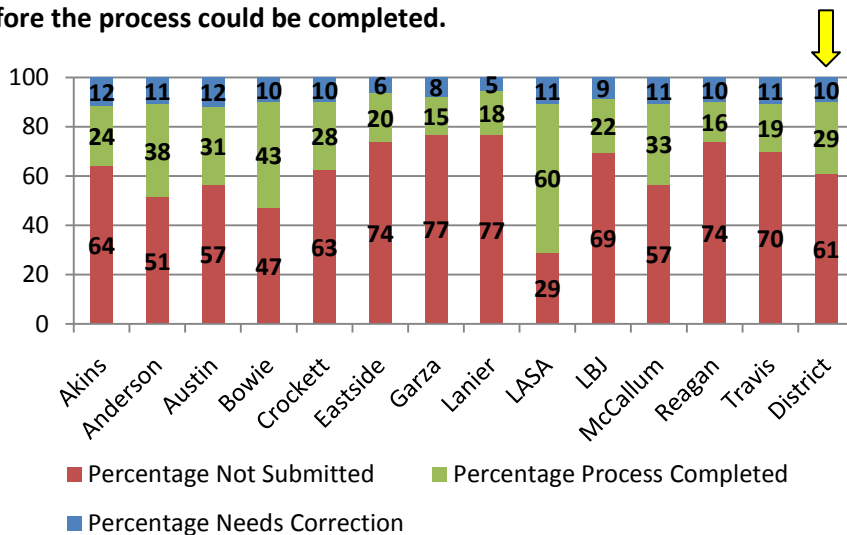




**What is the FAFSA?** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is an application that can be filled out annually by current and anticipating college students to determine their eligibility for federal student financial aid and to defray the personal costs of enrolling in postsecondary education.

**Why is the FAFSA important?** The accurate completion and early submission of the FAFSA is important to entering and completing postsecondary education, especially for economically disadvantaged students. A 2008 report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) found that students who completed the FAFSA were 50% more likely to enroll in a 4-year college than were those who had not. Similarly, an evaluation of a program initiated by H & R Block found that helping families to complete and submit the FAFSA increased postsecondary enrollment by students by 29% (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu, 2009).

**What percentage of AISD's 2010 seniors completed the FAFSA process?** Thirty-nine percent ( $n = 1,818$ ) of AISD seniors submitted a FAFSA. Twenty-nine percent of the 2010 seniors completed the FAFSA process, and 10% of the students had an application needing correction before the process could be completed.



LASA, Bowie, and Anderson High Schools had the highest percentages of students completing the FAFSA. Garza, Reagan, Eastside, and Lanier High Schools had the lowest percentages of students completing the FAFSA. The FAFSA application process is considered complete when a Student Aid Report (SAR) is generated with the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is subtracted from the school's Cost of Attendance (COA) to determine the student's financial need. The school will try to meet the need through a financial aid "package" that combines aid from federal, state, school, and private sources with loans and student employment income.

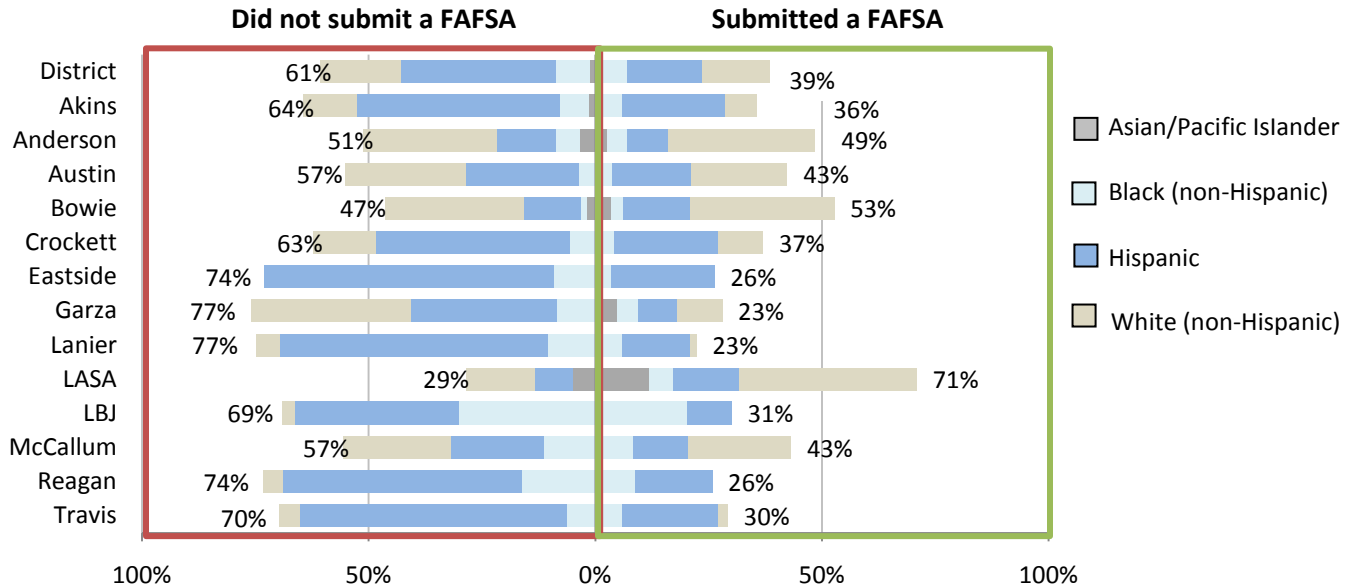
**About the FAFSA Pilot Project.**

Austin Independent School District (AISD) was one of 20 school districts selected by the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) to receive access to its student FAFSA completion data. The student-level data set includes a FAFSA submission date; a process completion date (indicating that a SAR was generated, and an EFC was calculated); and an indicator showing whether errors need to be corrected before federal aid can be accessed. Staff will use this information to assist students in accessing federal financial aid for postsecondary education.

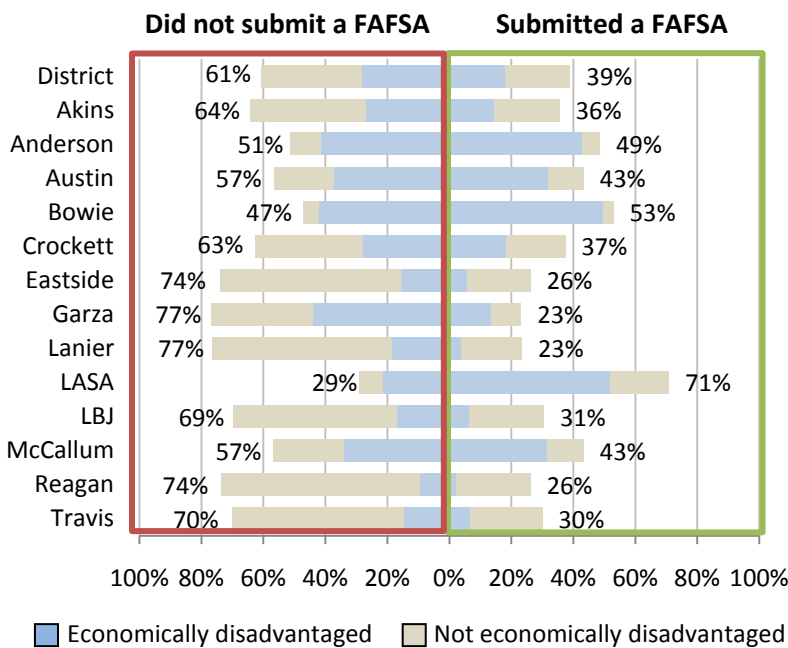
**Understanding the data.** The district is enrolled in FSA's access and security system and follows strict security guidelines that are consistent with the expectations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Student directory information is used to access FAFSA submission status information and includes student's name, date of birth, and zip code. The data only include information for students whose parents have given permission to disclose directory information. These records are matched with FAFSA applications, which are submitted electronically by students to the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid. The information is returned to the district to be summarized and used programmatically.



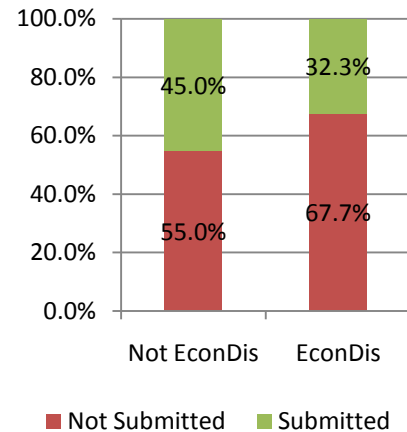
**Did FAFSA submissions differ across student ethnicity groups?** Higher percentages of White students, compared with students of other ethnic groups, completed the FAFSA, and Hispanic students had the lowest FAFSA completion rates.



**Did students with economic need submit a FAFSA application?** Generally, lower percentages of students who were economically disadvantaged, compared with students who were not economically disadvantaged, submitted an application. Anderson, Austin, Bowie, Garza, and LASA High Schools were exceptions to this finding because relatively greater percentages of economically disadvantaged students submitted FAFSA applications on these campuses.

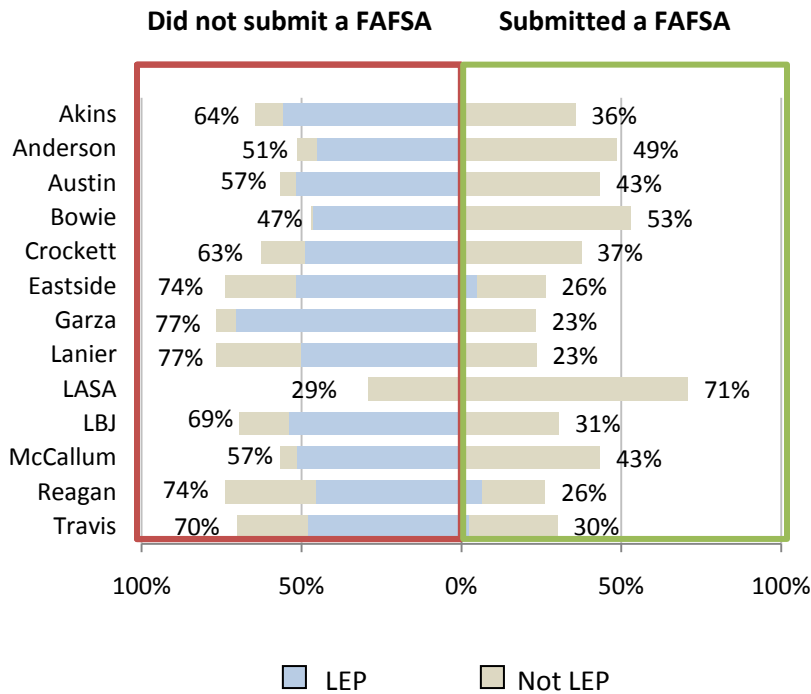


District-level percentages of FAFSA submissions, by economic disadvantage status





**Did FAFSA submissions differ across student limited English proficiency (LEP) status? Few LEP students completed a FAFSA.**



Of seniors who were categorized as LEP, 51% did not have a social security number (SSN) reported in AISD student records. Students without a SSN are not eligible for federal financial aid; however, they may apply for state financial aid if they meet state residency requirements articulated under House Bill 1403/Senate Bill 1528. These students may complete the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA). However, the district did not have access to these data at the time of this report and could not determine how many students may take advantage of the state aid.

**How will AISD use student FAFSA data?**

1. Program support: Using FAFSA Pilot Project data, district staff will provide targeted assistance for students to successfully complete the FAFSA and for student access to financial aid.
2. Program evaluation: The district provides multiple programs to assist students to complete the FAFSA. FAFSA data will be used to determine the effectiveness of program efforts and to help staff make decisions for improvement.
3. District research: In 2008, the Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) replicated a CCSR research study pertaining to the determinants of postsecondary enrollment (Garland, 2008). DPE will continue this study to confirm whether FAFSA submission is a determinant of postsecondary enrollment and to identify which student characteristics FAFSA appears to be most likely to help.

**References**

Bettinger, E. Long, B., Oreopoulos, P, & Sanbonmatsu, S. (2009). *The Role of simplification and information in college decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA experiment*. Retrieved from [http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~longbr/Bettinger\\_Long\\_Oreopoulos\\_Sanbonmatsu\\_FAFSA\\_experiment\\_9-09.pdf](http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~longbr/Bettinger_Long_Oreopoulos_Sanbonmatsu_FAFSA_experiment_9-09.pdf)

Garland, M. (2008). *The determinants of postsecondary enrollment: Evidence from the AISD Class of 2007*. Retrieved from [http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope\\_ps\\_enrollment.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_ps_enrollment.pdf)