



Family Engagement Services by Parent Support Specialists

2018–2019

Overview

Austin Independent School District (AISD) staff provide community and parent engagement support and learning opportunities to families of students attending district schools. AISD’s Parent Engagement Support Office (PESO) staff, within the Department of Communication and Community Engagement, coordinate many of these support and learning activities. Using a combination of federal, district, and city funding, AISD employed parent support specialists (PSSs) at most of its Title I elementary, middle, and high schools during the 2018–2019 school year. PSSs help enhance school-family communication, partnerships, and relationships by connecting families, schools, and community resources, with the goal of increasing student achievement.

This report summarizes some of the parent and family engagement services provided by PSSs to parents and families at their schools during the 2018–2019 school year, as recorded in eCST, one of the district’s data systems for recording student/family services. These data do not represent all the parent and family community engagement activities and services provided by district staff during the school year.

Family and Community Engagement Services and Learning Opportunities

AISD’s PESO staff provide a variety of services and learning opportunities across the district (<https://www.austinisd.org/parentsupport>). Examples of these services include parent and family engagement support to schools, communication and outreach to families and community members, parent and family education opportunities (e.g., workshops, classes), and professional development sessions for AISD staff. PESO staff also provide guidance and monthly training to PSSs on engaging parents through partnerships to strengthen students’ academic success. PSSs use the district’s eCST data system to record their parent and family engagement activities. Each time PSSs provide an individualized service to a student’s family (e.g., home visit, referral to social service agency, translation service, one-on-one meeting), they document the service on the student’s service tracking record. For 2018–2019, AISD PSSs provided services to 11,223 students’ parents, families or legal guardians, of whom 66% had students at elementary grade levels.

In addition, PSSs helped organize and/or conduct classes, trainings, and workshops to support parent education and life skills. For 2018–2019, AISD families participated and engaged in 3,339 of these events at 70 schools; these events focused on topics such as academic improvement (52%), health and wellness (17%), educating parents on city services (5%), student attendance (5%), and student behavior (4%).

Parent Survey Feedback on Impact of Workshops

To obtain parents' feedback, a survey was given to parents who attended a workshop series provided by PSSs during the school year. Of those who completed the survey ($N=1,064$), 99% of parents responded that the workshop helped them increase their knowledge. The most common topic presented in workshops, according to the survey results, was health and wellness (e.g., cooking and nutrition; 14%). Other commonly mentioned workshop series topics included Maestro en Casa (10%), computer classes (8%), and parenting classes (5%).

Annually, AISD surveys all parents who have students attending AISD schools to gain feedback from parents about school climate, parent engagement by school staff, information parents receive from schools, and district initiatives. For the most recent report, go to <https://www.austinisd.org/dre>, then select "Interactive Reports." On this page, go to the upper left drop-down menu entitled "Interactive Reports List," and select "Family Survey" to see the most recent district and campus survey results.

Conclusion

AISD provides a variety of parent and family engagement learning opportunities and support services on an annual basis to family members of students. These services are part of the district's vision and mission to provide a comprehensive, high-quality, engaging educational experience for all students (<https://www.austinisd.org/about-us>).

Parent and Family Engagement Policies

Parent and family engagement is part of AISD policy. AISD policy (Local GK) states that the district's mission is to provide, in partnership with parents and the community, a comprehensive educational experience that is high quality and challenging for all students (<http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/1146?filter=GK>).

At the federal level, any school district that receives federal funding (and AISD is such a district) must provide opportunities and support for parent and family engagement, communication, and support (<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf>).

Family engagement data are used by AISD for various reporting and compliance purposes.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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