

**Guidelines for Implementing the  
Teaching Enrichment Activities to Minorities (TEAM) Program  
2013-2014**

*Program Design*

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) developed and piloted the Teaching Enrichment Activities to Minorities (TEAM) program in 1984. This program was designed to provide instruction in higher-order thinking skills to students in a self-contained elementary school classroom setting. The program is aimed at improving the learning and thinking skills of children and assisting them in becoming more successful in school. The goal of the TEAM program is to develop student's thinking skills, link critical thinking skills to all subject areas, and prepare students for possible placement into gifted and advanced program. The TEAM program aims to develop students' critical and creative thinking skills and develop strategies capable of revealing hidden talents in diverse students.

*Student Participation*

During the 1984-1985 school year, four predominantly minority populated elementary schools piloted a TEAM class. Currently, the TEAM program is implemented in approximately 100 predominantly minority populated schools with large numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and limited English proficient students. Schools are selected to implement the TEAM program by the Regional Center Superintendents and the Administrative Directors for Curriculum at the Regional Centers. The criteria for student selection for the TEAM program includes a student's leadership, motivation, creativity, and an eagerness to learn as described in the *TEAM Program Student Selection Checklist* (FM 6979). Students who participate in the TEAM program are not required to have a particular achievement test score or grade point average, although students must demonstrate an ability and potential to work through a more challenging and rigorous curriculum.

*Program Implementation*

The TEAM program is designed to be implemented in one homeroom classroom in grades two through four, although some school site administrators and teachers have adapted the program to implement with first and fifth grade students. The TEAM program is an intervention strategy designed to give students an educational environment conducive to the development of the skills necessary for a successful academic experience. Additionally, children who are eligible for the gifted program do not participate in the TEAM program, since these students are already receiving services for advanced learners. Principals selecting to implement a TEAM program at their school must complete the *TEAM Program Implementation Survey* (FM 6600) identifying the grade levels and teachers that will be assigned to teach a TEAM class.

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*Grouping of Students in TEAM*

The grouping in a TEAM class provides both academic and social benefits to the students involved. Although the teacher to student ratio is the same as a general education classroom, the classroom environment stimulates interaction with other students. TEAM grouping patterns allow for increased student participation and for a greater emphasis on critical thinking, creative thinking, and vocabulary enrichment. The TEAM class grouping encourages the development of students' self-esteem because the expectation for achievement is higher.

*Curriculum and Instruction*

The TEAM teacher is responsible for teaching and linking the curriculum content to the development of thinking skills. Emphasis is placed upon the understanding and effective use of four analytical skills: similarities and differences, sequencing, classification, and analogies. These skills are practiced daily through the use of the *Building Thinking Skills* books (Parks & Black, 2006), enrichment activities, and questioning strategies.

The *Building Thinking Skills* books provide highly effective verbal and nonverbal reasoning activities to improve students' vocabulary, reading, writing, mathematics, logic, and figural-spatial skills as well as their visual and auditory processing. The activities are sequenced developmentally and are designed to be delivered as a series of separate lessons within the general curriculum. Each skill is presented first in the concrete figural-spatial form and then in the abstract verbal form. The lessons broadly follow Piaget's cognitive developmental theory by introducing concepts and skills through the use of manipulatives and paper and pencil pre-operational activities and then transitioning students to activities involving abstract thought, such as verbal reasoning and discussion. Students learn to analyze relationships between objects, between words, and between objects and words. Through the lessons in the *Building Thinking Skills* books, students learn to observe, recognize, and describe characteristics, distinguish similarities and differences, and identify and complete sequences, classifications, and analogies. These processes help students develop superior thinking and communication skills that lead to deeper content learning in all subjects.

The teacher's guide that accompanies the *Building Thinking Skills* student books includes the overall program objectives along with specific objectives and answers for each activity. The teacher's edition also provides lesson plan activities and ideas to integrate the skills in the *Building Thinking Skills* book with all subject areas. An important part of the TEAM program is encouraging students to discuss their thinking as they work through concepts. The teacher's guide of the *Building Thinking Skills* book also includes focus questions to support student discussion and to reinforce each of the

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thinking skills. This skill set provides a solid foundation for academic excellence and success in all subject areas.

*Classroom Environment*

The TEAM classroom should be an active learning environment. The teacher's role is one of an instructor as well as a facilitator of independent or small group inquiry. Resource libraries and activity centers are developed within the TEAM classroom. These centers are organized to encourage independent and small group activities with experiments, math manipulatives, creative writing, expository writing, and open-ended research.

*Professional Development*

The training for TEAM teachers includes professional development provided by Advanced Academic Programs. During the initial training, teachers discuss how to implement a classroom environment focused on thinking skills and how to integrate the *Building Thinking Skills* books within their daily instruction. Teachers learn how to set up learning centers in their classrooms, how to differentiate curriculum to meet the needs of students, and how to incorporate critical thinking and creative thinking in their teaching. Additionally, teachers are instructed in strategies for identifying gifted students, how to recognize giftedness in diverse students, and the process for referral and criteria for eligibility into the gifted program. At the end of the program year, TEAM teachers will be asked to complete the *TEAM Gifted Program Referral* form (FM 7095) identifying TEAM students that have been referred for gifted.

Teachers receive class sets of supplementary material for their TEAM classroom including the *Building Thinking Skills* books and teacher's guide, manipulatives for mathematics instruction, reading resources, and several books on a variety of topics including curriculum differentiation, assessment, and thinking skills instruction. During follow-up workshops teachers share activities that they have implemented with the TEAM classes, develop lessons, and provide feedback to one another. The opportunity for follow-up and classroom visits conducted by district staff from the Division of Academic Support, Advanced Academic Programs creates a support network for TEAM teachers and ensures fidelity to the program's goals.

*Program Evaluation*

In 2005-2006, the Division of Advanced Academic Programs of the M-DCPS requested that the TEAM be evaluated by the Office of Program Evaluation for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. As part of the evaluation, the median 2004 FCAT-NRT scores of TEAM students in grades 2 through 5 as well as the percentage of students scoring at Level 3 or above on the 2004 FCAT-SSS were calculated for grades 3 through 5.

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Also, the ethnic ratio compositions of students participating in TEAM during the 2003-04 school year were calculated. Finally, a random sample of 72 TEAM teachers completed surveys.

The evaluation questions posed and the corresponding results are the following:

*Evaluation Question #1: What is the academic standing of students who participate in the TEAM?*

A comparison of the results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) indicates that TEAM students have higher academic achievement scores than District students at comparable grade levels. The findings are true when considering either 2004 FCAT-NRT or 2004 FCAT-SSS scores.

*Evaluation Question #2: Do students in the TEAM program reflect the ethnic makeup of students in the District?*

The ethnic make-up of elementary students enrolled in the TEAM is similar to that of all elementary students in the District. Compared to the District, Blacks are slightly over-represented while Hispanics and Whites are slightly under-represented.

*Evaluation Question #3: Are the TEAM in-service training sessions preparing teachers to effectively implement the program?*

Survey results revealed that the overwhelming majority of teachers who attended TEAM training seminars in 2004 received instruction in applying curriculum strategies. Teachers reported that they found the curriculum strategies useful and, for the most part, applied them successfully in the classrooms.

These outcomes are reassuring. However, with regard to the comparison of FCAT scores it should be noted that TEAM students are selected because they show academic promise. Accordingly, these students may have comparatively high FCAT scores prior to enrolling in the TEAM.

*Conclusion*

Based on the success of the TEAM program and its positive impact on student's academic achievement and identification of underrepresented students for gifted and advanced programs, Miami-Dade County Public Schools continues to recognize the TEAM program as a District Priority Program (DPP).