms of student learning;

- b. in terms of your own professional development;

- c. about discipline challenges?

7. If you could change three things about this program, what would they be? Why/how?
8. If you could keep three things about the *Attuned Program*, what would they be? Why/how?
9. If I had to sum up my experience with the *Attuned Program* in a single word; it would be:
10. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the *Attuned Program* that I haven't asked you about or, that hasn't come up for discussion?

(Thank your for participation, closing comments)

Appendix B: Teacher Questionnaire

Survey for the *Schools Attuned* Program Evaluation Sulphur Springs ISD 2005

The estimated time to complete this important survey is less than 20 minutes.
Please return to: Kristy Johnson, or mail directly to evaluator (address on last page).

Background Information

Thank you in advance for your participation. This survey was developed to solicit inputs regarding *your* perception of the “*Schools Attuned*” approach, under Project STYLE (Students and Teachers Yearning to Learn Effectively) and is designed for those that have participated in the training. Your comments will provide the research team with information regarding the program’s effectiveness. We sincerely appreciate your time and effort in support of this important evaluation initiative. The data developed from this survey will be used to provide decision-makers with information regarding Project STYLE. Results will be reported in collective format. All individual responses will be held in strictest confidentiality.

Demographics

Please mark your answer by circling or filling in the blank:

Your School:

Sulphur Springs Middle
Douglas Intermediate

Your Position:

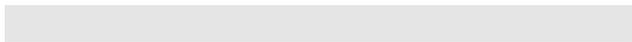
Classroom Teacher
Paraprofessional
Special Educator (CM, Counselor,
ESL, PE, Special Ed, Reading)

Other: _____

Grade Level(s) Taught This Year: 5th 6th 7th 8th Other: _____

Experience with *Schools Attuned* Program This Year Only This Year and Last Year Three Years Other: _____

Total Years Experience in Education: _____



Instructions

For each of the following items, please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement in relationship to the question.

I. Effectiveness of Training

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | I better understand student learning needs after completing the <i>Schools Attuned Training</i> . | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. | The initial <i>Schools Attuned Training</i> was very informative. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. | I am better able to accommodate for all types of learners after receiving training provided by the <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> . | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. | I believe the techniques in the <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> are effective tools in teaching students with different learning needs. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. | If available, I would participate in additional <i>Schools Attuned</i> training. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. | As a result of the program, I feel I have gained additional strategies to assist students in my classroom. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

II. Usefulness of Program

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. | I use the concepts taught in the <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> in my classroom on a consistent basis. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. | Using the <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> has improved my classroom environment for all children. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. | The <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> has helped me reach all students. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. | Students seem more aware of learning difficulties and strengths than before the program. (demystification) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. | This program has helped me accommodate the needs of students with attention control dysfunctions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. | The <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> has helped me accommodate the needs of students with neuromotor dysfunctions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. | The <i>Schools Attuned Program</i> has helped me accommodate the needs of students with memory dysfunctions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

III. Implementation of the Program

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- 14. The *Schools Attuned Program* has made a positive difference in the manner in which I teach children. 4 3 2 1
- 15. I have implemented *Schools Attuned* concepts in the classroom. 4 3 2 1
- 16. My school administration supports my participation in the *Schools Attuned Program*. 4 3 2 1
- 17. The program has been well coordinated within the district. 4 3 2 1
- 18. I believe that fewer children have received a special program “label” as a result of the *Schools Attuned Program*. 4 3 2 1
- 19. The *Schools Attuned Program* has helped me with referral decisions for special education programs. 4 3 2 1
- 20. I believe that the classroom lessons on neurodevelopmental constructs provided by the *Schools Attuned* facilitator are beneficial. 4 3 2 1

IV. Individualization

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- 21. I believe that each child should have the flexibility to learn in his/her own learning style and in his/her own time. 4 3 2 1
- 22. Staff members in our building are encouraged to include students with special learning needs. 4 3 2 1
- 23. I am more willing to include a student with a disability or learning need than most other staff members. 4 3 2 1
- 24. A student with a single disability can succeed in general education classes. 4 3 2 1
- 25. I believe every student, regardless of disability, should have a chance to participate in a general education classroom. 4 3 2 1

Instructions

For each of the following items, please write in your comments.

26. Complete this sentence. I believe that the *Schools Attuned Program* . . .

27. If a new school were to begin this program, what suggestions would you offer?

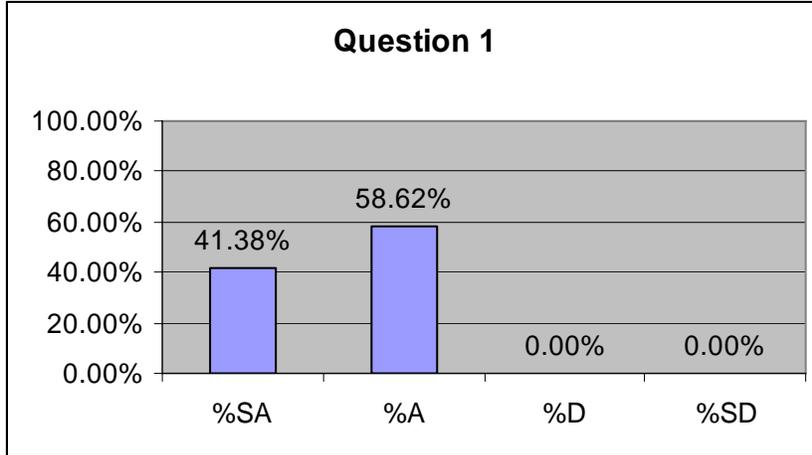
28. How can this program be improved in your school or in your classroom?

Feel free to include additional comments or suggestions on the back of this survey.

Please return to: Kristy Johnson, or mail directly to evaluator at:
Dr. Sherion Jackson Educational Administration, TAMU-Commerce, PO Box 3011, Commerce,
TX 75429-3011.

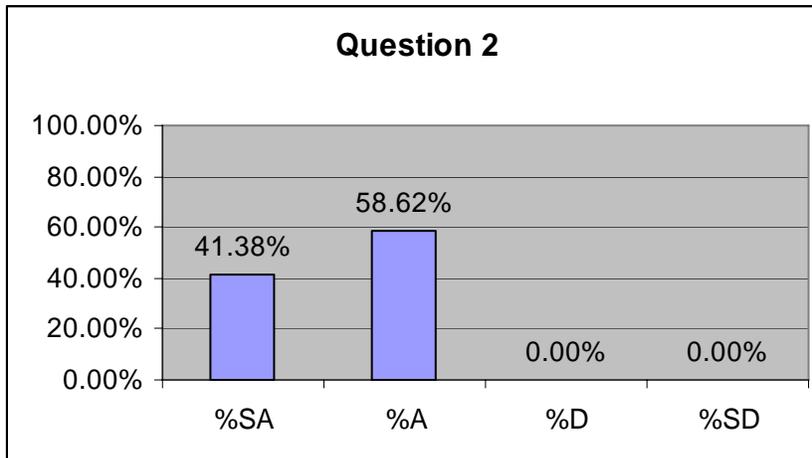
Appendix C: Results of Teacher Questionnaire

1. I better understand student learning needs after completing the Schools Attuned Training.



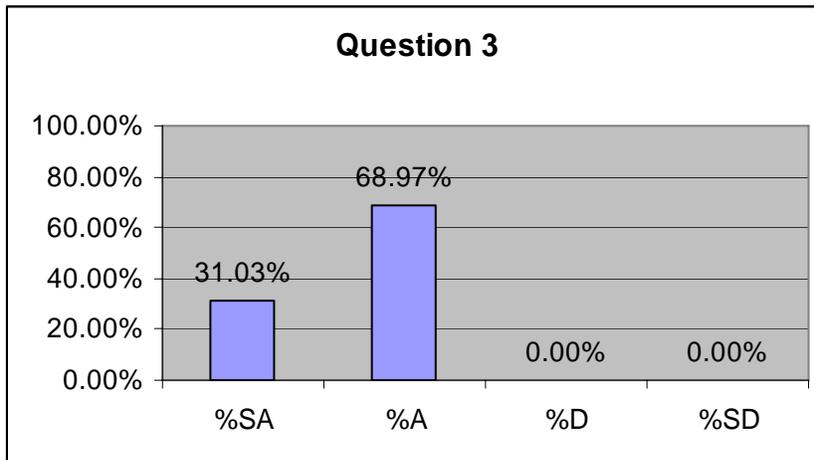
mean=3.414 standard deviation= 0.501

2. The initial Schools Attuned Training was very informative.



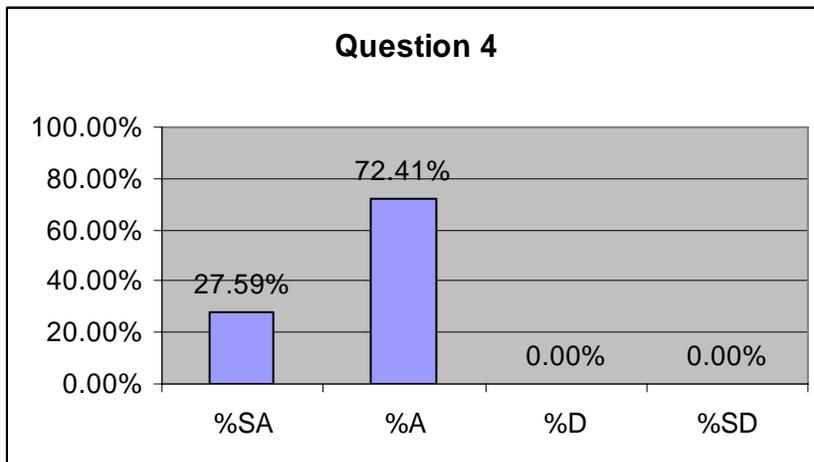
mean= 3.414 standard deviation= 0.501

3. I am better able to accommodate for all types of learners after receiving training provided by the Schools Attuned Program.



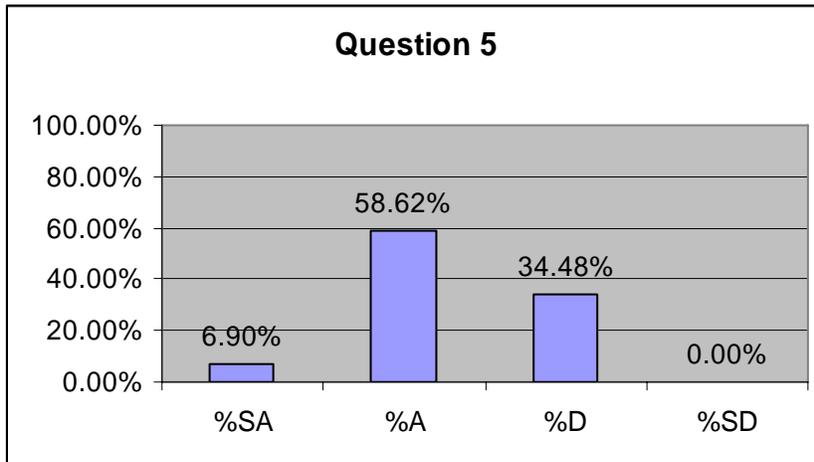
mean= 3.31 standard deviation= 0.471

4. I believe the techniques in the Schools Attuned Program are effective tools in teaching students with different learning needs.



mean= 3.276 standard deviation= 0.455

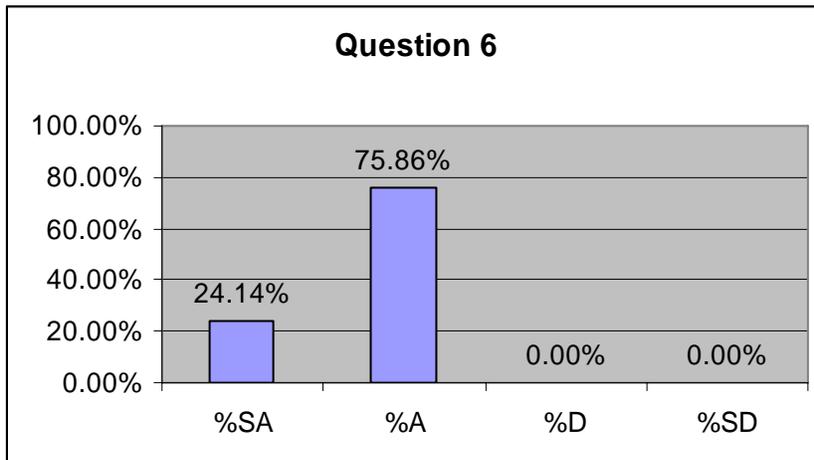
5. If available, I would participate in additional Schools Attuned training.



mean= 2.724

standard deviation= 0.591

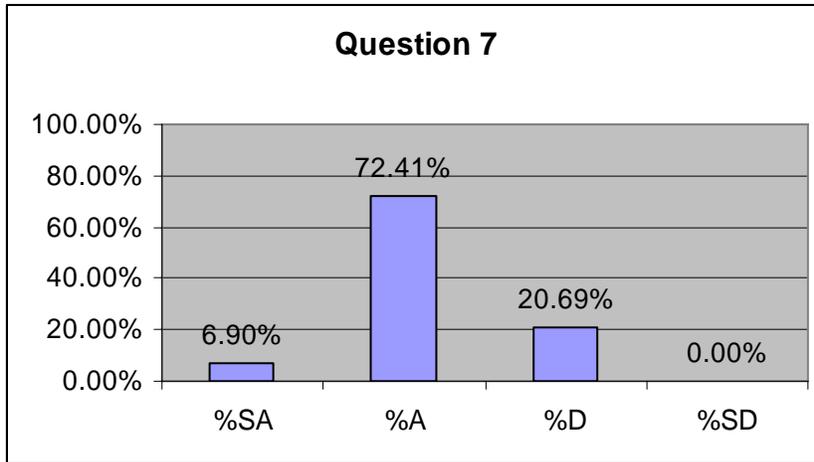
6. As a result of the program, I feel I have gained additional strategies to assist students in my classroom.



mean= 3.241

standard deviation= 0.435

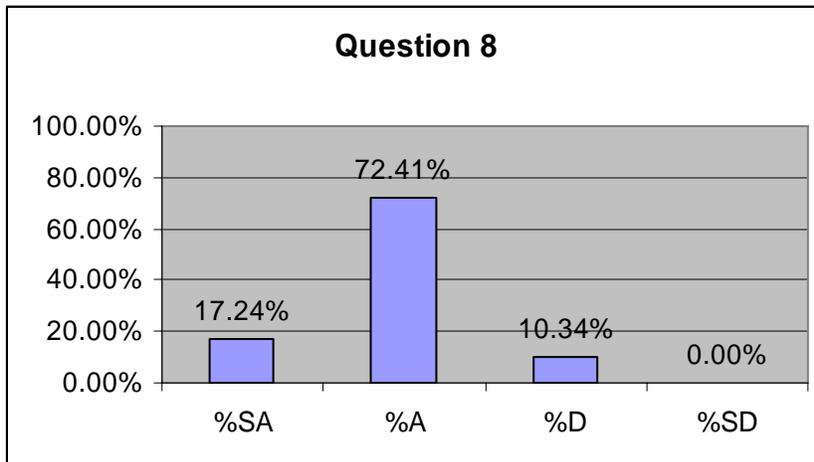
7. I use the concepts taught in the Schools Attuned Program in my classroom on a consistent basis.



mean= 2.862

standard deviation= 0.516

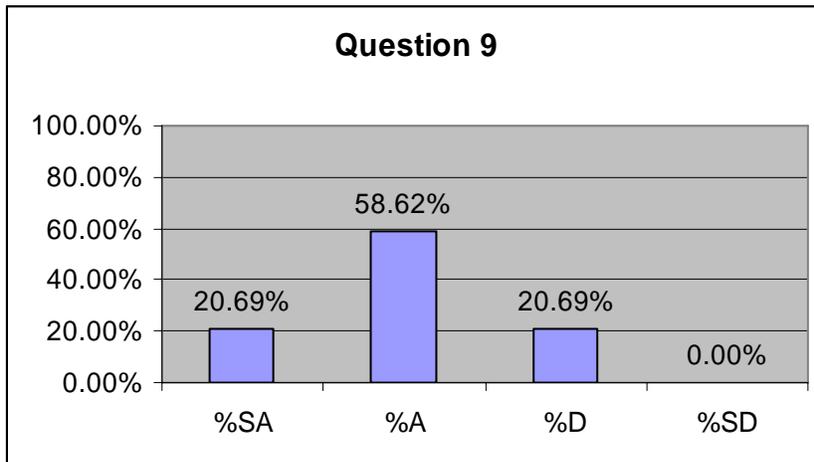
8. Using the Schools Attuned Program has improved my classroom environment for all children.



mean= 3.069

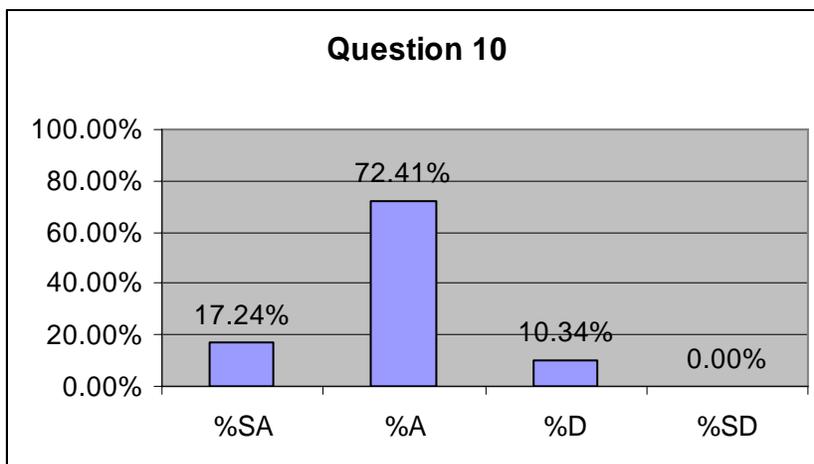
standard deviation= 0.53

9. The Schools Attuned Program has helped me reach all students.



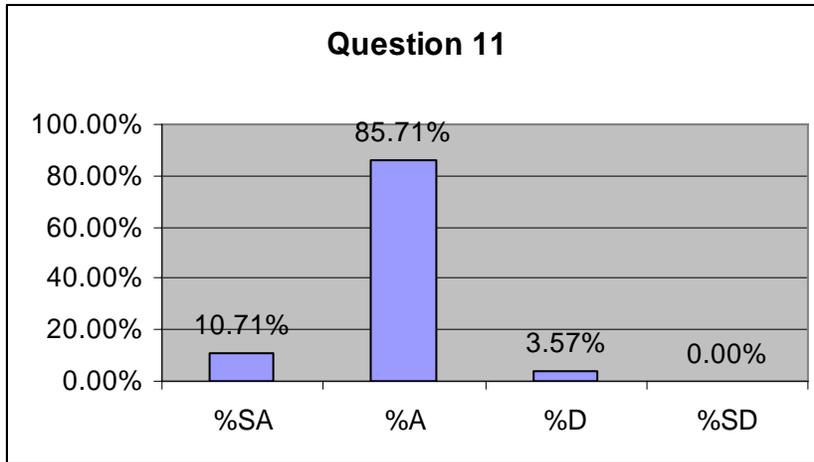
mean= 3 standard deviation= 0.655

10. Students seem more aware of learning difficulties and strengths than before the program. (demystification)



mean= 3.069 standard deviation= 0.53

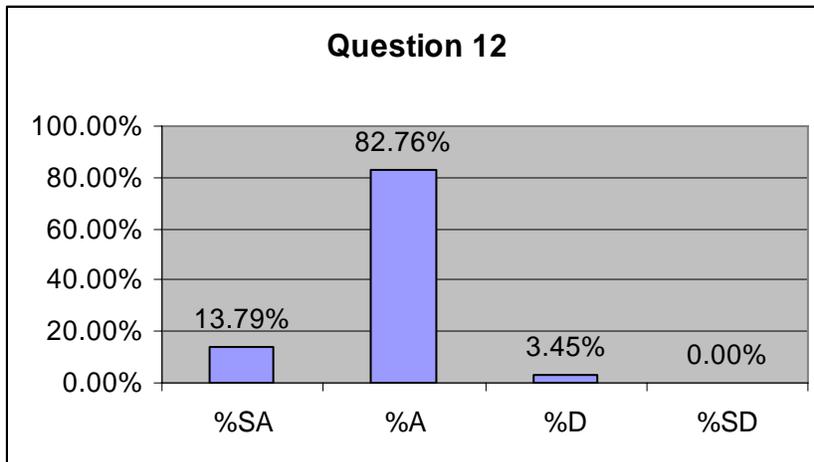
11. This program has helped me accommodate the needs of students with attention control dysfunctions.



mean= 2.966

standard deviation= 0.68

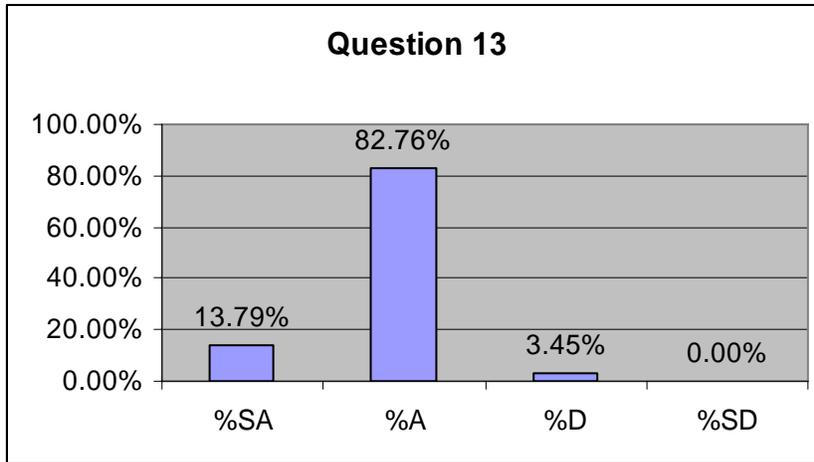
12. The Schools Attuned Program has helped me accommodate the needs of students with neuromotor dysfunctions.



mean= 3.103

standard deviation= 0.409

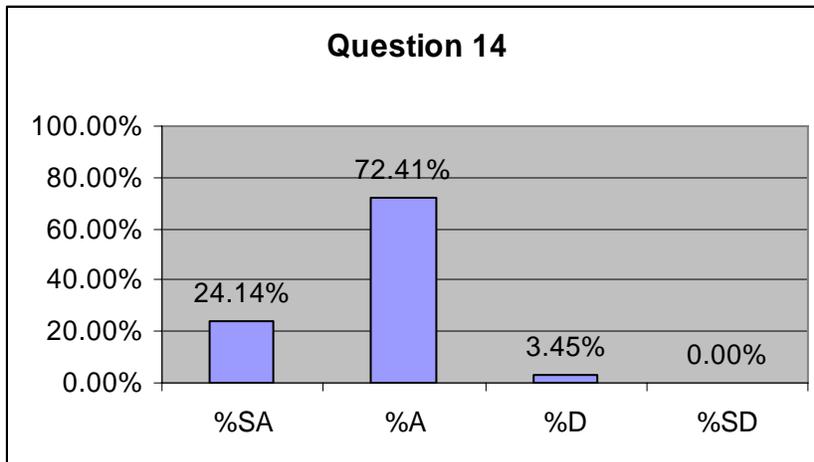
13. The Schools Attuned Program has helped me accommodate the needs of students with memory dysfunctions.



mean= 3.103

standard deviation= 0.409

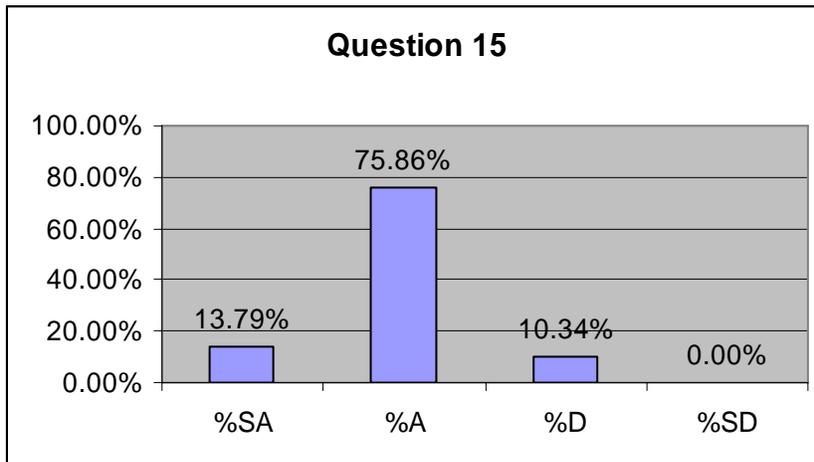
14. The Schools Attuned Program has made a positive difference in the manner in which I teach children.



mean= 3.207

standard deviation= 0.491

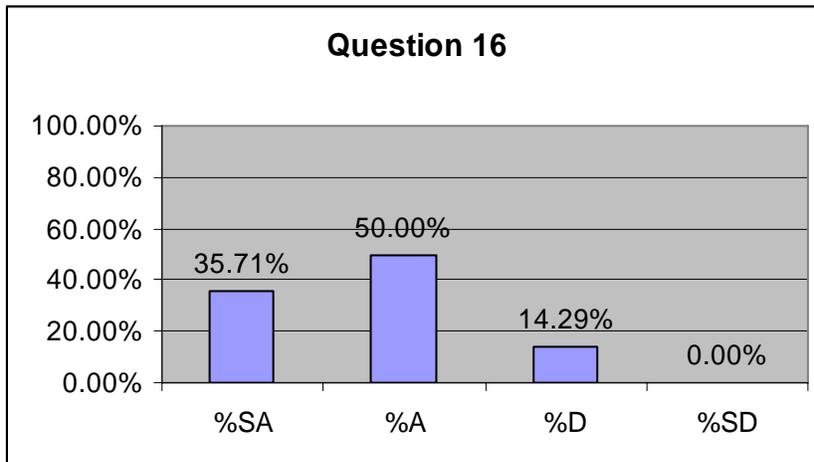
15. I have implemented Schools Attuned concepts in the classroom.



mean= 3.034

standard deviation= 0.499

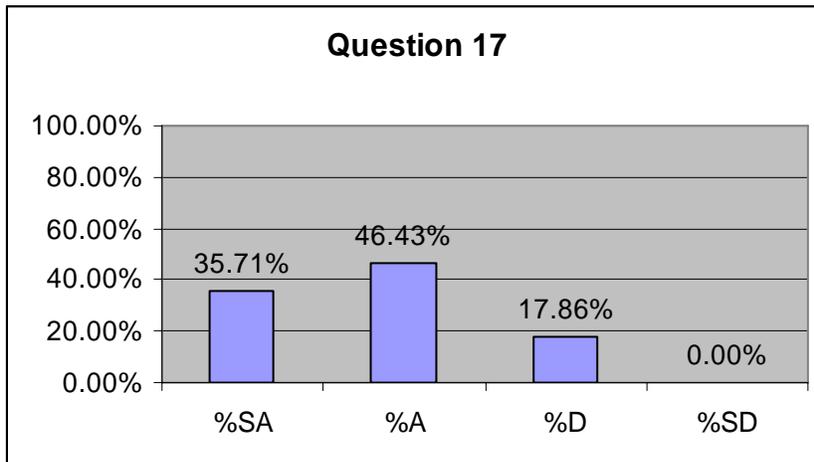
16. My school administration supports my participation in the Schools Attuned Program.



mean= 3.103

standard deviation= 0.9

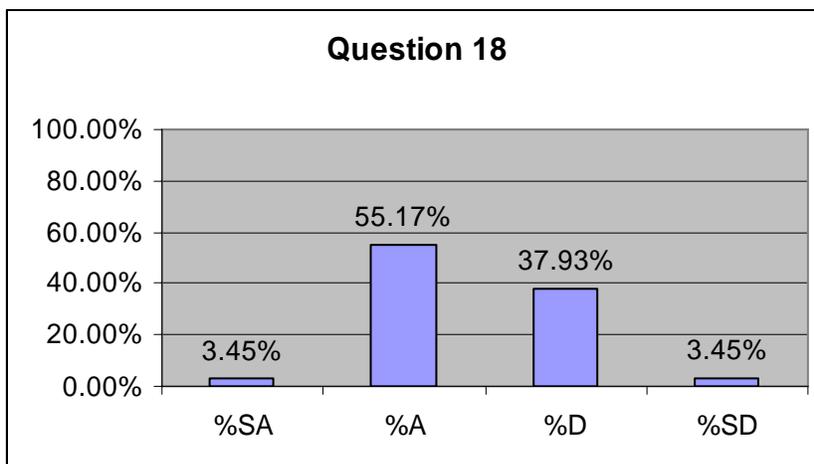
17. The program has been well coordinated within the district.



mean= 3.069

standard deviation= 0.923

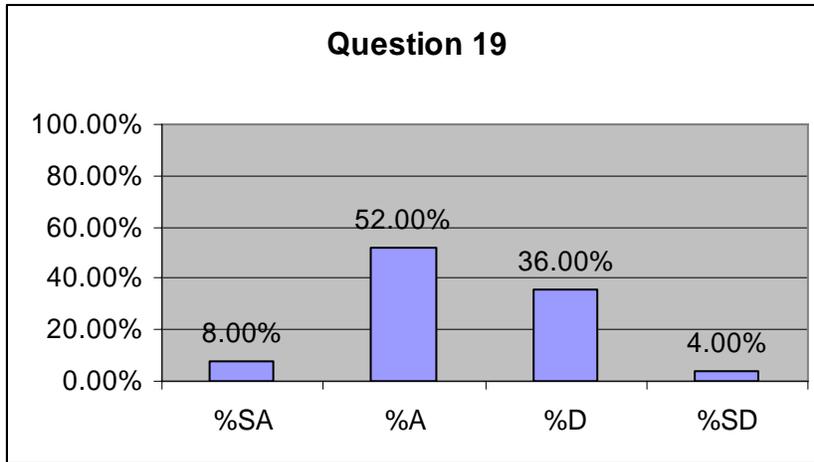
18. I believe that fewer children have received a special program "label" as a result of the Schools Attuned Program.



mean= 2.586

standard deviation= 0.628

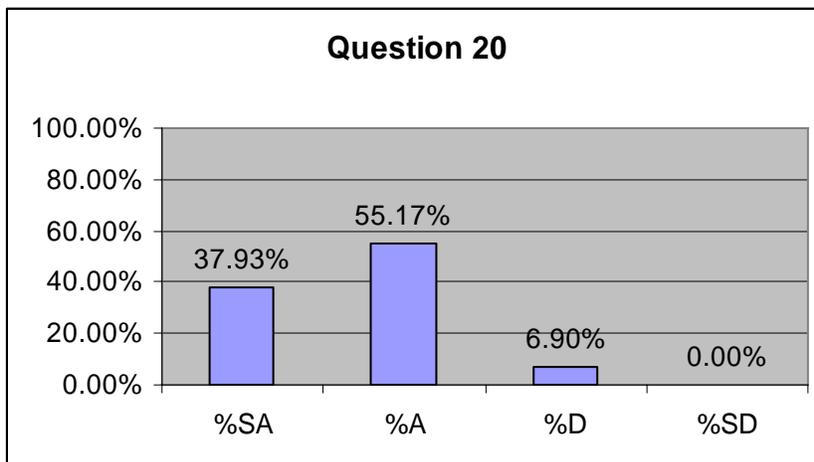
19. The Schools Attuned Program has helped me with referral decisions for special education programs.



mean= 2.276

standard deviation= 1.131

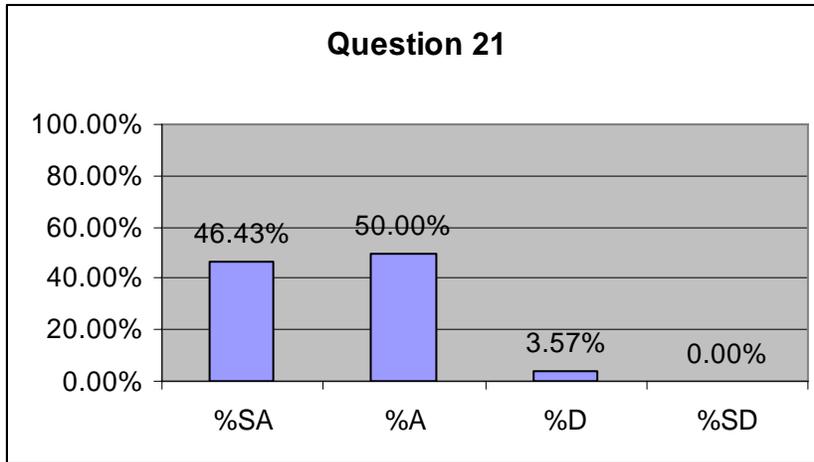
20. I believe that the classroom lessons on neurodevelopmental constructs provided by the Schools Attuned facilitator are beneficial.



mean= 3.31

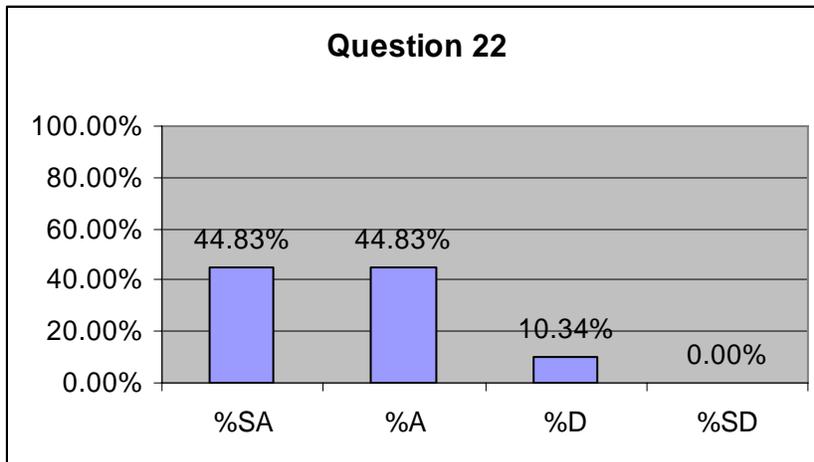
standard deviation= 0.604

21. I believe that each child should have the flexibility to learn in his/her own learning style and in his/her own time.



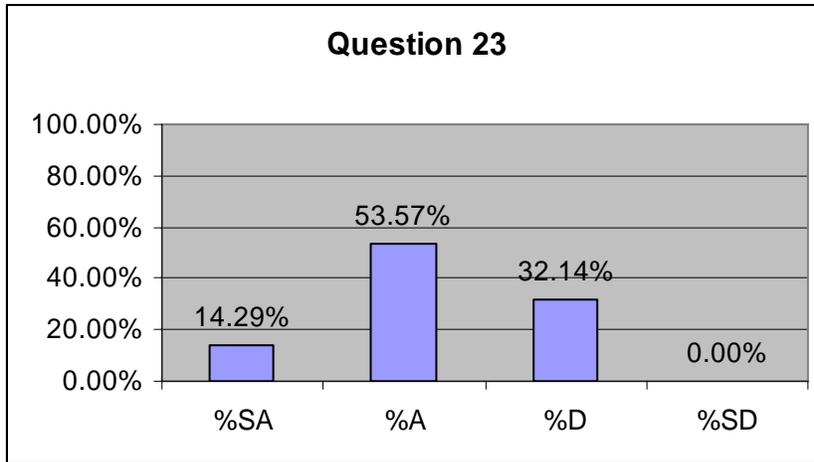
mean= 3.31 standard deviation= 0.85

22. Staff members in our building are encouraged to include students with special learning needs.



mean= 3.345 standard deviation= 0.67

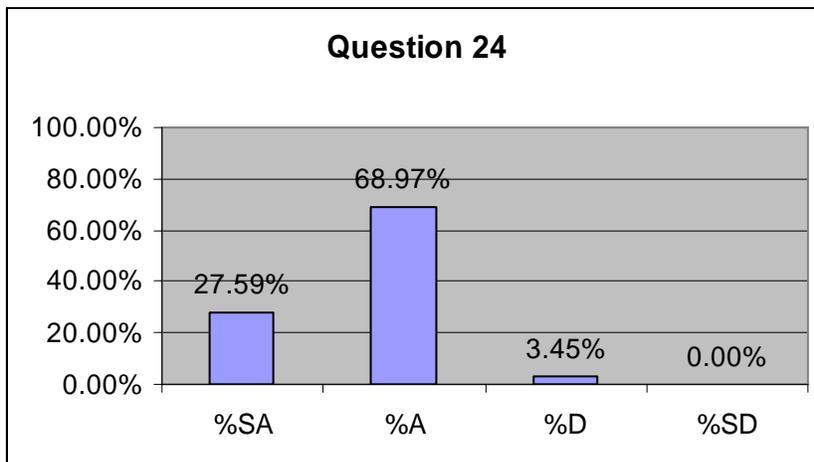
23. I am more willing to include a student with a disability or learning need than most other staff members.



mean= 2.724

standard deviation= 0.841

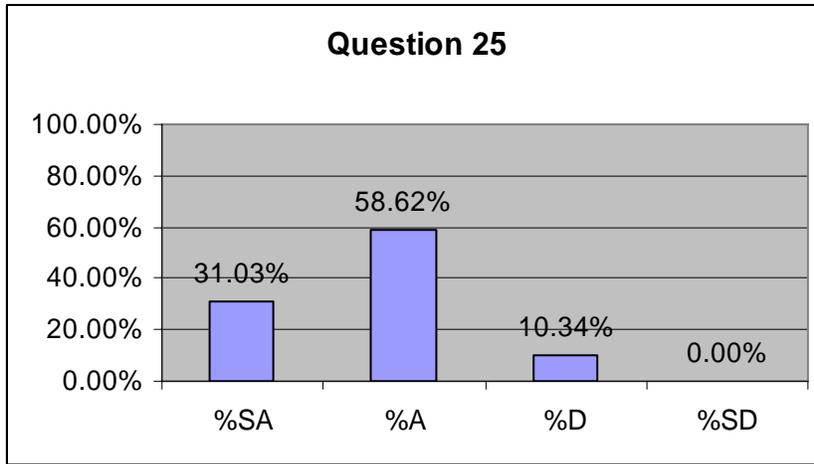
24. A student with a single disability can succeed in general education classes.



mean= 3.241

standard deviation= 0.511

25. I believe every student, regardless of disability, should have a chance to participate in a general education classroom.



mean= 3.207

standard deviation= 0.62