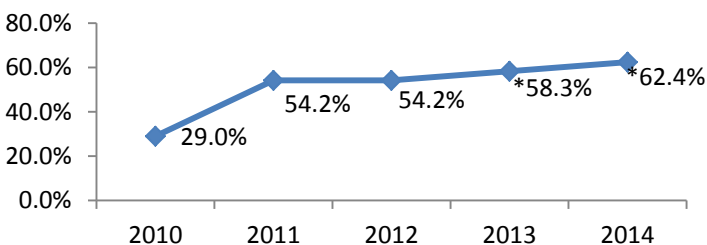


**What is the FAFSA?** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is an application that can be completed annually by current and anticipating college students and their parents to determine their eligibility for federal student financial aid and to defray the personal costs of enrolling in postsecondary education. The office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) offers financial aid in the forms of federal grants, loans, and work-study funds. Aid is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

**What is the TASFA?** In 2001, the state of Texas passed [legislation](#) (HB 1403) to permit immigrant students to qualify as state of Texas residents. As a Texas resident, a student may complete the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) and qualify to pay in-state tuition and fee rates and state financial aid while in college (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).

**What percentage of AISD's seniors completed the FAFSA in 2014?** Sixty-two percent of seniors submitted a FAFSA (Figure 1), and 60% completed the application process in 2014 (Table 1. Submissions increased significantly from 2012 to 2013 and from 2013 to 2014. Considering additional TASFA submissions, 64% of seniors submitted an application for financial aid (Table 1). The FAFSA completion rate of AISD seniors (60%) exceeded that of seniors in Central Texas: the Austin Chamber of Commerce (2014) estimated that 58% of seniors area wide submitted the FAFSA in 2014.

**Figure 1. AISD senior FAFSA submission rates increased in most years, 2010 through 2014.**



Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014. \*  $p < .05$



FAFSA<sup>SM</sup>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

### Student Financial Aid Data

In 2014, Austin Independent School District (AISD) accessed its student FAFSA completion data through the federal FAFSA Pilot Project and through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Following strict security guidelines consistent with the expectations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), AISD staff submitted students' directory information (e.g., name, date of birth, zip code) to FSA to access students' FAFSA submission and completion status information. THECB provided FAFSA completion data back to the district via the Apply Texas Counselors' Suite, based on the high school of enrollment indicated by the student. Completion data from FSA and THECB were merged to build a more complete set of results.

Some school staff also assisted students to complete the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA). In this process, school staff collected documentation of TASFA submission to be included in the overall summary of the number of students submitting financial aid applications.

## 2014 Senior FAFSA Submission Summary

**Table 1. AISD senior FAFSA submission rates increased from 2010 to 2014.**

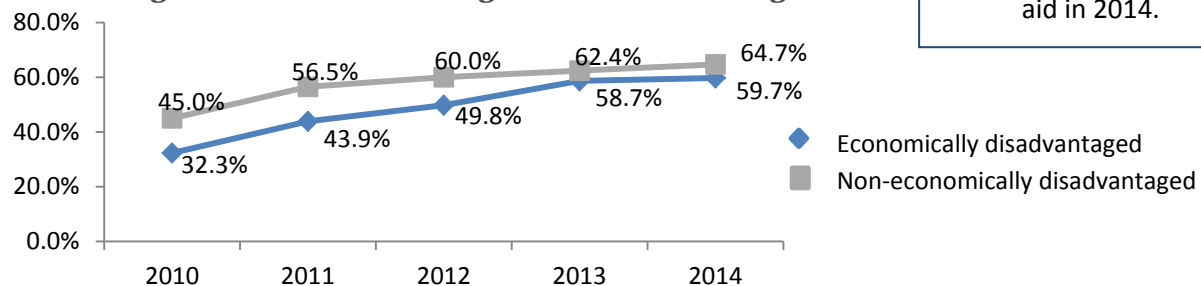
	2010 FAFSA (n = 4,648)	2011 FAFSA (n = 4,453)	2012 FAFSA (n = 4,444)	2013 FAFSA (n = 4,350)	2013 FAFSA/TASFA (n = 4,350)	2014 FAFSA (n = 4,163)	2014 FAFSA/TASFA (n = 4,163)
Akins	24.1%	50.3%	46.0%	62.0%	64.2%	68.4%	69.3%
Anderson	37.7%	56.8%	60.9%	60.8%	60.8%	64.2%	65.6%
Austin	31.2%	53.1%	50.3%	51.6%	51.6%	63.6%	63.7%
Bowie	43.1%	63.0%	61.9%	55.2%	55.2%	57.2%	57.2%
Crockett	27.5%	58.4%	55.9%	57.2%	58.7%	63.5%	66.5%
Eastside	19.9%	37.8%	38.4%	67.6%	67.6%	78.5%	78.5%
Garza	15.2%	25.3%	29.5%	68.6%	68.6%	70.9%	70.9%
Lanier	18.0%	38.9%	46.5%	42.9%	54.3%	49.1%	61.7%
LASA	60.1%	52.7%	73.3%	81.3%	81.3%	73.4%	74.9%
LBJ	21.6%	84.6%	63.6%	58.2%	58.2%	57.4%	57.4%
McCallum	32.5%	69.5%	63.3%	61.4%	62.7%	67.7%	67.7%
Premier at Lanier	-	-	-	-	-	15.6%	15.6%
Premier at Travis	-	-	-	-	-	17.9%	17.9%
Reagan	16.2%	45.0%	39.0%	42.1%	42.1%	52.4%	52.4%
Richards	-	-	-	84.6%	84.6%	96.2%	100.0%
Travis	19.0%	48.5%	56.9%	59.1%	72.3%	62.3%	62.3%
District Total	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>54.2%</b>	<b>54.2%</b>	<b>*58.3%</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>*62.4%</b>	<b>64.0%</b>

Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014, and Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) documentation provided by campus staff, prepared by AISD Department of Research and Evaluation staff \* $p < .05$

### Did students with economic need submit a FAFSA application?

Sixty percent of AISD economically disadvantaged students submitted the FAFSA in 2014, and their submission rate has increased markedly since 2010 (Figure 2). In 2014, the gap in the FAFSA submission rates between economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in AISD was not statistically significant.

**Figure 2. The FAFSA submissions gap between economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is closing.**



Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014  
\*  $p < .05$

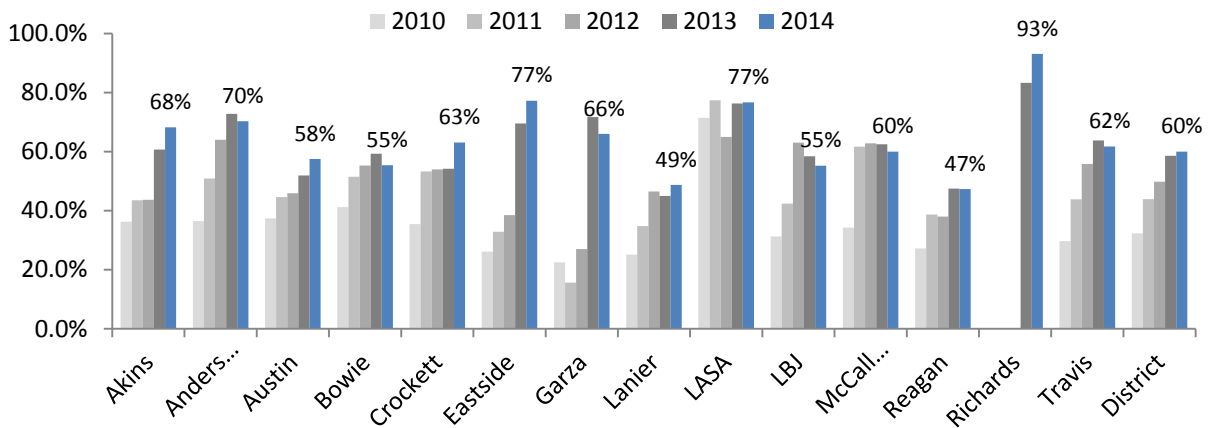
64%

of AISD high school seniors submitted a FAFSA or TASFA application for financial aid in 2014.

**Did FAFSA submissions by students with economic need vary according to campus?**

Although FAFSA submission rates for economically disadvantaged students continued to vary by school in 2014, submission rates for economically disadvantaged students were at an all-time high in most schools (Figure 3). This result is especially encouraging because Daun-Barnett and Mabry (2012) found low-income parents were often hesitant to provide personal information online. Additionally, low-income families, who were often first-generation college goers and members of minority populations, were less likely than were higher-income families to participate in financial aid application events.

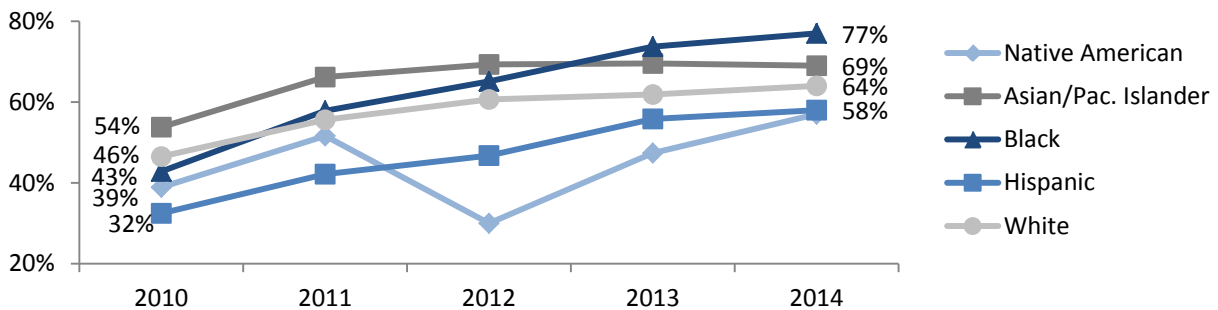
**Figure 3. FAFSA submissions by economically disadvantaged students increased significantly at all district high schools since 2010.**



Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014  
 \*  $p < .05$

**Did FAFSA submissions differ between student ethnicity groups?** Black and Hispanic students have had the greatest increases in FAFSA submissions since 2010. Although submission rates have increased over the years, they varied between ethnicity groups in 2014. The lower percentage of Hispanic seniors than of seniors in other ethnic groups submitting a FAFSA in 2014 was consistent with the results from the High School Senior Exit Survey (Wiggins, 2014). In this survey, significantly more Hispanic seniors than seniors from other ethnic groups were planning to pay for college by working or through scholarships, loans, and/or savings.

**Figure 4. Black and Hispanic seniors have had the greatest increases in FAFSA submissions since 2010.**

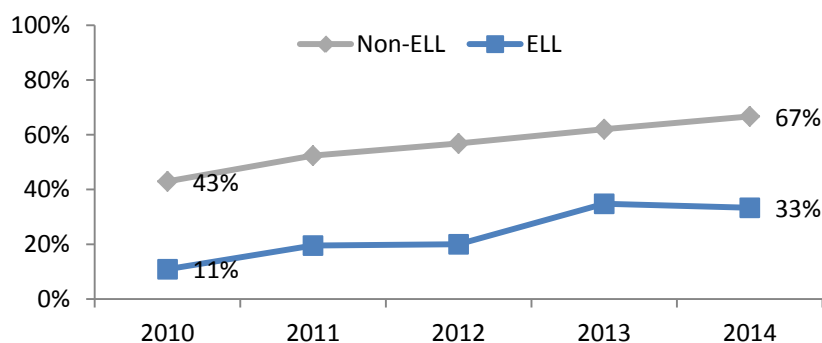


Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014  
 \*  $p < .05$

### Did FAFSA submissions differ for English language learners (ELLs) and their English-speaking peers?

The percentage of ELLs who submitted a FAFSA in 2014 (33%) was significantly lower than the percentage of non-ELL students who submitted a FAFSA (67%). The FAFSA submission rate for ELLs in 2014 was similar to the submission rate for ELL seniors in the prior year. Some ELL seniors may not be eligible for federal financial aid but may be eligible for state funding. AISD staff confirmed 62 student TASFA submissions; however, because staff were not required to report this information, this number may be an underestimate.

**Figure 5. English language learning (ELL) seniors submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at significantly lower rates than did their English-speaking peers.**



Source. Federal FAFSA Pilot Project and the Texas Higher Education Board FAFSA databases, 2010–2014

### How much financial support did AISD students receive?

In the 2013–2014 school year, full-time undergraduate students across the nation received an average of \$14,180 in financial aid, with \$8,080 from grants and \$4,840 from federal loans (College Board, 2014). Using the national estimate, the projected amount of federal financial aid allocated to 2014 AISD seniors was approximately \$36,825,460, based on a total of 2,597 FAFSA completions. Seventy-two percent of AISD seniors submitted their FAFSA before the priority deadline of March 31<sup>st</sup>. The priority deadline is the date students must file their FAFSA to receive priority consideration in the financial aid awarding process.

In Texas, the federal government provided approximately 85% of a student's financial aid. The state provided 6% of aid, compared with 5% nationally. Nine percent of a student's financial aid came from the colleges and universities students attended, compared with 19% nationally (Creusere, Fernandez, Fletcher, & Rice, 2015).

### So, how are we doing?

In 2014, district-level FAFSA completion rates were significantly higher than were rates in previous years. Although gaps in FAFSA submissions are closing, some groups of students continued to have significantly lower FAFSA submission and completion rates than did their counterparts. The district should focus on these student groups to reduce the number of students who experience financial barriers that may limit or prevent access to a postsecondary education.

#### Top 3 Reasons Seniors Did Not Submit a FAFSA in 2014

**31%** did not know about the financial aid process

**23%** did not think they would qualify

**22%** did not need financial aid to attend college

Source. Class of 2014 High School Exit Survey

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