

Somerset ISD Students Outperform Their Peers

Long before the pandemic, Somerset ISD in Texas made a commitment to district-wide innovation and improvement that focused on the development of teacher leaders. Somerset serves about 4,100 students, 90% of whom are Hispanic and 82% of whom are economically disadvantaged. At one point, the district was labeled in need of improvement by the state. Somerset initiated a partnership with NIET in 2010 to improve the district's support for teachers and high-quality instruction as its key lever to improve student outcomes.

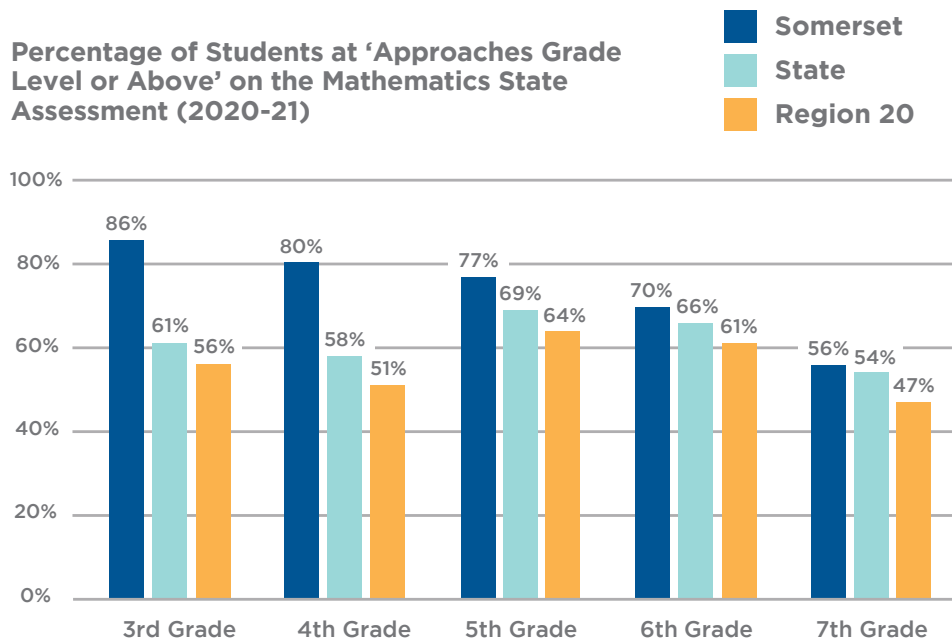
What worked for Somerset was a system focused on support for effective classroom teaching and increased student academic achievement growth for the highest-need students. The approach included new teacher leadership roles, as part of the school leadership team; school-based professional learning delivered by teacher leaders; support for principals to create distributed leadership teams; and strengthening the teacher pipeline to ensure that new teachers have the knowledge and skills to be effective on day one.

Somerset's focus on educator excellence and student progress was celebrated in November 2020 when the district was awarded the NIET Award of Excellence for Educator Effectiveness and \$50,000. The award acknowledges Somerset's broader, long-standing commitment to innovation, and it specifically highlights the district's efforts to help teachers stay and thrive in the classroom, effectively prepare new teachers, and make steady increases in student proficiency. By building a system that supports every teacher and school leader to continue to

Somerset Independent School District (TX)

outperformed the state and their region on the mathematics state assessment (2020-21)

Percentage of Students at 'Approaches Grade Level or Above' on the Mathematics State Assessment (2020-21)



Source: Somerset ISD, 2021



learn and improve, Somerset is better supporting students to excel.

This spring, they put an exclamation point on their efforts. On the 2021 state exams, Somerset outperformed the state and their region on the math state assessment across grade levels,

becoming one of the few districts in the state to show growth this spring. For example, 86% of third grade students in Somerset were performing at "Approaches Grade Level or Above" in math, compared to 61% statewide. Somerset also outperformed the state and their region in several other subjects and grade levels.

As districts deepen their focus on pandemic learning recovery, those that continue to keep high-quality instruction at the forefront — like Somerset — are positioned to accelerate student learning growth. Somerset's students and teachers have shown that creating systems that allow for teacher leadership and collaborative instructional leadership is a pathway to achieving success, no matter the challenges.