



Family Engagement Services by Parent Support Specialists

2020

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), within the Department of School, Family, and Community Education, coordinates many of these support and learning activities. Using a combination of federal, district, and city funding, AISD employs parent support specialists (PSSs) at most of its Title I elementary, middle, and high schools. PSSs help enhance school-family communication, partnerships, and relationships by connecting families, schools, and community resources, with the goal of increasing students' achievement.

This report summarizes some of the parent and family engagement services provided by PSSs to parents and families at their schools in 2020, as recorded in the electronic Child Study Team (eCST), one of the district's data systems for recording student/family services. These data do not represent all the family and 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/family-support>). Examples of these services include parent and family engagement support to schools, communication and outreach to families and community members, parent and family educational opportunities (e.g., workshops, classes), and professional development sessions for AISD staff. In 2020, PESO also provided COVID-19 pandemic support services for families and students.

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 a social service agency, translation service, one-on-one meeting), they document the service on the student's service tracking record. In 2020, AISD PSSs provided services to 29,654 students' parents, families, and legal guardians, of whom 94% had students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The number of services to parents, families, and legal guardians increased significantly after COVID-19-related school closures in the spring of 2020. In the second quarter (April through June) of 2020, AISD PSSs provided services to 12,864 individuals—none of whom had received services in the first quarter of the year—compared with 5,539 individuals who were served during the same timeframe in 2019.

In addition, PSSs helped organize and/or conduct classes, trainings, and workshops to support parent educational and life skills. In 2020, AISD families participated and engaged in 2,247 of these events, focusing on topics such as academic improvement, health and

wellness, access to city services, student attendance, and student behavior.

Parent Survey Feedback

To obtain parents' feedback, a survey was sent to parents who attended a workshop series provided by PSSs during the school year. Of those who completed the survey ($n = 342$), 99% of parents responded that the workshop improved their parenting skills and/or connected them to community resources. Topics presented in workshops included Maestro en Casa, health and wellness (e.g., cooking and nutrition), computer classes, family literacy, bilingual education in AISD, and parenting skills. Due to pandemic-related school closures, many in-person workshops that had been offered in previous years were no longer offered; nonetheless, PSSs continued to engage families with virtual learning opportunities in the summer and fall of 2020.

Annually, AISD surveys all parents who have students attending AISD schools to gain feedback from them about school climate, their engagement by school staff, information they receive from schools, and district initiatives. For the most recent report, go to the AISD's Department of Research and Evaluation's homepage and click on "Interactive Reports;" from that page, go to the upper left drop-down menu, entitled "Interactive Reports List," and select "Family Survey."

Conclusion

AISD provides a variety of 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 Community Relations, section 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.

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

AISD staff use family engagement data for various reporting and compliance purposes.



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