



STETSON  
& ASSOCIATES, INC.

# Evaluation of Services for Students with Disabilities

Austin Independent School District

# Chapter One

## Introduction and Snapshot of Services

Since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, school districts across the country have recognized that the promise to ensure students with disabilities and their families have access to a free and appropriate public education requires strong leadership and an unwavering commitment to excellence and equity. Districts committed to going beyond the letter of the law invest in actions to guide self-assessment of progress and continuous improvement. In 2020, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) engaged Stetson and Associates to accomplish a program evaluation to support improvement of services and outcomes for this student population that represents 13.3% of all students attending AISD.

This report represents the culmination of a review that has spanned two changes in special education leadership, beginnings and pauses generally dictated by significant restrictions of access to parents and personnel and classroom observations due to the worldwide Covid epidemic. As new leadership assumed their roles in the department, a full restart and revision to the original work scope were requested. What began as a staffing study became a full program evaluation.



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### **Districts committed to going beyond the letter of the law invest in actions to guide self-assessment of progress and continuous improvement.**

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After securing the necessary data through faculty and parent surveys, it was possible to complete the final product. The response rate for each of these surveys was outstanding. It is with confidence that we now submit the following findings to be addressed in creating and strengthening systems that support success for students with disabilities, their parents, teachers and school leaders.

Second, it is no longer possible, either philosophically or practically, to separate an evaluation of services for students with disabilities from a review of the quality of instructional services provided to all students. Special education services are support services, so it is necessary to examine the general education instructional delivery system for all students and the problem-solving process for any student who experiences difficulty in school.

## Quality Standards for Services

Any review of services for students with disabilities should be directed by several guiding principles that reflect “effective practice” today. The traditional belief systems of the past must be discarded in favor of higher expectations, greater collaboration and a strong sense of shared ownership for all students. Separate siloes of service have given way to a full and rich continuum of supports that are based on individual student needs, not on disability labels or available places. The following is the lens through which policies and practices within AISD for students receiving special education services were evaluated.

### Leadership

1. **The district is guided by a clear vision of services for students with disabilities.** A common vision and vocabulary regarding services for students with disabilities is an essential pre-condition for achieving strong student outcomes, effective coordination and use of resources to achieve this result.
2. **Special education leadership at the district level has a responsibility to provide clarity and consistency regarding the district vision and expectations for serving students with disabilities. Communications must be clear, responsive and transparent.** To ensure equitable access and opportunities, the district must ensure that **services are consistent from level to level and from school to school.** No student should be disadvantaged based on the school he or she attends. A major component of department leadership is **active engagement and authentic collaboration with all other departments** to ensure that actions are fully coordinated and that students with disabilities are represented in every function of the district.
3. **The working relationship between department and campus leaders should be characterized by trust, open communication and shared accountability for procedural safeguards and positive outcomes for students with disabilities.** Both are accountability for decisions regarding students receiving special education services. State and Federal regulations must be met and the building principal has a responsibility to see that these are carried out in his or her school as site-based decision making does not supersede federal and state requirements. Similarly, it is the department staff's role to support each campus leader through clear guidelines, responsive communications and the creation of

systems that support the recruitment, training and supervision of highly qualified personnel.

## Instruction

4. **All students must receive strong, Tier One instruction within a system-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).** This is the first commitment that must be met and one that benefits all students. The absence of good instruction in the general education classroom or discomfort with increasing diversity in our schools cannot be the reason for referral to special education or an emphasis of 'pull-out' settings as a remedy.
5. **Higher expectations, research-based methodologies and greater instructional rigor are required to close the current achievement gap. The general education classroom and the general curriculum are the reference points for decision-making for each student with a disability.** Services provided in inclusive general education classrooms are found to benefit all students due to the necessity for differentiated instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping, shared personnel to provide in-class support and many more characteristics of inclusive delivery systems. For those students who do require some level of supports *outside* of the general education classroom for part or very rarely, all of the day, these **decisions must be individualized** and reflect specially designed instruction that is **focused on a successful return** to the general education classroom whenever appropriate.

## Staffing

6. Staffing to provide services required by students with disabilities must meet a four-point test: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Appropriateness and Sufficiency. Above all, **the district must provide an objective, student-centered process for determining if personal supports are needed for each student, when and where they are needed and in what manner.** Too often, requests are based on the belief that adult proximity solves student needs or is a substitute for effective instruction. If, following this individualized process, it is determined that personal assistance (staff) is needed, staff must be provided. There is typically strong pressure for more staff in districts across the country when the existing staff are not being used effectively, efficiently or appropriately.

## Capacity Building

7. **Capacity building is essential for all who deliver services to students with disabilities. There must be a systemic plan for delivery of professional development and mentoring to achieve quality services and supports.** School district cannot rely on university preparation alone but must engage educators in continuous learning. The field of education and the research behind it evolves rapidly. To maintain a standard of quality and effectiveness, learning for educators must be rigorous and ongoing. Parents and the community expect educators to gain and maintain cutting-edge skills throughout their career.

## Family Engagement

8. **Family and community member engagement is essential** in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and ensuring their post-school success. Their **satisfaction with services provided to their children** is a critical metric for school leaders. The district must be certain that communications are clear, all interactions are respectful, and that the parent's perspective is actively sought as specialized services are designed and provided. The parent voice should be encouraged and welcomed.

These eight quality standards form the basis for our findings and provide the organizational structure for this evaluation report. For each standard, data to support the conclusions will be described. Recommendations for improvement will also be listed for each of the standards. In reading this report, notice the intersection of traditional philosophies and the need for a “new lens” for viewing high impact services for students with disabilities. Not all current challenges that face Austin ISD are simply technical, many require the shift in philosophy, approaches and focus.

## A Snapshot of Special Education Services

Prior to the start of the evaluation and again at the conclusion, Stetson and Associates, Inc. reviewed five-year data provided by the Texas Education Agency concerning Austin ISD's special education accountability status, student enrollment, performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessment, staffing ratios, and the district level of compliance with state and federal mandates relative to special education services. The following is a snapshot to use as a context for the remainder of the report.

- Austin ISD's enrollment of students with disabilities is approximately 9,998, or 13.3% of the total student population. The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD has increased since 2017. In contrast, the overall student population in membership was reported to be 82,766 in 2017 and 74,725 in 2021 (TEA, TAPR data) which is an overall decrease of approximately 10%.

- The student with a disability-to-special education teacher ratio for Austin ISD (1:13.2) is lower than the state (1:14.3) and region (1:14.8) ratios. It is also lower than five of the six comparison districts.
- The teacher turnover rate for Austin ISD (13.1%) is lower than the state (16.4%), lower than the region (16.8%), and lower than four of the six comparison districts. Data regarding turnover rates specific to special education teachers is not available.
- Austin ISD's Expenditures for Students with Disabilities (18.14%) is higher than the state and all six comparison districts.
- Austin ISD's Program Expenditure per Student with a Disability (\$2,167.) is higher than all six comparison districts and more than \$1000. over the state average (\$1,100.).
- AISD teacher salaries are the lowest (\$55,849.) among the comparison districts and the highest (\$27,874.) for educational aides.
- The performance of students with disabilities in Austin ISD did not meet minimum state standards for STAAR 3-8 in all subject areas nor did they meet minimum state standards for EOC passing rates in all four subject areas.
- The district has not met the minimum standards for students with disabilities in any of the four years reported.
- Austin ISD's graduation rate (62.1%) for students with disabilities is above both the state and the Region 13 rate for students with disabilities and above all comparable districts.
- The district has met the requirements for the Special Education Determination Status every year since 2017 until 2021 when the district received a Status of "Needs Assistance." The district has also received significant disproportionality (SD) rating for over-representation of Asians in the disability area of Autism since 2018.

These data are included in the full Comparison Report, refer to Appendix A. The final section of this chapter will describe the evaluation methods used to prepare this report.

## Evaluation Methods

This review of special education services includes an examination of both quantitative and qualitative data, and employed twelve basic methodologies, including:

1. **A Comparison Study** based on five key factors including student enrollment, performance, staffing, budget and compliance. This study provides a comparison of data with the state, Region 13 Education Service Center and eight comparable districts. Districts selected for this

study include Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Dallas ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Houston ISD, and San Antonio ISD. The full report is included in Appendix A.

2. **One-on-One Interviews with District Leaders.** including the Director of Related Services, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Executive Director of Talent and Acquisition, Director of Special Education, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendent for Student Programs, and Director Section 504 and Dyslexia.
3. **Structured Observations of Classroom Practices at 12 randomly selected schools.** The schools visited include:

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Blazier Elementary	Gorzcki Middle School	Austin High School
Govalle Elementary	Lively Middle School	LBJ High School
Houston Elementary	O'Henry Middle School	North East Early College
Mills Elementary		
Pleasant Hill Elementary		
Walnut Creek Elementary		

Structured classroom observations are essential when a program evaluation is requested. This is the center of the question regarding quality and effectiveness of instructional services and answers many questions regarding appropriate staffing, reasons for student performance ratings and provides a deeper look at the culture of the schools.

A brief visit with the principal is conducted to gain current enrollment and staffing numbers, leadership issues of importance to the principal and a map of the school. The teachers are notified in advance of the visit and the associate visits classroom he or she selects to gain a representative sample of classroom types. Classrooms with substitute teachers are avoided. Classroom visits are approximately twenty minutes in length. Unless necessary, the observers do not speak directly to the teacher to minimize disruption. If a practice is observed, that item is checked and any important anecdotal information is entered into the space provided. These instruments are not used for teacher evaluation in any way and the teacher's name is not reported. Particularly under *Standard 5: Instructional Excellence*, these charts of results provide a list of the strategies considered to represent effective, research-based practice in any classroom.

In Austin ISD, sixty-seven (67) classrooms were visited across these 12 schools, including 40 special education and 27 general education classrooms. Stetson and Associates used a structured observation document that focuses on quality instructional practices associated with positive outcomes for students. A copy of the observation tool and the results are found in Appendix B.

4. **Focus group meetings.** Ninety-minute focus groups sessions were conducted with randomly selected representatives from each of the following groups.

**Table 1: Focus Group Attendance by Group**

Focus Group	Total # Participants
Parents	0
Elem Special Education Teachers	7/10
Secondary Special Education Teachers	5/10
Elementary/Secondary General Education Teachers	3/20
Paraeducators	0/10
Elementary Principals	9/10
Secondary Principals	7/10
Special Education Leadership Team	6/10
Assessment Team	9/10
SLPs and Related Services	7/10

These focus groups addressed both the positive aspects of services for students with disabilities in the district and the areas in need of improvement. The focus group summaries are included in Appendix C. Note the very low Zoom Focus Group attendance. To replace this loss, the faculty and parent surveys were sent out with open-ended questions that are the same as those that were discussed in all focus groups. A qualitative analysis was then conducted of 1,124 responses from faculty and 419 from parents.

5. **A Faculty Survey disseminated to instructional and leadership faculty.** One thousand one hundred twenty-four (1,124) surveys were returned from pre-kindergarten through high school staff and included eight response groups. The total number of staff surveys disseminated was 4,882. This represents an approximate return rate of 23%. Data collection instruments relative to these activities are in Appendix D of this report.

In addition to the quantitative data obtained, Stetson and Associates analyzed 1,124 responses to five open-ended questions. These questions were added to the Faculty Survey due to the low attendance at the scheduled Focus Group sessions. These questions are the same as those asked during a typical educator focus group session.

6. **A Parent Survey provided in English and Spanish.** Four hundred nineteen (419) parent surveys were returned for a return rate of 41%. Of the 419 surveys returned, 35 were the Spanish version. A copy of the parent survey is in Appendix E of this report. In addition to the quantitative data obtained, Stetson and Associates analyzed 419 responses to six open-ended questions. As mentioned above, these questions were also added to the Parent



Survey due to low attendance at scheduled Focus Group sessions. These questions are the same as those asked during a typical parent focus group session.

These combined evaluation activities were used to capture the strengths and needs relative to services for students with disabilities in Austin ISD. This information forms the basis for the findings and recommendations that follow.

### **Appreciation for Austin ISD Coordination of Evaluation Activities**

This evaluation review required the active involvement of Austin ISD central office leadership, campus level leaders, instructional, related service and ancillary staff who participated in meetings, interviews, and observations. The efforts of the district in requesting and organizing activities, and providing necessary resources, time, talent and information are greatly appreciated. It is the hope of Stetson and Associates that this report will provide a launching point for future efforts to improve services for Austin ISD's students with disabilities, their families and the community.

# Chapter Two

## Leadership



### Standard 1: A Clear and Inclusive Vision and Shared Vocabulary Regarding Services for Students with Disabilities

Without a clear and consistent vision for students with disabilities, the philosophies and practices guiding service delivery will vary widely from year to year and school to school. The lack of common vision and vocabulary results in a loss of momentum for individual students and decreased focus across the faculty. Conversely, a shared vision can serve as a catalyst to dramatically move the organization from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

Throughout Texas and the nation, students with disabilities are increasingly viewed as “*our* students—not *your* students or *my* students.” A positive, clear, and consistent message regarding services for students with disabilities, including equal membership in the school community, must be articulated by the superintendent, administrators over general education and special education, and by each principal.

The practices of inclusive education and equitable access to quality instruction have resounding support in literature and in practice. The role of leadership is critical to creating these necessary conditions for success. This philosophy of shared ownership for all students with disabilities is an essential pre-condition for achieving strong student outcomes, effective coordination and use of resources to achieve this result. The reverse is also true for educators assigned to serve students with disabilities. The whole school community and student body is a shared concern.

As noted in the Austin ISD website, students receiving special education services are not “special education” students. They are general education students who require varying levels of special education support.

From the Austin ISD website under the Department of Special Education:

“All students are general education students first, and the provision of special education and related services, or Section 504 accommodations and supplementary aids and services, are provided in addition to general education—not in place of it. The primary instructional goal for all services is that students with disabilities are able to access and

progress in the general curriculum through an Individualized Education Program, or IEP, built on a standards-based framework.”

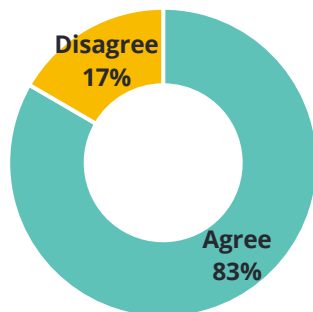
Phrases such as “your students” and “my students” or “siloe” programs have no place in today’s inclusive schools. Does the message of shared ownership resonate throughout the entire district?

## Findings

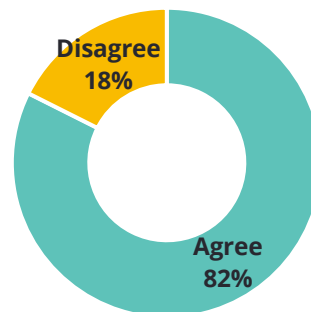
1. Based on survey responses, the majority of Austin ISD faculty member and parents respond positively to the question of a strong sense of shared responsibility for all students. Perceptions are fairly consistent across position, level, and Special Education Campus Support Communities (CSC).

**Figure 1: Faculty and Parent Survey Responses re: Shared Responsibility**

Faculty Q1: Educators on our campus demonstrate a commitment to shared responsibility for all students, including students with disabilities.



Parent Q4: Faculty members we have talked with seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility for all students, including students with disabilities.

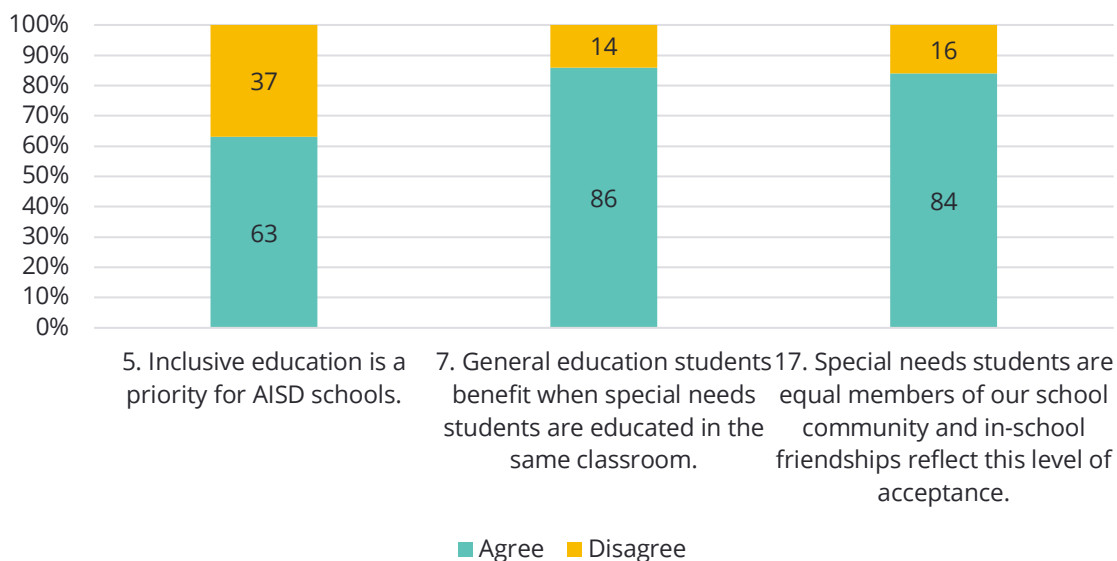


2. It was noted numerous times in focus group sessions and interview comments that Superintendent Elizalde presents a clear message of support for shared ownership for all students and for inclusive practices. This is critical to the development of purpose and consistency across the district. This message from a superintendent is especially resonant with school leaders and general education personnel. If this message comes exclusively from the department of special education, a sense of importance and expectation for action can be lost.
3. There is additional evidence of a positive view of educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. When asked if general education students benefit when special needs students are educated in the same classroom, 86.3% of all faculty agree. Ninety-seven (97) percent of principals agree with this statement. This is an excellent result as the foundation for improved inclusive practices exists across school leadership. The lowest agreement

results are from general education teachers and other instructional staff, 83% agree for each group. In contrast to other evaluations conducted across the US, these are very strong results.

4. The department has developed a list of Quality Standards for students receiving Special Education Services. This is an excellent move toward clarity in expectations, opportunities for schools and parents to assess current practices and for creating specific action plans.
5. The special education department has also initiated meetings for parents to engage them in identifying and expanding upon descriptors of desired practices for students with disabilities. This is an excellent and positive shift from previous efforts to engage and inform parents that were described as limited and often contentious.
6. When interviewing applicants for leadership or instructional position, include questions regarding each applicant’s philosophy and approach to inclusive practices and the contributions they might make to support the district’s mission.
7. The lack of consistent services for students with disabilities across the district is a signal that the vision remains for many at the ‘statement’ level and has not yet reached the implementation level. When asked if special education services are consistently delivered across Austin ISD campuses, only 31.9% agree. The implementation of the vision for students with disabilities is a mandate for all departments in the district but has special importance for the department of special education. The Quality Practices mentioned above can be an excellent vehicle for achieving consistent implementation status. This point will be discussed in *Standard 2: Department Leadership*.

**Figure 2: Faculty Survey Responses re: Inclusive Education**



## Recommendations

1. The leadership of the special education department should expand on the Superintendent's message and the positive responses of the Austin ISD faculty and link them clearly to the messages and actions of the department. This would provide a more visible and compelling message for the district as a whole and facilitate the work of the department in transforming the vision into practice!
2. Expand the message on the Austin ISD website to provide greater clarity regarding purpose and guiding principles.
3. The special education department should create a strategic plan for improving outcomes for students with disabilities that would include every appropriate department in the district, particularly the Curriculum and Instruction department. It is essential to avoid reinforcing an old message of separation and siloes and the advantage of a collaborative culture is clear.
4. Provide professional development to general and special education coordinators and their leadership staff in cutting-edge practices and research-based strategies to build their capacity to expand this knowledge throughout the district.
5. Expand activities relative to the Quality Standards for Special Education Services document through web-based presentations, print resources and links. The special services department recently developed a list of your own. Another example of these Quality Standards is provided here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8cc5aw>. If desired, engage members of the department staff (special education, curriculum and instruction, school leadership) in customizing the final list. Note: Stetson and Associates developed this instrument to provide clarity to steps school leaders at the district and campus levels should take toward quality and effectiveness. The Virginia State legislature now requires every school to annually self-assess using this instrument. We provide it here merely as an example.
6. Develop the capacity of all personnel who are in instructional coaching positions to disseminate information about Quality Standards for Special Education Services and maintain consistency of practice across the district.
7. Provide training and resources to all district principals to support their roles as knowledgeable instructional leaders with regard to students with disabilities.

8. Ask each campus to select a team of general and special educators to self-assess the extent to which each school meets these standards. Provide a trained facilitator so that the understanding of these standards is consistent across the district and that the self-assessment results are valid.
9. Revise current department orientation and language if it reinforces label, place or program models and substitute with student-needs based approaches to service delivery. This does not eliminate the valuable information we have about specific disability categories – it integrates this information within decisions based on true student needs and capacities.



## **Standard 2: Strong District Leadership, A Universal Understanding of the Path Forward, and Integrating the Department into the Fabric of the District**

Special education leadership at the district level has a responsibility to provide clarity and consistency regarding the district vision and expectations for serving students with disabilities. Special education leadership at the district level has a responsibility to provide clarity and consistency regarding the district vision and expectations for serving students with disabilities.

Support to campus administration and staff is a primary responsibility of central office leadership. This should be a collaborative relationship that focuses on shared responsibilities for all areas of special education, which includes not only quality research-based supports and services to students with disabilities but also compliance with state and federal guidelines for special education.

Communications must be clear, responsive and transparent. A major component of department leadership is active engagement and authentic collaboration with all other departments to ensure that actions are fully coordinated and that students with disabilities are represented in every function of the district.

Providing leadership to a district, departments, various stakeholder groups in ensuring quality services to students with disabilities is an undeniably complex and challenging role. There are heightened legal and equity issues as well as the challenge of meeting stringent compliance requirements. Perhaps most challenging is the task of improving the performance of students with disabilities in the context of persistent and pervasive low achievement scores amid low

expectations and ineffective instructional practices. Individuals who assume these roles know that the following must be characteristics of their work in order to achieve success.

These characteristics are:

- Ability to Create a Unified Vision re: Quality Services and Outcomes;
- Consistency in Implementation across the district to ensure Equitable Services & Smooth Transitions from Level to Level and School to School;
- Clear and Responsive Communications and Role Clarity
- Ability to achieve Full Compliance with the Letter of the Law, (guidelines from the Federal and State levels);
- Skills in Collaboration with Principals and Parents and Fellow Department Heads;
- Sophistication in Building and Sustaining Systems for Change.

The most frequent theme across the program evaluation data collection activities was the need to strengthen the leadership of the department. It is important to note at the beginning of this chapter on leadership at the department level that both current leaders were appointed to their positions approximately one year ago amid what some have referred to as “a fully dysfunctional system.” They followed three sets of leaders, each with a tenure of less than two years that yielded an entrenched reputation of ineffectiveness for the department.

In addition, the promise made to parents and the Austin community to eliminate a backlog of 900 unprocessed student evaluations was the central focus of their efforts for this past year and the more proactive aspects of their roles did not receive the attention required. Their top priority has been, and continues today, to eliminate the backlog of overdue evaluations for students referred for special education services and to sustain this success. This was a serious due process violation and is especially egregious for the students whose needs for support were and, in some instances, remain unmet. To date, the backlog has been cleared. Still there is work to do in addressing this priority, such as conducting reviews of records at the school and district levels to reconcile differences in counts of remaining evaluations, recruiting and hiring lost diagnostic personnel, and preventing a slide back into unprocessed evaluations.

From a position of fairness, an assessment of the performance of the current and relatively new leadership team should be conducted at a future date. when more time, energy and resources can be devoted to the proactive tasks described above.

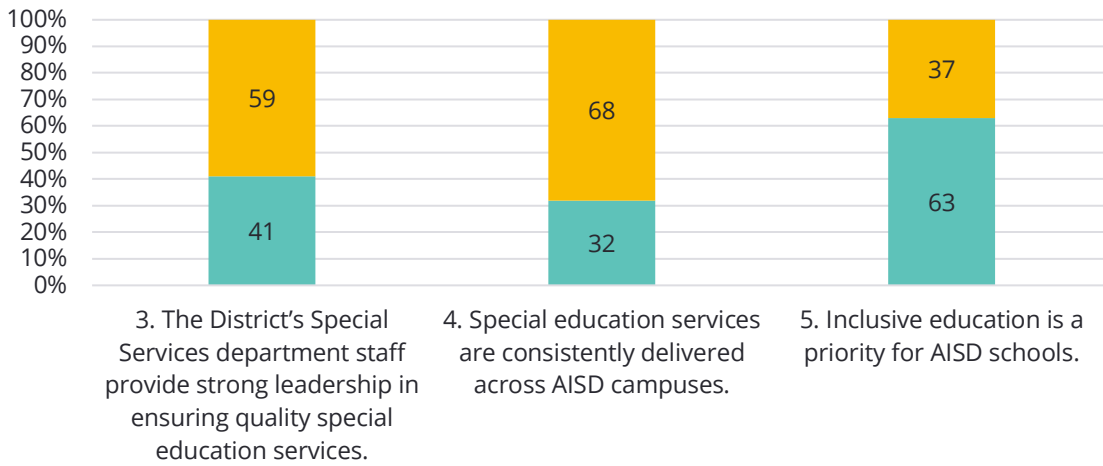
## Findings

There are seven major findings related to this quality standard.

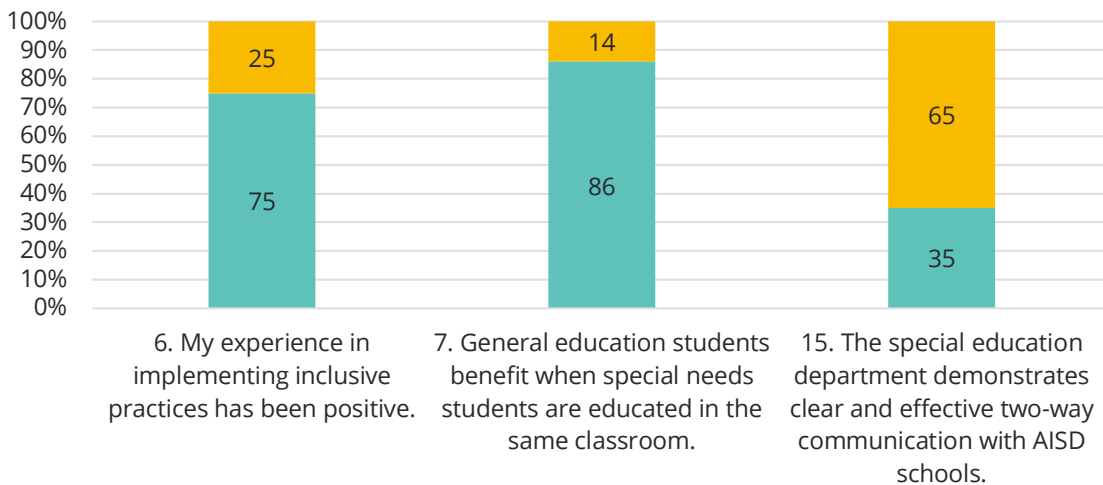
1. There is no clear districtwide vision for services and desired outcomes for students with disabilities, including quality indicators for each segment of the department that should guide practice, self-assessment and action planning. A common vision will serve to achieve the necessary level of consistency across Austin ISD campuses.
2. Less than one-third of faculty respondents (31.87%) agree that special education services are consistently delivered across AISD campuses. This poses a serious concern because a student in need of special education services can be either advantaged or disadvantaged based on the school he or she attends. Inconsistent communications from the department contribute to this concern. Focus group participants and interviewees frequently cited inconsistent communications and directions related to the provision of special education services leading to confusion and varying levels of implementation and quality.
3. The special education department is organized by functions with directors supervising the areas of Related Services, Dyslexia/504, Evaluations, Compliance and Operations, and Campus Supports. These five function areas are overseen by the Executive Director of Special Education. The five directors supervise staff within their function area. One of the major strengths of the organizational structure is the position of Director for Campus Support which is key to improving communications between the department and principals and key staff assigned to provide direct supports and services to individual campuses.
4. The need to improve communications between the department and the schools is a top concern reflected from the responses to the Faculty Survey. When asked if the special education department demonstrates clear and effective two-way communication with AISD schools, only 35.1% agreed.
5. There is a need for increased role clarity regarding special education personnel. The roles and responsibilities of coordinators, supervisors, appraisal personnel, and instructional and related service personnel are not uniformly understood across AISD's 125 schools.
6. Department staff indicated through interviews and focus group sessions that the regularly scheduled staff meetings were generally not productive and provided information that could be gained through written materials. These meetings are an opportunity to reinforce district philosophy, ensure that all staff understand guidelines and procedures so they can offer clear and consistent guidance, find ways to collaborate for greater impact of services and resources and build necessary team skills.



**Figure 3. Faculty and Parent Responses to Survey Questions Related to Leadership**

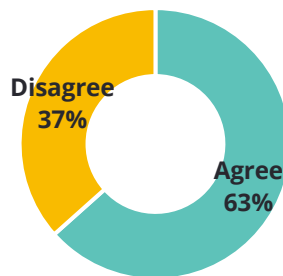


■ Agree ■ Disagree



■ Agree ■ Disagree

Parent Q16: I feel support by the central office staff in my efforts to ensure my child receives a quality education.



## Recommendations

1. Enhance the Austin ISD vision of services for students with disabilities, including quality indicators, role delineation for campus and department leadership, and the common expectations to be met across all schools. This is a critical step to gain consistency and improved results for students with disabilities. Given the clear direction available to districts from research-based based strategies, the task of creating a clear organizational vision and structure should not require a great deal of time and will make a major difference in focus and clarity for the department and the district.
2. Use the new organizational structure to clarify communication linkages and to improve communication, accountability and cooperation. Review current roles and responsibilities assigned to the lead(s) over this component of the department. Such consistency requires careful attention at the district level to robust leadership training and clear guidelines regarding quality standards expected by the district of every department and school leader.
3. This department has an image problem that extends throughout all segments of the educator and parent communities. It is imperative to change these perceptions on the basis of authentic collaboration and desire to provide services, supports, and information needed by others to meet the goals of the department. Keep logs on returns of calls, emails and requests from principals, other school personnel and parents for a period of time. Set measurable goals for improving response time and stakeholder satisfaction. Set stakeholder communications and satisfaction as a key metric for the entire department. If needed, provide training in improving customer satisfaction. The level of frustration expressed regarding communications with the department can also affect perceptions of the field of special education and the students they serve.
4. Clarify the continuum of services within the district and eliminate confusion over inclusive options. This recommendation will be treated in much greater detail in Standard 5.
5. Survey principals, special education team leaders, central office staff and other key groups for a list of issues/directions/policies for which confusing or conflicting information is currently provided. The process for gathering this information should be informal and require very little time or effort. Consider repeating this annually to proactively identify areas of confusion or inconsistency.
6. Involve department staff in creating a similar list and in identifying areas in which different practices are observed that negatively impact the quality of services or the degree to which the district is in compliance with rules or regulations.

7. Work collaboratively with key department staff to create a set of clear, consistent responses in written or bulleted form for appropriate dissemination. Date all original communications and updates.
8. Create a list of topics that account for requests for department clarification. Prepare written responses and address this list in department meetings to engage in detailed discussions regarding appropriate responses to questions, and the instances in which questions should be directed to the executive director of the department. Minimize the length of this list to increase system-wide responsibility for knowing and following correct practice.
9. Publish the district's, schools' and teachers' successes regarding services for students with disabilities and inclusive practices via the district website, school recognition and other media options.



**Standard 3: The working relationship between department and campus leaders should be characterized by trust, open communication and shared accountability for procedural safeguards and positive outcomes for students with disabilities.**

District and campus leaders are both accountable for decisions regarding students receiving special education services. State and Federal regulations must be followed and the building principal has a responsibility to see that these are carried out in his or her school. Site-based decision making does not supersede federal and state requirements. Similarly, it is the department staff's role to support each campus leader through clear guidelines, responsive communications and the creation of systems that support the recruitment, training, and supervision of highly qualified personnel.

## Findings

1. Focus group sessions, interviews and principal responses to the survey all reinforced the importance of Standard 3. Described as a "major disconnect between the department staff and principals," the specifics identified such stressors as poor communication, lack of availability and presence on campuses, lack of shared respect and lack of clarity. Principals expressed concerns that the department staff lack an understanding of "what principals do."

2. A particularly stressful aspect of poor communications involved students arriving on campuses without prior notice or consultation with the principal. In some instances, the needs of the students were complex and left staff fully unprepared.
3. From the department's perspective, in some cases, it is difficult to gain principal participation and acceptance of responsibility for students with disabilities on his or her own campus. On some campuses, there is lack of follow-through on important tasks that impact compliance and quality. The disconnect was frequently described as an "us versus them" problem.
4. With the recent assignment of new department leadership, principals expressed hope that a new and more positive relationship was being formed.

## Recommendations

1. Austin ISD is a large school district with many priorities and competition for time and attention. I do recommend, however, that administration make more quality time available to department leads to meet with principals to ensure consistent communications and facilitate a shared philosophy and language. These meetings might best be arranged at the Special Education Campus Support level.
2. The central office staff should be aware of the potential for directions that are not consistent and meet frequently with CSC staff to ensure a common message.
3. Many of the recommendations listed in earlier sections discussed above relate to strategies for enhanced communication and equally apply to this standard.

Although this standard crosses over much that has been discussed in the previous two standards, it is important to identify the concern regarding the described central office and campus leader disconnect specifically. It appears that this concern has existed over several years and across several leaders. It will be necessary to mend these relationships where they are broken so that the goals of improving services for students with disabilities can be achieved. These two groups of leaders share an authentic commitment to success for every student receiving special education services.

# Chapter Three

## Instruction



### **Standard 4: All students must receive strong Tier One instruction within a system-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**

Strong Tier 1 instruction is the starting point for all educational practices and sets the expectations for classroom practices. For the great majority of students with disabilities, success with on-grade level content can be achieved with the use of differentiated instruction, creative scaffolding, flexible grouping, instructional technology, positive behavioral strategies, and appropriate use of instructional accommodations. In classrooms where Tier 1 instructional strategies are absent, many students struggle to achieve.

A solid, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) should be clearly communicated, consistent from campus to campus, and provide a proactive, even preventive, mechanism for early identification of students struggling either instructionally or behaviorally in school. The process should engage well-trained faculty teams to routinely screen for any student experiencing difficulty in school, ensure that effective Tier One strategies are provided to support the student and engage in collaborative planning to identify needed interventions to return the student to a successful school experience.

Stetson and Associates believes that structured classroom observations are essential when a program evaluation is requested. This is the center of the question regarding quality and effectiveness of instructional services and answers many questions regarding appropriate staffing, reasons for student performance ratings and provides a deeper look at the culture of the schools.

Classroom visits are approximately twenty minutes in length. Unless necessary, the observers do not speak directly to the teacher to minimize disruption for the learners. If a practice is observed, that item is checked and any important anecdotal information is entered into the space provided. These instruments are not used for teacher evaluation in any way and the teacher's name is not reported. Particularly under Standard 5: Instructional Excellence, these charts of results provide a list of the strategies considered to represent effective, research-based practice in any classroom.

## Findings

1. Strong Tier One instruction was not in evidence in the majority of the 67 Austin ISD classrooms visited. Whole group instruction, limited use of scaffolds, and the same instructional activity for every student were most frequently in evidence. Small group instruction was observed in only five classrooms across the sixty-seven classrooms visited. There was also minimal evidence of visual aids, manipulatives, anchor charts, or scaffolding strategies with most instruction provided using overhead display technology with a visual representation of the instructional task.
2. The following is a table with the Tier One strategies we look for when visiting any classroom and the number of times the practice was observed.

**Table 2. Faculty Survey Responses re: Inclusive Education**

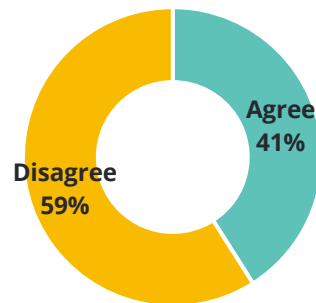
<b>Domain 4. Instructional Quality – Tier One</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
4a) Lesson objective is visible and in student friendly language.	42.11
4b) The pace and design of the lesson support student engagement.	70.21
4c) Instruction is differentiated in content presentation, student interaction with content, and in student choice for product to show what they know.	32.56
4d) Scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications support learning.	43.24
4e) Supports for SWD are provided in a non-stigmatizing manner.	76.67
4f) Scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications for SWD do not compromise rigor, and support success with enrolled grade level standards/objectives.	40.74
4g) Curriculum content and instructional methodology maintains rigor and student higher order thinking.	67.74
4h) Instructional technology is used by both students and teachers to support instruction and engagement.	82.35
4i) Students needing assistive technology use it independently to participate in activities and interact with others.	13.64
4j) Quick formative assessments are used and guide instructional decisions.	34.62

For further clarity regarding the results of the structured observations conducted in Austin ISD, refer to Appendix B for the complete results and continue to Standard 4 for more detailed information about specific finding regarding quality instructional practices.

3. The current MTSS process is not fully implemented and is inconsistent across schools.

#### Figure 4. Faculty Survey Question 26

Faculty Q26: The district's Student Support System (SST) process is effective in guiding problem-solving for students who are struggling in school.



### Recommendations

1. Use current research on the importance of a well-functioning Response to Intervention or Multi-Tiered System of Supports to build consensus and understanding.
2. Pay particular attention to the need to develop a clear model for Tier One instruction and the understanding that all students in Austin ISD schools should have access to highly effective instruction in every classroom.
3. In concert with the Curriculum and Instruction department, create a 'short list' of research-based practices that are expected in every classroom. Create an elementary and a secondary version.
4. Embed these expectations into ongoing professional development, evaluations, instructional walk-throughs, coaching and technical assistance.
5. Require external consultants who provide professional development to Austin ISD schools to model these Tier One practices.
6. Produce related on-line and print resources for all educators.
7. For examples of Tier One observation guides, visit <https://bit.ly/2Jy31X1>. This version was recently developed by Stetson and Associates for the State of Hawaii for use in Learning Walks to promote Tier One instructional practices. The complete set of materials can easily be customized to meet the needs of Austin ISD if requested.

At a minimum, every educator should be skilled in differentiating instruction, using scaffolds for learning, flexible grouping, attention to academic learning time, strong and positive behavioral support strategies. If not present in every classroom, opportunities for learning are likely inequitable.



## Standard 5: Highly Effective Instructional Strategies for All Learners

Higher expectations, research-based methodologies and greater instructional rigor are required to close the current achievement gap. The general education classroom and the general curriculum are the reference points for decision-making for each student with a disability. Services provided in inclusive general education classrooms are found to benefit all students due to the necessity for differentiated instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping, shared personnel to provide in-class support and many more characteristics of inclusive delivery systems. For those students who do require some level of supports *outside* of the general education classroom for part or very rarely, all of the day, these decisions must be individualized and reflect specially designed instruction that is focused on a successful return to the general education classroom whenever appropriate.

In a recent study by the Hechinger Report (Butrymowicz & Mader, 2020), it was proposed that 90% of students with a disability have the cognitive ability to meet the same standards and graduate using the same criteria as nondisabled peers. While this statement is challenging to be sure, repeat IEP goals from year to year and low achievement statistics reinforce the future work to be accomplished.

In addition, the five-year, longitudinal of performance of students with disabilities in Austin ISD validate the need for an increased focus on improving delivery of instructional and behavioral support services to this student population. The following is an excerpt from the Comparison Study conducted for Austin ISD regarding performance scores for students with disabilities (Appendix A). These data validate the need to review current instructional practices for all students and conduct a second analysis of current instructional practices in Austin ISD's 'pull-out' classrooms serving students with disabilities.



**Table 3. Five Year Comparison of Special Education 2021 STAAR 3-8 Passing Rates for Students with Disabilities in Austin ISD and Performance Level Rating**

Performance	Mathematics Standard 70%/PL Level	Reading Standard 70%/PL Level	Science Standard 65%/PL Level	Social Studies Standard 65%/PL Level	Writing Standard 70%/PL Level
2021	31.8/PL3	35.4/PL3	27.8/PL3	24.3/PL3	25.2/PL3
2020	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
2019	52.2/PL2	45.4/PL2	44.8/PL2	36.9/PL3	34.5/PL3
2018	52.7/PL2	48.7/PL2	45.2/PL2	32.3/PL3	30.6/PL3
2017	48.7/PL2	41.2/PL2	42.1/PL2	33.6/PL3	27.3/PL3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Austin ISD's 2017, 2018 Performance Based Monitoring Analysis (PBMAS) Data and 2019, 2021 Results Driven Accountability. Note: There is no 2020 data for any district in Texas due to the cancellation of the administration of the STAAR test.

- The STAAR scores for students with disabilities in grades 3-8 in AISD have been below the state standards in all areas for the last four years that the STAAR was administered.
- In 2018 and 2019, the scores for students with disabilities increased in all areas from the 2017 scores, with the exception of the Social Studies score in which there was a decline of 1.3 from 2017 to 2018.
- The 2021 scores declined significantly in all areas from the 2019 scores and were even lower than the scores five years ago.
- National studies conducted within the past year verify that students with disabilities and students whose second language is English fared much worse than their peers when engaged in virtual or blended learning. This should be factored into losses in student performance scores but emphasizes the importance of accelerating efforts to improve the quality and impact of instructional delivery.

**Table 4. Comparison of 2021 Special Education STAAR EOC Passing Rates for Students with Disabilities**

PERFORMANCE	MATHEMATICS STANDARD 65%	SCIENCE STANDARD 75%	SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 70%	ENGLISH I & II STANDARD 60%
Texas	*	*	*	*
Region 13	*	*	*	*
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>39.4</b>
Cy- Fair ISD	63.0	67.1	75.6	45.1
Dallas ISD	49.9	54.1	57.7	34.5
Fort Bend ISD	41.6	57.4	62.1	40.7
Fort Worth ISD	30.6	43.3	48.6	26.4
Houston ISD	41.2	48.0	57.4	34.2
San Antonio ISD	35.0	41.4	49.8	21.4

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020 and 2021 Results Driven Accountability

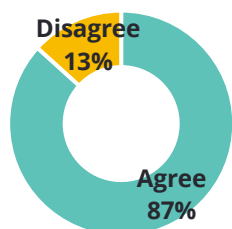
\*No data reported in 2020 for Texas and Region 13

- Students with disabilities in Austin ISD did not meet minimum state standards for EOC passing rates in all four subject areas.

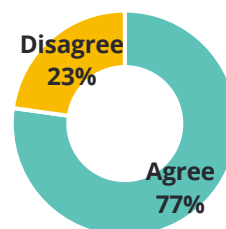
## Findings

**Figure 5. Faculty Survey Questions re: Instruction**

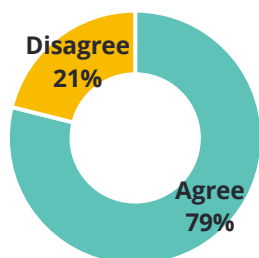
Faculty Q11: I am knowledgeable of the IEPs content for each student I teach who receives special education services.



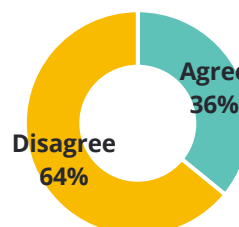
Faculty Q12: Our faculty uses instructional accommodations appropriately for any student who needs them.



Faculty Q13: Our faculty modifies the curriculum for students with disabilities if specified in the IEP.



Faculty Q14: Common planning time is provided to support quality collaboration among general and special education faculty.



1. The classrooms visited did provide excellent examples of positive teacher-to-student relationships and a strong degree of student engagement. Our associates observed enthusiastic teachers, positively acknowledging student efforts, and positive rapport. Overall, student-to-student interactions and teacher-to-student interactions were characterized by kindness and respect in 96% of classroom observations. Teachers demonstrated patience with student responses and attention to equity when selecting students to respond during instruction. It is likely that these the low incidence of disruptive behaviors during classroom observations can be at least partially attributed to these positive and respectful teacher-to-student relationships. Observers reported off-task behaviors were quickly and respectfully redirected by both general and special education teachers. Although classroom rules and expectations were not posted, students followed

established routines within 88% of classrooms observed and complied with teacher redirections in 92% of classroom observations. Additionally, it was noted that there were very few interruptions to teacher instruction.

2. IDEA 2004 requires students with disabilities to have access to and the opportunity to progress in the general curriculum. Though this requirement was initially enacted in 1997 and strengthened in 2004, many districts continue to struggle with providing general curriculum access for students with disabilities.

Access to the general education curriculum, appropriate use of accommodations and modifications, and effective in-class support should be improved to respond to the growing number of diverse learners in Austin ISD. There are great benefits for all students, particularly for those students who struggle in school, whether as a result of different learning styles, different home languages, the impact of poverty on learning, or the need for accelerated instruction.

3. Objectives were posted in only 42.1% of classrooms observed. In one elementary classroom, the “morning meeting” was used to introduce the day’s lesson objectives and directly teach what students were expected to learn that day. Although a seemingly small strategy, this helps to ensure that the general education curriculum is the focus of lessons taught and that students understand the purpose of the lesson.
4. The majority of students receiving in-class support within the general education setting were working on grade-level standards however, this was not observed within the special education self-contained classrooms. Instead, students were given “free play” or working with non-curricular activities such as blocks with little direct instruction. Overall, there was a lack of learner objectives linked to the curriculum and/or no alignment of activities to an alternate curriculum based on functional goals.
5. While different curricula are needed for a very few students, their goals are expected to be aligned with the same curriculum goals as their typical peers. This is one reason for ensuring that teachers are conferencing with their enrolled grade level teachers – to gain a clear perspective of what age-appropriate peers are learning and to brainstorm related tasks and objectives that might be taught through the lens of multilevel instruction. Perhaps the first task in closing the achievement gap in our schools is to critically look at the extent to which high expectations and on-grade level standards are available to students with disabilities, and other special population students. It was not clear what curriculum is being utilized within the special education classrooms in Austin ISD. Too often, schools are quick to select alternative curricula for students who could participate in and benefit from strong curricular content.

6. A related concern related to the number of teachers using computers in the classroom as a “small group” lesson for selected students. Observers noted the lessons students were engaged in on the computer are “practice” based and are not connected to the lesson objective, similar self-paced learning not unlike giving a student a worksheet. There seemed to be no planning, so it was disconnected from the classroom. However, they were using district purchased educational programs: math facts, vocabulary, etc. Computers can be a great tool but seemed to be used more for busy-work. At no time in the observations were computers used to support instruction though the use of text to speech or speech to text software – a very helpful accommodation when student understand the text at grade level but are not yet reading or writing on grade level.
7. Accommodations are defined as a change made to the teaching or testing procedures in order to provide student access to the information, and/or the opportunity to demonstrate his/her own knowledge and skills. In other words, this is a change in HOW the student will learn and/or demonstrate learning. A modification is defined as a change in the WHAT the student is expected to learn or demonstrate mastery. In contrast to accommodations, only the ARD committee team can determine the need for specific descriptors of curricular modifications.

In observations of Austin ISD classrooms, the use of instructional scaffolds such as word banks, dictionaries, multiplication charts, writing prompts, listening guides, verbal prompts, and manipulatives were documented in several classrooms. The most frequently observed instructional accommodation used during whole group instruction was modeling the learner expectation with a presented example and re-stating directions. However, observations of instructional practices also provided evidence that the use of IEP determined, student-specific instructional accommodations and curricular modifications is minimal at 22%. This contrasts with the survey results in which 78% of the faculty reported that they provide student accommodations. Additionally, the parent survey reported that 74% believe that their child’s teacher does provide accommodations and modifications per the IEP.

8. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the faculty survey respondents indicated that instruction is modified for students as specified in the IEP. In contrast, observations did not yield strong evidence of modified instruction when it appeared to be appropriate. Observations in general education classrooms with one or more students with IEPs yielded only one instance of modified student work and that was a worksheet.
9. Collaborative planning is critical to providing adequate and targeted support to students. It also builds shared ownership among educators as well as the knowledge and skill capacity of participants. Additionally, a well-defined instructional planning process is essential to the effective delivery of academic information. General education teachers can

share content-specific methodologies and approaches to teaching key concepts and their special education partners are adept at adjusting instructional delivery, materials and grading rubrics.

An important responsibility for principals to meet relates to finding and protecting common planning time for those teachers who share students and instructional delivery. Due to the increased focus on access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities, the lesson planning process takes on another dimension. Coordination between general and special education is essential when planning the delivery of instruction, following the general curriculum framework and ensuring access and progress for students with disabilities.

The typical response is: “there isn’t enough time in the day.” Yet, when collaborative planning time is not afforded at some point in the week, even the best teachers struggle with achieving the desired results in the classroom. Only thirty-six percent (36%) of the faculty surveyed indicated that they have common planning time to support quality collaboration and instructional delivery. Therefore, there is a need for training principals to embed planning time into the master schedule as it is developed. A session for principals to accomplish this goal is scheduled later this spring.

The following is a table with faculty responses to questions regarding the delivery of instruction and collaborative planning.

## Recommendations

1. Implement a district-wide priority for:
  - improving the selection of instructional accommodations for students who need them,
  - selecting only a few targeted accommodations for a student per subject or across subjects thus minimizing ‘laundry lists’ of accommodations to be implemented,
  - providing training re: the use of accommodations, the importance of teaching students when and how to use appropriate accommodations,
  - monitoring teacher use for students who have accommodations specified in their IEP, to be certain that they are provided as intended,
  - encourage ARD committees to review the list annually and make adjustments as needed each year and
  - fading the use of accommodations over time as appropriate. Note: This recommendation impacts approximately 10% of the total number of students in Austin ISD and would benefit many more struggling learners – a potential game-changer for many.
2. Continue to connect best practices for students with disabilities with best practices for all students such as: multilevel instruction, flexible grouping, use of instructional technology,

activity-based learning, peer tutoring models and positive behavioral supports. Include special and general educators in training regarding the models of instructional delivery. Increase the awareness, knowledge and skills of all teachers in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) so they may design and implement lessons using multiple means of presentation, action and expression, and multiple means of student engagement.

3. Continue to monitor the implementation of accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities across the district. Increase understanding regarding effective and appropriate implementation of instructional accommodations for any student requiring them to achieve success. Connect instructional accommodations, typically a special education term, with the concept of instructional scaffolding, generally a general education term. Increase awareness of all Austin ISD educators regarding the role of accommodations/scaffolding in facilitating and accelerating learning.
4. Provide general education content training and supportive material resources for special education staff to increase knowledge of the general curriculum, thereby increasing their value to general education teachers. This training should incorporate the skills learned in developing standards-based IEP to further support special educators in ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate instruction in the general education curriculum.
5. Provide training for paraprofessionals that include content overviews of academic areas in which they are involved, the use of effective differentiated strategies when dealing with diverse learners, and effective planning for instruction with their supervising teacher(s).
6. Increase the effectiveness of in-class support models to improve services for students with disabilities, and academic and behavioral outcomes. Provide training and follow up technical support to collaborative teams to promote the use of multiple structures of co-teaching.

The ultimate goal of instructional excellence for all learners is **improved student outcomes**. As measured by the state assessment system, the performance of Austin ISD students with disabilities fell below the state actual performance in grades three through five, and EOC assessments in all content areas. When compared to six other districts, Austin ISD performance was below five of the six. The relationship between the quality of instruction in both general and special education classrooms including the quality of in-class support in inclusive settings to improved student outcomes is direct and foundational.

# Chapter Four

## Staffing



### Standard 6: Staffing is Based on Student Needs and is Individually Determined

Staffing to provide services required by students with disabilities must meet a four-point test: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Appropriateness and Sufficiency. Above all, the district must provide an objective, student-centered process for determining if personal supports are needed for each student, when and where they are needed and in what manner. Too often, requests are based on the belief that adult proximity solves student needs or is a substitute for effective instruction. If, following this objective process, it is determined that personal assistance (staff) is needed, staff must be provided. There is typically strong pressure for more staff in districts across the country when the existing staff are not being used effectively, efficiently or appropriately.

There are several key findings related to current staffing numbers and procedures that are negatively impacting Austin ISD.

### Instructional Staff Findings

1. Almost universally across principals and general and special education teachers, there is a perception that Austin ISD is understaffed with regard to special education teachers and paraeducators. On the basis of information from the TEA website and our observations, this is not accurate. Below is a chart that presents the teacher-to-student ratio for special education services.

**Table 4. State/Region and Comparable District Staffing Ratios for Special Education**

Entity	Students With Disabilities (In Membership)	Special Education Teachers	Percentage Of Special Education Teachers	Teacher: Student With a Disability	Teacher Turnover Rate
Texas	595,885	34,862.5	9.4%	1:17.1	14.3%
Region 13	46,903	3,157	11.5%	1:14.9	14.8%
<b>Austin</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>755.3</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>1:13.2</b>	<b>13.1%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	11,474	837.2	10.9%	1:10.8	12.2%
Dallas ISD	14,142	1006.2	9.8%	1:14.1	13.8%
Fort Bend ISD	8,256	516.7	10.3%	1:17.6	12.8%
Fort Worth ISD	7,953	497.5	9.1%	1:16	15.2%
Houston ISD	16,056	548.2	4.9%	1:29.2	18.8%
San Antonio ISD	5,983	391.9	12.4%	1:15.3	14.9%

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2021 Texas Academic Proficiency Reports (TAPR) and 2021 RDA Reports

It is important to note that the staffing numbers listed are from published data from the Texas Education Agency and do not account for current staffing numbers reported by the district or for contracted staff.

- Per this chart, the special education teacher to student with a disability ratio for Austin ISD is lower than the state, Region 13, and lower than five of the six comparable districts. While The state average is one teacher for 17.1 students with disabilities, the Austin ISD rate is one teacher for 13.2 students.
- After conducting the school visits and based on data provided by the principal or his or her representative, we prepared the following chart of teacher per student ratios for these specific campuses.



**Table 5. Austin ISD Staffing Analysis from Classroom Observations/Principal Interviews**

Campus	# Special Education Students	# General Education Teachers	# Special Education Teachers	Ratio Sped Teachers: Sped Students	# Para-educators	Ratio Paras: Sped Students	Ratio Adults to Students receiving Sped Services
Austin HS	266	79	4	1:66	15	1:17	<b>1:14.0</b>
Walnut Creek Elem	90	53	7	1:13	7	1:13	<b>1:6.4</b>
Webb MS	107	24	10	1:11	4	1:26	<b>1:7.6</b>
North East Early College HS	148	56	12	1:12	14	1:11	<b>1:5.7</b>
Pleasant Hill Elem	83	29	6	1:13	8	1:10	<b>1:5.9</b>
O'Henry MS	111	25	7	1:15	9	1:12	<b>1:6.9</b>
Mills Elem	98	68	12	1:8	9	1:11	<b>1:4.7</b>
Lively MS	153	68	11	1:13	8	1:19	<b>1:8.1</b>

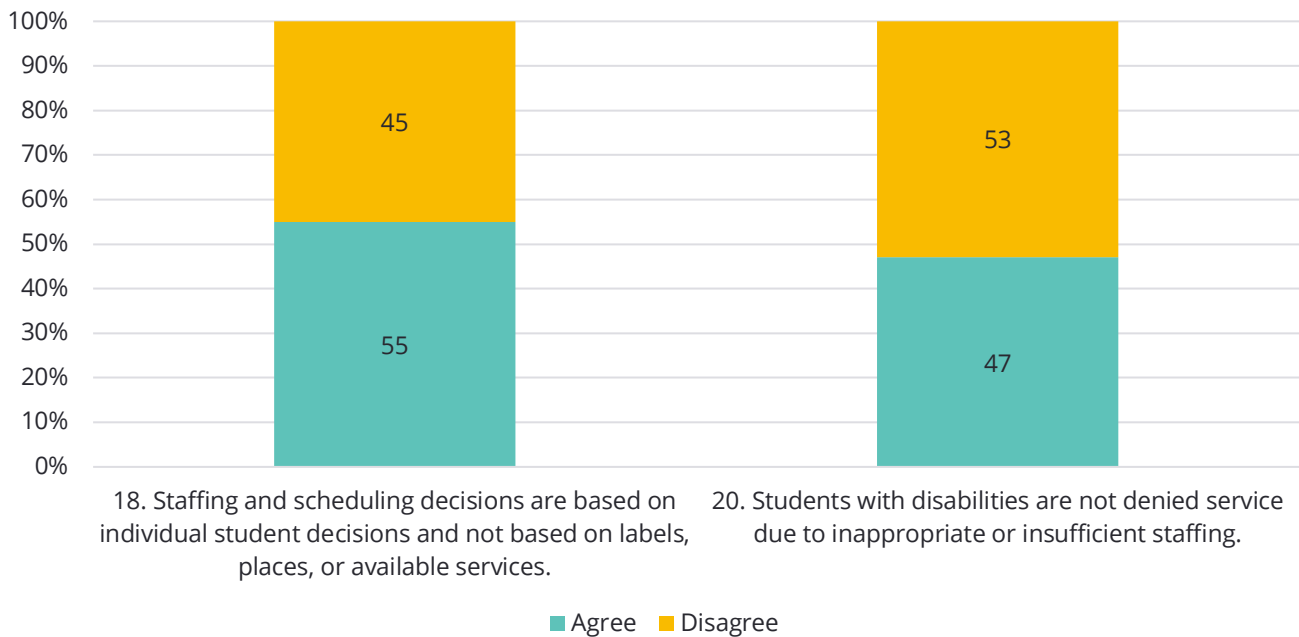
2. Austin ISD staffing ratios are extremely low based on our experience across Texas and the United States. The following are the most current statistics provided by the Director of Special Education, March 1, 2022.

**Table 6. Austin ISD Staffing Analysis from Classroom Observations/Principal Interviews**

# Students receiving special education services	# Special Education Teacher Employed	# Vacant Special Education Teacher Positions	Teacher to Student Ratio Today	# Special Education Para-educators Employed	# Vacant Special Education Para-educator Positions	Average Para to Student Ratio Today	Average Adult to Student Ratio (incl all positions)
<b>9220</b>	778	38	<b>1:11.9</b>	784	155	<b>1:11.8</b>	<b>1:5.3</b>
	With vacancies filled		1:11.0	With vacancies filled		1:9.8	1:5.25

The following is our rationale for these low ratios. Austin ISD does not have an objective, student-centered process for determining staffing needs on the basis of student needs. Without this process, pressures from faculty for assistance, low expectations, inadequate instructional strategies, ineffective use of current personnel, excessive paperwork demands, and perhaps a mistaken belief that being more inclusive requires more staff result in decisions that are not reflective of highly effective services for students with disabilities.

**Figure 6. Faculty Survey Responses Regarding Staffing and Scheduling**



Refer to Appendix F for a copy of the format Stetson and Associates uses to guide principals and teachers to make precise staffing decisions for each student and each class period of the day. Notice that instructional and behavioral supports that are needed for each student are determined first before the need for personal support beyond that of the general education teacher is considered. This follows the spirit and the letter of federal and state guidelines for students with disabilities. In other words, the general education classroom and the general education curriculum are the reference points for all decisions regarding services and service locations. The great majority of students with disabilities do not require special education personnel to deliver services for every subject or class period of the instructional day.

Some of the comments suggest there is an expectation that many students require a paraeducator assigned to them individually. For example, one parent commented: “We need extra people to provide one-on-one services for my child.” However, this is rarely needed and over-support does not serve the student. The assignment of a one-on-one paraeducator can impede student progress, social development, and independence and self-reliance unless objectively determined that it is necessary to meet the needs of the student.

- Another major reason for overstaffing relates to the ineffective use of special education personnel. Are service providers well trained? Do they understand the various models for delivering support in the general education classroom? Are they acquainted with current research regarding the evolution of teacher and paraeducator roles and are they effective

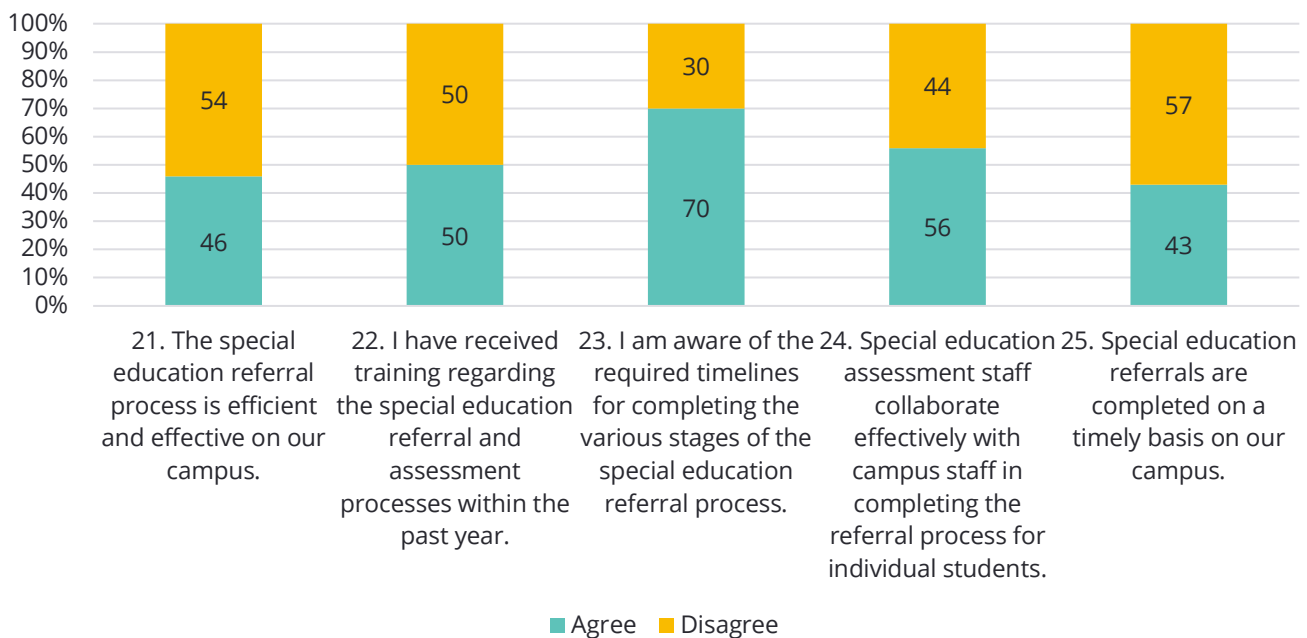
in their roles? Are paraeducators properly directed by a supervising teacher and are their skills developed over time? The responses to these questions are clearly related to limited professional development (to be discussed in the next section).

4. High requests for additional staff reflect a need for improved instruction in both the general education and special education classrooms. As described in the section on instruction and in light of current student performance scores, this is an area for considerable development. The following questions will guide inquiry into areas for improvement:
  - Is instructional delivery research-based, evaluated frequently, and the result of robust collaborative planning?
  - Is the request for one-on-one paraeducators a substitute for effective positive behavioral supports or is it based on the belief that adult proximity resolves behavioral problems in the classroom?
  - To what extent does the lack of a philosophy of shared ownership for all students at the root of an over-reliance on special education staff?
5. Is instructional delivery research-based, evaluated frequently, and the result of robust collaborative planning? Is poor instruction the basis for high requests for staff? As described in the section on instruction and in light of current student performance scores, this is an area for considerable development.
6. Is the request for one-on-one paraeducators a substitute for effective positive behavioral supports or is it based on the belief that adult proximity resolves behavioral problems in the classroom?
7. To what extent does the lack of a philosophy of shared ownership for all students at the root of an over-reliance on special education staff? While the faculty survey results point to a strong sense of shared ownership for all students, vestiges of siloed philosophies can impact referral and staffing statistics.
8. According to Executive Director, Talent Acquisition, one-third of Austin ISD teacher vacancies are in special education. During a recent recruitment effort, only two certified special education teachers indicated interest in joining Austin ISD.
9. The results of exit interviews indicate that special education teachers leave for the following reasons: 1) lack of support from principals 2) paperwork and preparation required for IEP meetings and amount of non-student time 3) parents challenging teachers and 4) student behaviors that are difficult to control.
10. The total expenditures per student with a disability in Austin ISD is higher than the state and all the comparable districts. For example, there is a wide range of program expenditures per student with disability among the comparable districts, ranging from a

low of \$1,04 to AISD's high of \$2,167. *Review the Comparison Report for additional documentation of expenditures per special education student. To what extent is the per student expenditure for special education services the result of over-staffing and under-serving?* This question requires further study with the Finance Department but personnel costs account for the largest portion of any district budget.

Many concerns from faculty related to the “high turnover rate”. The teacher turnover rate for Austin ISD is higher than the state, lower than Region 13, and higher than or equal to four of the comparable districts. This is a point that is of importance to Austin ISD and every district in the country as an unusual number of resignations and retirements along with fewer available qualified applicants complicate an already difficult problem.

**Figure 7. Faculty Survey Responses Regarding Referrals to Special Education**



### Appraisal Staff Findings

1. Appraisal staff, related service staff, and district support staff for students with disabilities are a critical component of the supports and services provided to students with disabilities. Austin ISD has a significantly higher number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff than the state, Region 13, and the six comparable districts. The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD per appraisal staff (LSSPs and Diagnosticians) has increased 46% since 2017, yet the total population of students with disabilities has not decreased, it has in fact increased by 13%. The 2021 number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff is the highest ratio of the five years.

**Table 7. Five Year Comparison of Staffing Information for Appraisal Staff and SLPs for Austin ISD**

	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (IN MEMBERSHIP)	EDUCATIONAL DIAGS	LSSP/ PSYCHOLOGIST	TOTAL APPRAISAL	APPRAISAL STAFF PER SWD	SLPS	SLPS PER SWD
<b>2021</b>	9,952	19.50	16.50	36	276.4	75.70	131.5
<b>2020</b>	10,345	19.50	35.30	54.8	188.8	84.20	122.9
<b>2019</b>	9,542	19.50	40.10	59.6	160.1	87.70	108.9
<b>2018</b>	8,859	15.50	33.40	48.9	181.2	85.40	103.7
<b>2017</b>	8,647	16.50	41.25	57.75	149.8	80.90	106.9

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2021 PEIMS Data/FTE Counts (Does Not Include Contract Staff) and TAPR 2021,2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 Data Reports.

- The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD per appraisal staff (LSSPs and Diagnosticians) has increased 46% since 2017. The 2021 number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff is the highest ratio of the five years.
- The total population of students with disabilities has only increased 13% over a five year period.
- The number of students per Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) in AISD for 2021 is the highest of all the five years listed and is an increase of 19% since 2017.

Current numbers provided by the Department of Special Education on March 1, 2022, show the following.

**Table 8. Current Data re: Diagnostician Employment**

# Students receiving special education services	# Diags Employed	# Diags Contracted	# Diag Vacancies	Ratios if vacancies filled	# LSSPs Employed	# LSSP Contracted	# LSSP Vacancies	Ratios if ll vacancies filled	Total Appraisal to Student Ratio
9220	17	16	13	1:231	12	28	33	1:231	1:53.3
	With vacancies filled			1:126	With vacancies filled			1:126	

2. Speech Therapy services for students with disabilities are typically provided by a licensed speech pathologist, a speech pathologist in their clinical fellowship year (CFY), or a speech therapy assistant. The roles and responsibilities for these individuals are limited by their licensing requirements and the CFY and speech therapy assistant require the supervision of a licensed speech pathologist. The licensing board limits the number of supervision hours per licensee and a speech therapy assistant may not represent speech therapy in the ARD committee meeting nor can they complete evaluations. These limitations can significantly impact the staffing ratios in a district. SLPs caseloads must be reviewed differently because they not only complete evaluations for eligibility, but also provide direct therapy services to students and often complete the ARD paperwork for students who are considered “speech only” students.

3. Austin ISD has a higher number of students with disabilities per SLP than the state and Region 13 and a higher SLP per student with disability ratio than four of the comparable districts. The number of students per Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) in AISD for 2021 is the highest of all the five years listed and caseload numbers have an increase of 19% since 2017. Again, it is important to note that the staffing numbers listed are from published data from the Texas Education Agency and do not account for current staffing numbers reported by the district or contracted staff.
4. The average pay for diagnosticians in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than all comparable districts.

**Table 9. Salary Comparison for Appraisal, Speech-Language Pathologists, Teachers and Educational Aides Average Base Pay**

	EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN	LSSP	SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS	TEACHERS	EDUCATIONAL AIDES
Texas	\$68,620	\$68,283	\$63,801	\$57,641	\$22,165
Region 13	\$65,411	\$63,211	\$62,519	\$55,077	\$24,203
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>\$63,278</b>	<b>\$60,876</b>	<b>\$60,850</b>	<b>\$55,849</b>	<b>\$27,874</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	\$70,381	\$73,623	\$64,957	\$61,137	\$23,116
Dallas ISD	\$79,118	\$81,808	\$67,646	\$63,183	\$28,436
Fort Bend ISD	\$68,174	\$71,980	\$65,405	\$61,428	\$24,009
Fort Worth ISD	\$82,168	\$69,099	\$66,295	\$62,422	\$25,544
Houston ISD	\$71,813	\$71,723	\$62,676	\$56,664	\$22,247
San Antonio ISD	\$74,564	\$58,006	\$60,095	\$56,337	\$23,086

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Staff Salaries and FTE Counts

Salary information does not include stipends nor does it account for number of days worked for the different positions.

- There is a wide range of pay for educational diagnosticians among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$63,278 to a high of \$82,168.
- The average pay for diagnosticians in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than all comparable districts.
- There is a wide range of pay for LSSPs among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$58,006 to a high of \$81,808.
- The average pay for LSSPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts.

- There is a wide range of pay for SLPs among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$60,095 to a high of \$67,646.
- The average pay for SLPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts.
- There is a wide range of pay for teachers among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$55,849 to a high of \$63,183.
- The average pay for teachers in Austin ISD is lower than the state and all the comparable districts.
- There is a wide range of pay for educational aides among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$22,247 to a high of \$28,436.
- The average pay for educational aides in Austin ISD is higher than the state and Region 13 and all the comparable districts.

## Recommendations

1. Continue to address the challenge of salaries that are not competitive.
2. The funds for more competitive salaries should be freed up as the district shifts to an objective process for determining instructional staffing needs. The student to instructional staff ratio greatly exceeds expected parameters if numbers provided are correct.
3. Professional development is critical to address these staffing challenges. It is obvious personnel do not have training regarding effective practices for providing support, collaborative teaching, other models for in-class support or specialized support for those students not served in the general education classroom. Most in-class support observed was one teach – one assist rather than the most robust options for sharing instructional delivery.
4. Effectiveness and efficiency in use of staff can be greatly improved. For example, with the high numbers of paraeducators entrusted with providing personal support, to what extent do they receive strong supervision, skill development and monitoring?
5. Provide training and support to principals in staffing and scheduling for special education services. Offer this by level so that unique scheduling issues are addressed and the information is practical. Expect this same process from every principal for any discussion of the need for staff. Include this skill as part of the annual administrator evaluation.
6. As recommended in Theme Two, implement an objective, student-centered staffing model across the district that will provide equitable services and supports for students with disabilities, provide appropriate levels of staffing based on student needs, and ensure that resource allocations result in the most efficient use of personnel.

7. Provide training and technical support for Austin ISD principals and selected faculty members to provide a consistent understanding of the process. Offer technical support each year for schools to assess student needs for personal assistance and create an initial schedule for special needs in advance of the master scheduling process. This will facilitate more opportunities for common and protected planning times.
8. Establish clear standards for quality in-class support, including limiting the number of special education students in co-taught classes to one-third. If the class is staffed using a support facilitation approach (i.e., special education personnel provide more informal and flexible support two to three times each week), the standard will then be set at no more than the natural proportion of students with disabilities. This standard, in keeping with Austin ISD's statistics, would limit the number of students with disabilities to no more than 13% of the total classroom population when support facilitation is the delivery model of choice.
9. Improve the quality of in-class support by providing training and/or coaching regarding the multiple ways in which two teachers can share instructional delivery in the same classroom and the ways in which they can significantly increase the rigor of the content taught for all students.
10. Investigate and address the possible reasons for delays in filling staffing vacancies and the use of special educators to serve as substitute teachers as well as the reasons substitute teachers are not provided for special education teachers.
11. Provide information and resources to principals regarding creative ways to increase planning time for teachers and to use that time more efficiently. This will enhance the quality and impact of all special education services, as preparation and structured collaboration are essential to the delivery of quality services for all students.
12. Principals should receive training in the creation of a master schedule that begins with decisions related to special needs students, increases options for shared planning times, and facilitates better assignment and scheduling of co-teachers within single discipline areas and/or narrowed span of grade levels.
13. Design measures to sustain an objective student-centered staffing model so that it remains in place. Avoid 'organizational drift' which will result in a rapid return to the problem.
14. Use information gained in exit interviews to improve the level of support Austin ISD personnel need to remain committed to the district and to their profession.

The next standard, a systemic plan and delivery system for professional development and mentoring, is closely linked to many of the findings and recommendations listed above.



# Chapter Five

## Capacity Building



### Standard 7: Capacity Building is Essential for All Who Deliver Services to Students with Disabilities

Capacity building is essential for all who deliver services to students with disabilities. There must be a systemic plan for delivery of professional development and mentoring to achieve quality services and supports. School district cannot rely on university preparation alone but must engage educators in continuous learning. The field of education and the research behind it evolves rapidly. To maintain a standard of quality and effectiveness, learning for educators must be rigorous and ongoing. Parents and the community expect educators to gain and maintain cutting-edge skills throughout their career.

Throughout the course of this evaluation, the need for a strong and responsive professional learning component to support Austin ISD's efforts toward improving outcomes for all students was most frequently expressed by principals and instructional personnel at all levels.

### Findings

1. The need for a strong and responsive professional learning component to support Austin ISD's efforts toward improving outcomes for all students was the most frequently cited need expressed by principals and instructional personnel at all levels.
2. The primary means for professional development was described as each campus's professional learning community (PLC). While this is a powerful mechanism for campus development and improvement it is not sufficient for *districtwide* changes in practices that improve student outcomes and service delivery. Therefore, there is a need for a more formal, systematic process for inter-departmental collaboration, planning and delivery of professional development. When asked if there was such a process in place, one administrator responded, "not much – except the Chiefs do meet regularly." The rationale most often provided was "no time" and "frequent turnover of department leadership."
3. Student and staff diversity, issues of equity, and poverty are areas that were noted by evaluators during interviews and focus groups. "We need immediate change with regard to

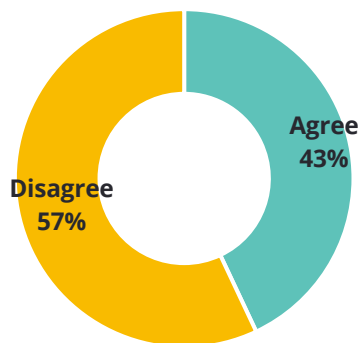
diversity and equity and we must develop skills and connections to children from poverty. We need to believe in all students – and that doesn't happen overnight". This is a direct link to improved inclusive practices for students with disabilities and for all students.

## Recommendations

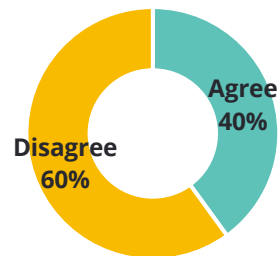
1. The skills and quality of the teaching faculty are recognized as the variable most directly related to student performance. It is imperative that the delivery of professional development not be siloed! The Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education departments should co-plan and co-deliver sessions designed to increase the use of solid Tier 1 strategies, differentiated instruction, multilevel instruction, schoolwide behavioral support strategies, scaffolding techniques, and instructional accommodations to all faculty.
2. The process for determining instructional and behavioral needs *before* determining staffing has been described in the previous section but should be a major component of future professional development for the district.
3. The cost and time invested in professional development does not yield improvement in practice unless it is accompanied by skilled instructional coaching. Identify all personnel across the various departments who are in a coaching capacity and focus on sharpening their presentation and mentoring skills and in building a common vocabulary.

**Figure 8. Faculty Survey Responses re: Professional Development**

Faculty Q8: Our faculty has received sufficient training to effectively implement inclusive education.



Faculty Q10: AISD teachers have received professional development and coaching to effectively teach special needs students in the standards-based general education curriculum as appropriate.



# Chapter Six

## Family Engagement



### Standard 8: Family and Community Engagement is Essential to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities

Parent and community member engagement is essential in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and ensuring their post-school success. Their satisfaction with services provided to their children is a critical metric for school leaders. The district must be certain that communications are clear, all interactions are respectful, and that the parent's perspective is actively sought as specialized services are designed and provided. The parent voice should be encouraged and welcomed.

### Findings

1. The Department of Special Education has launched a series of meetings for parents of students with disabilities to engage them in establishing quality practices intended to shape the services their children receive and improve present and future outcomes. As one coordinator commented, "we are beginning to ask what parents want - we are building relationships with parents."
2. The following Parent Survey results are very helpful in gauging satisfaction with current services and in identifying the areas in which parents believe that improvement is needed.

**Table 10. Parent Survey Responses**

1. My child's school provides quality services for students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	126	31.6%
	Agree	179	44.9%
	Disagree	61	15.3%
	Strongly Disagree	33	8.3%
2. I believe my child's teachers have the skills and experience to provide the quality instruction that my child needs.	Strongly Agree	149	37.3%
	Agree	172	43.1%
	Disagree	53	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	25	6.3%
3. My child is considered a full member of the student body in his/her school.	Strongly Agree	183	47.5%
	Agree	145	37.7%
	Disagree	35	9.1%
	Strongly Disagree	22	5.7%
4. Faculty members we have talked with seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility for all students, including students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	177	44.6%
	Agree	150	37.8%
	Disagree	47	11.8%
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.8%
5. The district's special education referral process is efficient and effective for our child.	Strongly Agree	85	22.8%
	Agree	119	31.9%
	Disagree	77	20.6%
	Strongly Disagree	92	24.7%
6. I provide input into the creation of my child's IEP/BIP.	Strongly Agree	202	50.1%
	Agree	169	41.9%
	Disagree	20	5.0%
	Strongly Disagree	12	3.0%
8. I am encouraged to be an active participant in our child's IEP meeting.	Strongly Agree	207	51.5%
	Agree	159	39.6%
	Disagree	29	7.2%
	Strongly Disagree	7	1.7%
9. I attended our child's most recent IEP team meeting.	Strongly Agree	270	66.7%
	Agree	125	30.9%
	Disagree	7	1.7%
	Strongly Disagree	3	0.7%
10. My child's teachers accommodate and modify instruction as specified in the IEP/BIP.	Strongly Agree	152	39.3%
	Agree	164	42.4%
	Disagree	48	12.4%
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.9%
11. I understand how my student's grades are determined.	Strongly Agree	116	29.5%
	Agree	162	41.2%
	Disagree	83	21.1%
	Strongly Disagree	32	8.1%
12. My experience in attending ARD meetings in the district has been positive.	Strongly Agree	169	41.5%
	Agree	172	42.3%
	Disagree	38	9.3%
	Strongly Disagree	28	6.9%
13. My child's general and special education teachers work together to plan his/her educational program.	Strongly Agree	153	39.7%
	Agree	158	41.0%
	Disagree	45	11.7%
	Strongly Disagree	29	7.5%

14. The educators at my child's school treat us as full and equal partners in matters concerning my child's educational program.	Strongly Agree	195	48.4%
	Agree	157	39.0%
	Disagree	27	6.7%
	Strongly Disagree	24	6.0%
15. I feel supported by my child's principal in our efforts to ensure my child receives a quality education.	Strongly Agree	159	42.3%
	Agree	130	34.6%
	Disagree	50	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	37	9.8%
16. I feel supported by the central office staff in my efforts to ensure my child receives a quality education.	Strongly Agree	117	34.0%
	Agree	101	29.4%
	Disagree	66	19.2%
	Strongly Disagree	60	17.4%

## Recommendations

1. The new parent outreach activities are an excellent beginning and the department must continue with more transparency and more helpful resources for parents on the website. The means of reaching parents and engaging them in identifying department priorities and services have expanded dramatically over the past decade. The current website can be expanded to offer rich resources, clear information about upcoming policies and procedures and opportunities for greater involvement.
2. Trust must be built after the past few years of missed deadlines for referrals, testing and initiation of required services. The district has been very transparent through the news media and articles that describe progress toward eliminating the backlog of assessments. It will be important to continue to engage parents and the community in updates and new initiatives.
3. As the district improves the process for determining services and staffing, it is necessary to provide the rationale for these actions. New and more effective models of support, instructional practices and more targeted professional development will benefit students with disabilities and performance levels will improve when services are truly focused on student needs. Parents will need to be partners with Austin ISD in making these decisions for their children and clear and practical information should be shared. These are efforts to significantly improve services, close the achievement gap and improve post-school opportunities.

# Conclusion

Austin ISD is to be commended for taking positive steps to ensure effective and equitable practices are in place in its schools and across its programs for students with disabilities. It is our hope that this report of findings and recommendations serves as a springboard to a positive future for all Austin ISD students. We look forward to your accomplishments and successes in the future!

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# APPENDIX A

## Comparable District Study



# Appendix A: COMPARABLE DISTRICT STUDY

## Austin Independent School District

As part of the *Review of Staffing Practices for Students with Disabilities* for the Austin Independent School District, Stetson and Associates, Inc., provides an analysis of comparable data relative to enrollment, staffing, student performance, budget and financial resources, and compliance with state and federal mandates for special education populations. Specifically, this report reviews information from the state, Region 13, and other school districts with comparable enrollment of students and experience in addressing the factors associated with services for this population of students.

This report is based on readily available information pertaining to enrollment, staffing performance, budget, and compliance from national, state, and regional databases. It includes information from the following sources:

1. Texas Education Agency: Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) 2019-2021 by State, Region 13, and Districts
2. Texas Education Agency: PEIMS Standard Reports 2020-2021 Special Education Student Enrollment Information by Disability Category
3. Texas Education Agency: Results Driven Accountability 2020 (State and Region) and 2021 (Districts)
4. Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Staff Salaries and FTE Counts by State, Region 13, and Districts
5. Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Budgeted Financial Data by State, Region 13, and Districts

The district selected six school districts in Texas for comparison, including:

1. Cypress-Fairbanks ISD (Cy-Fair)
2. Dallas ISD
3. Fort Bend ISD
4. Fort Worth ISD
5. Houston ISD
6. San Antonio ISD

## STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**Table 1: National, State and Regional Comparison of Enrollment for Students with Disabilities**

	TOTAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
National	7,300,000*	14%
Texas	587,076	10.7%
Region 13	46,901	12%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>9,998</b>	<b>13.3%</b>

Source: US Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, Children and Youth with Disabilities (May 2020), Texas Education Agency: 2021 Results Driven Accountability (RDA)

\* (ages 3-21 who receive services under IDEA for the 2019-2020 school year)

- ▶ Austin ISD is below the national average in the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the district and above the state and Region 13 average in the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the district.

**Table 2: Individual School District Enrollment Comparisons for Students with Disabilities**

	TOTAL STUDENTS (IN MEMBERSHIP) WITH DISABILITIES	ACCOUNTABILITY RATING/SPED DETERMINATION 2021	% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES*
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>Needs Assistance</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	11,474	Meets Requirements	10%
Dallas ISD	14,142	Needs Assistance	9.7%
Fort Bend ISD	8,256	Needs Assistance	10.8%
Fort Worth ISD	7,953	Needs Intervention	10.4%
Houston ISD	16,056	Needs Intervention	8.2%
San Antonio ISD	5,983	Needs Intervention	13.1%

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2021 Texas Academic Proficiency Report (TAPR)

- ▶ Enrollment percentages for students with disabilities among Austin ISD and the six comparable districts range from 8.2% - 13.1%.
- ▶ Austin ISD is higher in the percentage of enrollment of students with disabilities than the six comparable school districts.

**Table 3: Enrollment of Students with Disability by Primary Disability Category**

DISTRICT	OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRED	INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY	EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE	LEARNING DISABILITY	SPEECH IMPAIRMENT	AUTISM
Texas	5,644/15%	61,611/10%	37,461/6%	91,045/33%	119,431/20%	84,431/14%
Region 13	6,843/15%	3,696/8%	2,867/6%	17,350/37%	9,074/19%	6,219/13%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>1,298/13%</b>	<b>889/9%</b>	<b>534/5%</b>	<b>4,087/41%</b>	<b>1,712/17%</b>	<b>1,293/13%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	1,640/14%	1,306/11%	639/5%	2,789/24%	2,974/25%	1,674/14%
Dallas ISD	2,144/15%	1,564/11%	555/4%	4,186/29%	1,609/12%	3,404/24%
Fort Bend ISD	1,197/14%	888/11%	717/9%	2,251/27%	1,187/14%	1,779/21%
Fort Worth ISD	861/11%	905/11%	286/4%	2,342/29%	2,110/26%	1,270/16%
Houston ISD	2,236/14%	2,202/14%	821/5%	5,158/32%	2,290/14%	2,830/17%
San Antonio ISD	801/13%	586/10%	451/8%	2,303/39%	1,085/18%	588/9%

Source: Texas Education Agency: PEIMS Standard Reports /Special Education Reports/2020-2021 Special Education Student Enrollment Information by Disability Category

- ▶ There is a wide range of percentages in each disability category among the comparable districts in the categories of Other Health Impaired (11%-15%), Intellectual Disability (9%-14%), Emotional Disturbance (4%-9%), Learning Disability (24%-41%), Speech Impairment (12%-26%), and Autism (9%-24%).
- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Other Health Impaired (OHI), is below the state, Region 13 and lower than or equal to five of the comparable districts.

- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Intellectually Disabled (ID), is below the state percentage and above the Region 13 percentage. The percentage of students identified as ID in Austin ISD is lower than all six comparable districts.
- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Emotionally Disturbed (ED), is lower than the state, Region 13, and lower than or equal to four of the six comparable districts.
- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Learning Disabled (LD), is above the state, Region 13, and all six of the comparable districts.
- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Speech Impaired (SI), is below the state, Region 13, and lower than three of the comparable districts.
- ▶ The percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the category of Autism (AU), is below the state, equal to Region 13, and is lower than five of the six comparable districts.
- ▶ The disability categories of Orthopedic Impairment (OI), Auditory Impairment (AI), Visual Impairment (VI), Deaf-Blind (DB), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC) were reviewed as well. At the state, Region 13, and district level, the percentage of students with disabilities in each of these categories was 2% or less of the total number of students with disabilities.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE

**Table 4: Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities 2020**

DISTRICT	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Texas: Target 80-100%	77.9%
Region 13	79.3%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>79.4%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	75.5%
Dallas ISD	67.0%
Fort Bend ISD	74.0%
Fort Worth ISD	65.0%
Houston ISD	66.2%
San Antonio ISD	71.6%

Source: Texas Education Agency, 2021 Results Driven Accountability (RDA).

- ▶ The graduation rate in Austin ISD for students with disabilities is above both the state and the Region 13 rate for students with disabilities.
- ▶ The graduation rate in Austin ISD for students with disabilities is above all six comparable districts.

**Table 5: Comparison of Special Education 2021 STAAR 3-8 Passing Rates for Students with Disabilities**

PERFORMANCE	MATHEMATICS STANDARD 70%	READING STANDARD 70%	SCIENCE STANDARD 65%	SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 65%	WRITING STANDARD 70%
Texas	38.5	36.7	36.9	31.8	25.9
Region 13	34.9	36.2	34.9	30.5	25.4
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>25.2</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	45.3	42.3	47.0	41.9	29.8
Dallas ISD	41.7	38.2	37.0	34.1	25.0
Fort Bend ISD	38.6	41.1	39.7	34.9	26.6
Fort Worth ISD	28.7	31.8	27.3	21.2	23.0
Houston ISD	31.9	32.6	29.5	27.7	23.2
San Antonio ISD	20.3	22.6	20.4	25.8	15.4

Source: Texas Education Agency, 2021 Results Driven Accountability by district, Region 13, and by state.

- ▶ Students with disabilities in Austin ISD did not meet minimum state standards for STAAR 3-8 in all subject areas.
- ▶ Students with disabilities in Austin ISD scored below the state, Region 13, in all academic areas and below four of the comparable districts in mathematics, three of the comparable districts in reading, four of the comparable districts in science and below five of the comparable districts in writing.
- ▶ In contrast, although AISD scores in social studies were below the state and Region 13 they were above four of the six comparable districts in social studies.

**Table 6: Comparison of 2021 Special Education STAAR EOC Passing Rates for Students with Disabilities**

PERFORMANCE	ALGEBRA I STANDARD 65%	BIOLOGY STANDARD 75%	US HISTORY STANDARD 70%	ENGLISH I & II STANDARD 60%
Texas	46.8	54.3	63.2	33.1
Region 13	43.3	55.8	65.6	33.8
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>39.4</b>
Cy- Fair ISD	63.0	67.1	75.6	45.1
Dallas ISD	49.9	54.1	57.7	34.5
Fort Bend ISD	41.6	57.4	62.1	40.7
Fort Worth ISD	30.6	43.3	48.6	26.4
Houston ISD	41.2	48.0	57.4	34.2
San Antonio ISD	35.0	41.4	49.8	21.4

Source: Texas Education Agency, 2021 Results Driven Accountability

- ▶ Students with disabilities in Austin ISD did not meet minimum state standards for EOC passing rates in all four subject areas.

- ▶ The Algebra I EOC passing rate for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is below the state, slightly below the region, and above four of the six comparable districts.
- ▶ The Biology EOC passing rate for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is above the state, Region 13, and five of the comparable districts.
- ▶ The passing rate for students with disabilities in Austin ISD on the US History EOC is slightly above the state, below the region and above five of the six comparable districts.
- ▶ The English I & II EOC passing rate for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is above the state, Region 13, and above four of the comparable districts.

## STAFFING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Table 7: State/Region and Comparable District Staffing Ratios for Special Education**

ENTITY	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (IN MEMBERSHIP)	SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS	PERCENTAGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS	TEACHER: STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY	TEACHER TURNOVER RATE
Texas	595,885	34,862.5	9.4%	1:17.1	14.3%
Region 13	46,903	3,157	11.5%	1:14.9	14.8%
<b>Austin</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>755.3</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>1:13.2</b>	<b>13.1%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	11,474	837.2	10.9%	1:10.8	12.2%
Dallas ISD	14,142	1006.2	9.8%	1:14.1	13.8%
Fort Bend ISD	8,256	516.7	10.3%	1:17.6	12.8%
Fort Worth ISD	7,953	497.5	9.1%	1:16	15.2%
Houston ISD	16,056	548.2	4.9%	1:29.2	18.8%
San Antonio ISD	5,983	391.9	12.4%	1:15.3	14.9%

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2021 Texas Academic Proficiency Reports (TAPR) and 2021 RDA Reports

It is important to note that the staffing numbers listed are from published data from the Texas Education Agency and do not account for current staffing numbers reported by the district or for contracted staff.

- ▶ There is a wide range of percentage of special education teachers among the comparable districts, ranging from 4.9% to 13.7%.
- ▶ Austin ISD employs a higher percentage of special education teachers than the state and Region 13 and higher than five of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range in teacher to student with disability ratio among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of 1:10.8 to a high of 1:29.2
- ▶ The special education teacher to student with a disability ratio for Austin ISD is lower than the state, Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range in teacher turnover rate among comparable districts, ranging from a low of 12.2% to a high of 18.8%
- ▶ The teacher turnover rate for Austin ISD is lower than the state, Region 13, and lower than four of the comparable districts.

**Table 8: Comparison of Staffing Information for Appraisal Staff**

	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (IN MEMBERSHIP)	EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN	LSSP/ PSYCHOLOGIST	PSYCH ASSOCIATE	TOTAL APPRAISAL	APPRAISAL STAFF PER STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY
Texas	595,885	4895.68	2044.98	71.66	7,012.32	1:85
Region 13	46,903	175.51	247.29	2.00	424.8	1:110.4
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>19.50</b>	<b>16.50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1:276.4</b>
Cy- Fair ISD	11,474	99.25	30.73	10.00	129.98	1:88.3
Dallas ISD	14,142	93.93	17.82	0	111.75	1:126.6
Fort Bend ISD	8,256	58.82	46.70	0	105.52	1:78.2
Fort Worth ISD	7,953	88.87	44.60	0	133.47	1:59.6
Houston ISD	16,056	123.00	40.47	0	163.47	1:98.2
San Antonio ISD	5,983	11.00	43.00	0	54	1:110.8

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Staff Salaries and FTE Counts (Does Not Include Contract Staff) and TAPR 2021 Data Reports.

This data must be interpreted with caution as it does not reflect the number of appraisal staff that are contracted for services in the state, region, or comparable districts.

- ▶ There is a wide range of appraisal staff to students with disability ratios among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of 1:59.6 to a high of 1:276.4
- ▶ Austin ISD has a significantly higher number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff than the state, Region 13, and the six comparable districts.

**Table 9: Comparison of Speech/Language Pathologists Staff**

	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	SPEECH THERAPIST/ PATHOLOGIST (SLP)	SLP PER STUDENT WITH DISABILITY
Texas	595,885	5,464.27	1:102.4
Region 13	46,903	405.98	1:115.5
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>75.70</b>	<b>1:131.5</b>
Cy- Fair ISD	11,474	109.98	1:104.3
Dallas ISD	14,142	80.85	1:175
Fort Bend ISD	8,256	71.89	1:114.8
Fort Worth ISD	7,953	96.65	1:82.3
Houston ISD	16,056	84.82	1:189.3
San Antonio ISD	5,983	53.70	1:111.4

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Staff Salaries and FTE Counts (Does Not Include Contract Staff), 2021 TAPR Reports

This data must be interpreted with caution as it does not reflect the number of speech-language pathologists that are contracted for services in the state, region, or comparable districts.

- ▶ There is a wide range of SLP to students with disability ratios among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of 1:82.3 to a high of 1:189.3

- ▶ Austin ISD has a higher number of students with disabilities per SLP than the state and Region 13 and a higher SLP per student with disability ratio than four of the comparable districts.

## BUDGET AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

**Table 10: Special Education Actual Budgeted Data by State and District (Information Based on “All” Funds)**

	TOTAL REVENUE PER STUDENT ALL FUNDS	TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES / PER STUDENT	EXPENDITURES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	PROGRAM EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT WITH DISABILITY
Texas	\$10,255	\$10,602	11.14%	\$1,100
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>\$10,727</b>	<b>\$11,944</b>	<b>18.14%</b>	<b>\$2,167</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	\$8,818	\$9,588	10.86%	\$1,041
Dallas ISD	\$11,545	\$12,480	9.24%	\$1,153
Fort Bend ISD	\$9,588	\$10,106	15.63%	\$1,579
Fort Worth ISD	\$9,728	\$10,939	10.65%	\$1,165
Houston ISD	\$10,102	\$10,624	10.90%	\$1,158
San Antonio ISD	\$11,441	\$11,876	13.46%	\$1,599

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Special Education Budgeted Financial Data by State and Districts

- ▶ There is a wide range of revenue per student among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$8,818 to a high of \$11,545.
- ▶ Austin ISD has a higher revenue per student than the state and four of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of operating expenditures per student among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$9,588 to a high of \$12,480.
- ▶ There is a wide range of the percentage of expenditures for students with disabilities among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of 9.24% to a high of 18.14%.
- ▶ The percentage of expenditures for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is higher than the state and all six of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of program expenditures per student with disability among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$1,041 to a AISD’s high of \$2,167.
- ▶ The total expenditures per student with a disability in Austin ISD is higher than the state and all the comparable districts.

**Table 11: Salary Comparison for Appraisal, Speech-Language Pathologists, Teachers and Educational Aides Average Base Pay**

	EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN	LSSP	SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS	TEACHERS	EDUCATIONAL AIDES
Texas	\$68,620	\$68,283	\$63,801	\$57,641	\$22,165
Region 13	\$65,411	\$63,211	\$62,519	\$55,077	\$24,203
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>\$63,278</b>	<b>\$60,876</b>	<b>\$60,850</b>	<b>\$55,849</b>	<b>\$27,874</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	\$70,381	\$73,623	\$64,957	\$61,137	\$23,116
Dallas ISD	\$79,118	\$81,808	\$67,646	\$63,183	\$28,436
Fort Bend ISD	\$68,174	\$71,980	\$65,405	\$61,428	\$24,009
Fort Worth ISD	\$82,168	\$69,099	\$66,295	\$62,422	\$25,544
Houston ISD	\$71,813	\$71,723	\$62,676	\$56,664	\$22,247
San Antonio ISD	\$74,564	\$58,006	\$60,095	\$56,337	\$23,086

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2020-2021 Staff Salaries and FTE Counts

Salary information does not include stipends or does it account for number of days worked for the different positions.

- ▶ There is a wide range of pay for educational diagnosticians among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$63,278 to a high of \$82,168.
- ▶ The average pay for diagnosticians in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than all comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of pay for LSSPs among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$58,006 to a high of \$81,808.
- ▶ The average pay for LSSPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of pay for SLPs among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$60,095 to a high of \$67,646.
- ▶ The average pay for SLPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of pay for teachers among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$55,849 to a high of \$63,183.
- ▶ The average pay for teachers in Austin ISD is lower than the state and all the comparable districts.
- ▶ There is a wide range of pay for educational aides among the comparable districts, ranging from a low of \$22,247 to a high of \$28,436.
- ▶ The average pay for educational aides in Austin ISD is higher than the state and Region 13 and all the comparable districts.



## COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL TARGETS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Table 12: Data Comparison for Special Education LRE and Dropout Rate**

2021 RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY	LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT RATES				SPECIAL EDUCATION DROPOUT RATE
	Regular EC Program (3-5)	Regular Class $\geq$ 80% (6-21)	Regular Class <40% (6-21)	Separate Settings (6-21)	
Texas PL Cut Points	30-100%	70.0 – 100%	0 - 10.0%	N/A	0 - 1.8%
Texas	29.7%	69.7%	14.9%	0.3%	1.9%
Region 13	30.7%	71.8%	11.0%	*	1.1%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>69.9%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	29.2%	67.6%	14.9%	0.5%	0.9%
Dallas ISD	20.9%	73.7%	17.2%	*	3.5%
Fort Bend ISD	16.7%	66.9%	15.6%	*	1.6%
Fort Worth ISD	27.5%	76.0%	14.6%	2.2%	3.9%
Houston ISD	29.8%	72.4%	21.0%	0.5%	3.3%
San Antonio ISD	30.8%	78.6%	15.8%	*	2.8%

Source: Texas Education Agency 2020 and 2021 Results Driven Accountability

An asterisk (\*) is used to mask data to protect student confidentiality.

- ▶ Austin ISD met the state target for Least Restrictive Environment for the Regular Class <40%. The district did not meet the state target for the Regular EC Program or Regular Class  $\geq$ 80%.
- ▶ The rate of students removed to a Separate Setting in Austin ISD is above the state rate and above two of the districts with reported data.
- ▶ The special education dropout rate in Austin ISD is lower than the state and lower than five of the comparable districts.

**Table 13: Data Comparison for Special Education STAAR ALT Participation Rate**

2021 RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY	STAAR ALT PARTICIPATION RATE		
	Mathematics	Reading	Science
<b>State Rate</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<b>Austin ISD</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
Cy-Fair ISD	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%
Dallas ISD	1.9%	1.7%	1.7%
Fort Bend ISD	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%
Fort Worth ISD	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%
Houston ISD	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
San Antonio ISD	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%

Source: Texas Education Agency 2020 and 2021 Results Driven Accountability

An asterisk (\*) is used to mask data to protect student confidentiality.

- ▶ The participation rate on the STAAR ALT for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is lower than the state rate in mathematics, reading, and science.
- ▶ The participation rate on the STAAR ALT for students with disabilities in Austin ISD equal to or lower than five of the comparable districts in mathematics is equal to or lower than four of the comparable districts in reading, and lower than all comparable districts in science.

## FIVE YEAR LONGITUDINAL DATA FOR AUSTIN ISD

**Table 14: Five Year Comparison of Special Education 2021 STAAR 3-8 Passing Rates for Students with Disabilities in Austin ISD and Performance Level Rating**

PERFORMANCE	MATHEMATICS STANDARD 70%/PL LEVEL	READING STANDARD 70%/PL LEVEL	SCIENCE STANDARD 65%/PL LEVEL	SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 65%/PL LEVEL	WRITING STANDARD 70%/PL LEVEL
<b>2021</b>	<b>31.8/PL3</b>	<b>35.4/PL3</b>	<b>27.8/PL3</b>	<b>24.3/PL3</b>	<b>25.2/PL3</b>
2020	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
2019	52.2/PL2	45.4/PL2	44.8/PL2	36.9/PL3	34.5/PL3
2018	52.7/PL2	48.7/PL2	45.2/PL2	32.3/PL3	30.6/PL3
2017	48.7/PL2	41.2/PL2	42.1/PL2	33.6/PL3	27.3/PL3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Austin ISD's 2017, 2018, Performance Based Monitoring Analysis (PBMAS) Data and 2019, and 2021 Results Driven Accountability. NOTE: There is no data for any district in Texas due to the cancellation of the administration of the STAAR test.

- ▶ The STAAR Scores for students with disabilities in grades 3-8 in AISD have been below the state standard in all areas for the last four years that the STAAR was administered.
- ▶ In 2018 and 2019, the scores for students with disabilities increased in all areas from the 2017 scores with the exception of the Social Studies Score in which there was a decline of 1.3 from the 2017 to 2018.
- ▶ The 2021 scores declined significantly in all areas from the 2019 scores and were even lower than the scores five years ago.

**Table 15: Five Year Comparison of Special Education EOCs for Students with Disabilities in Austin ISD and Performance Level Rating**

PERFORMANCE	ALGEBRA I STANDARD 65%/PL LEVEL	BIOLOGY STANDARD 75%/ PL LEVEL	US HISTORY STANDARD 70%/ PL LEVEL	ENGLISH I & II STANDARD 60%/ PL LEVEL
2021	43.2/PL2	57.9/PL2	63.4/PL1	39.4/PL2
2020	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS
2019	62.3/PL1	63.9/PL2	73.6/PL0	32.1/PL2
2018	61.2/PL0	66.3/PL1	68.4/PL1	34.6/PL2
2017	55.3/PL1	63.3/PL2	71.5/PL0	29.0/PL3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Austin ISD's 2017, 2018, Performance Based Monitoring Analysis (PBMAS) Data and 2019, and 2021 Results Driven Accountability. NOTE: There is no data for any district in Texas due to the cancellation of the administration of the STAAR test.

- ▶ The EOC scores for students with disabilities in Austin ISD increased each year from the 2017 scores in all areas with the exception of the social studies score in 2018.
- ▶ The ELA scores for all of the four years reported are significantly below the standard; however, the 2021 score is the highest reported score for the four years.
- ▶ The 2021 EOC scores for students with disabilities in Austin ISD are the lowest reported scores for the four-year period for all areas with the exception of the ELA scores.

**Table 16: Five Year Comparison of Staffing Information for Appraisal Staff and SLPs for Austin ISD**

	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (IN MEMBER- SHIP)	EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN	LSSP/ PSYCHOLOGIST	TOTAL APPRAISAL	APPRAISAL STAFF PER SWD	SLPS	SLPS PER SWD
2021	9,952	19.50	16.50	36	276.4	75.70	131.5
2020	10,345	19.50	35.30	54.8	188.8	84.20	122.9
2019	9,542	19.50	40.10	59.6	160.1	87.70	108.9
2018	8,859	15.50	33.40	48.9	181.2	85.40	103.7
2017	8,647	16.50	41.25	57.75	149.8	80.90	106.9

Source: Texas Education Agency: 2021 PEIMS Data/FTE Counts (Does Not Include Contract Staff) and TAPR 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 Data Reports.

- ▶ The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD per appraisal staff (LSSPs and Diagnosticians) has increased 46% since 2017. The 2021 number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff is the highest ratio of the five years.
- ▶ The total population of students with disabilities has only increased 13% over a five year period.
- ▶ The number of students per Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) in AISD for 2021 is the highest of all the five years listed and is an increase of 19% since 2017.

# SUMMARY

This comparison study of Austin Independent School District with state, Region 13, and six comparable districts selected by the district was completed to provide the district with information that indicates the rank or status of the district relative to enrollment, performance, staffing, compliance, and financial information. It also serves to support the formal review of staffing practices for students with disabilities. The following represents the most significant findings that resulted from this comparison.

## STUDENT ENROLLMENT

A key factor in determining staffing needs for a district is the actual number of students that will need services. However, in addition to the number of students needing services, the district must also consider the type and severity of the disability conditions in the district. An over-representation of students in disability areas that frequently require more staffing due to behavioral issues such as ED, OHI, or AU can often require a higher level of staff. The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD has increased 13% since 2017. In contrast, the overall student population in membership was reported to be 82,766 in 2017 and 74,725 in 2021 (TEA, TAPR data) which is an overall decrease of approximately 10%.

Austin ISD is below the national average in the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the district and above the state and Region 13 average in the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the district. Austin ISD is higher in the percentage of enrollment of students with disabilities than the six comparable school districts.

When compared by category of disability, the percentage of Austin ISD students with disabilities in the categories of OHI, ID, ED, and SI is below the state percentage. The percentage of students identified as OHI, ID, and ED, and AU is lower than most of the comparable districts and the percentage of Austin ISD students identified as LD is higher than the state percentage and higher than all comparable districts.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The graduation rate in Austin ISD for students with disabilities is above both the state and the Region 13 rate for students with disabilities and above all comparable districts.

Students with disabilities in Austin ISD did not meet minimum state standards for STAAR 3 – 8 in all subject areas nor did they meet minimum state standards for EOC passing rates in all four subject areas. The district has not met the minimum standards for students with disabilities in any of the four year periods reported. What is of most concern is the significant decline in the 2021 STAAR 3-8 scores for students with disabilities in AISD from the 2019 scores. In 2018 and 2019, the scores for students with disabilities increased in all areas from the 2017 scores with the exception of the Social Studies in which there was a decline of 1.3 from the 2017 to 2018 score.

The ELA EOC scores for all of the four years reported are significantly below the standard; however, the 2021 score is the highest reported score for the four years. In contrast, the 2021 EOC scores for students with disabilities in Austin ISD are the lowest reported scores for the four-year period for all areas with the exception of the ELA scores.

## STAFFING

Austin ISD employs a higher percentage of special education teachers than the state and Region 13 and a higher than five of the comparable districts. The special education teacher to student with a disability ratio for Austin ISD is lower than the state, Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts. The teacher turnover rate for Austin ISD is higher than the state, lower than Region 13, and higher than or equal to four of the comparable districts.

Appraisal staff, related service staff, and district support staff for students with disabilities are a critical component of the supports and services provided to students with disabilities. Many districts contract for these services as there is a shortage in many of these areas. The sufficiency, efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness of these staff members can impact services in a district. Appraisal staff includes Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) and Educational Diagnosticians. The roles and responsibilities of LSSPs and diagnosticians are quite different and there are licensure and certification requirements that determine the assessment scope of these positions. Austin ISD has a significantly higher number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff than the state, Region 13, and the six comparable districts. The number of students with disabilities in Austin ISD per appraisal staff (LSSPs and Diagnosticians) has increased 46% since 2017, yet the total population of students with disabilities has not decreased, it has in fact increased by 13%. The 2021 number of students with disabilities per appraisal staff is the highest ratio of the five years.

Speech Therapy services for students with disabilities are typically provided by a licensed speech pathologist, a speech pathologist in their clinical fellowship year (CFY), or a speech therapy assistant. The roles and responsibilities for these individuals are limited by their licensing requirements and the CFY and speech therapy assistant require the supervision of a licensed speech pathologist. The licensing board limits the number of supervision hours per licensee and a speech therapy assistant may not represent speech therapy in the ARD committee meeting nor can they complete evaluations. These limitations can significantly impact the staffing ratios in a district. SLPs caseloads must be reviewed differently because they not only complete evaluations for eligibility, but also provide direct therapy services to students and often complete the ARD paperwork for students who are considered "speech only" students. Austin ISD has a higher number of students with disabilities per SLP than the state and Region 13 and a higher SLP per student with disability ratio than four of the comparable districts. The number of students per Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) in AISD for 2021 is the highest of all the five years listed and caseload numbers have an increase of 19% since 2017.

Again, it is important to note that the staffing numbers listed are from published data from the Texas Education Agency and do not account for current staffing numbers reported by the district or contracted staff.

## BUDGET AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Austin ISD has a higher revenue per student than the state and four of the comparable districts. The total expenditure per student in Austin ISD is higher than the state and five of the comparable districts. The percentage of expenditures for basic educational services in Austin ISD is lower than the state and lower than all comparable districts. The percentage of expenditures for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is higher than the state and all comparable districts. The total expenditures per student with a disability in Austin ISD is higher than the state and all the comparable districts.

## SALARIES

The average pay for diagnosticians in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than all comparable districts. The average pay for LSSPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts. The average pay for SLPs in Austin ISD is lower than the state and Region 13, and lower than five of the comparable districts. The average pay for teachers in Austin ISD is lower than the state and all the comparable districts. The average pay for educational aides in Austin ISD is higher than the state and Region 13 and all the comparable districts.

Again, salary information does not include stipends base pay nor does it account for the number of days worked for the different positions.

## COMPLIANCE

Austin ISD met the state target for Least Restrictive Environment for the Regular Class <40%. The district did not meet the state target for the Regular EC Program or Regular Class ≥80%. The special education dropout rate in Austin ISD is lower than the state and lower than five of the comparable districts.

The participation rate on the STAAR ALT for students with disabilities in Austin ISD is lower than the state rate in mathematics, reading, and science. The district has met the requirements for the Special Education Determination Status every year since 2017 until the 2021 when the district received a Status of "Needs Assistance." The district is also has received significant disproportionality (SD) for over representation of Asians in the disability area of Autism since 2018.

## CLOSING

The information contained in this study will inform the formal staffing study and will support the findings and recommendations relative to sufficiency, efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness of staffing for students with disabilities in the Austin Independent School District.

# APPENDIX B

## Classroom Observation Summary

## Classroom Observation Summary Report

### Austin Independent School District

<b>Domain 2. Instructional Activities/Use of Academic Learning Time</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
2a) Less than 10% of observed time spent on non-instructional issues.	66.67
2b) 85% of students appear engaged in assigned activities.	77.42
2c) Off-task behavior is quickly redirected.	75.86
2d) Classroom routines (access to materials, homework submission, movement in and out of groups, etc.) minimize lost time.	88.46
<b>Domain 3. Evidence of Instructional Planning</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
3a) A lesson plan is available.	15.15
3b) Lesson plan includes pre-assessment to guide differentiation (scaffolding, accommodations, modifications)	33.33
3c) Strategies that accelerate learning (pre-viewing content and vocabulary, visualizing, reflection, etc.) are evident in lesson plans.	50.00
3d) Lesson plan includes decisions for student groupings based on student preferences, needs, and the design of the lesson.	37.50
3e) Lesson plan shows that student grouping is flexible and changes frequently.	37.50
<b>Domain 4. Instructional Quality – Tier One</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
4a) Lesson objective is visible and in student friendly language.	42.11
4b) The pace and design of the lesson support student engagement.	70.21
4c) Instruction is differentiated in content presentation, student interaction with content, and in student choice for product to show what they know.	32.56
4d) Scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications support learning.	43.24
4e) Supports for SWD are provided in a non-stigmatizing manner.	76.67
4f) Scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications for SWD do not compromise rigor, and support success with enrolled grade level standards/objectives.	40.74
4g) Curriculum content and instructional methodology maintains rigor and student higher order thinking.	67.74
4h) Instructional technology is used by both students and teachers to support instruction and engagement.	82.35
4i) Students needing assistive technology use it independently to participate in activities and interact with others.	13.64
4j) Quick formative assessments are used and guide instructional decisions.	34.62
<b>Domain 5. A Positive Learning Environment – Tier One</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
5a) Teacher to student, student to teacher, and student to student interactions are characterized by “growth mindset” language.	94.23
5b) Interactions between teacher and student are characterized by kindness and respect.	96.23
5c) Student to student interaction is characterized by kindness and respect.	96.15



5d) Expectations for behavior are described clearly and posted prominently	53.85
5e) Students comply with behavior expectations.	92.16
5f) A schedule of class activities is posted prominently.	45.10
5g) Room arrangement supports positive behavior, accommodates various groupings, and reduces wasted time.	87.23
<b>Collaborative Teaching</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
6a) Both teachers participate in the presentation of the lesson.	40.00
6b) Students ask questions of both teachers.	60.87
6c) Teachers are not identified as assigned to specific students.	61.90
6d) Both teachers are engaged in classroom management.	90.48
6e) Teachers jointly share and use classroom space.	71.43
<b>Use of Paraprofessionals</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
7a) The role(s) of paraprofessionals appear to be appropriate for the class/needs of the student (paraprofessional role versus certified teacher role).	65.22
7b) Students with disabilities are seated among peers and paraprofessional supports are provided unobtrusively.	68.18
7c) Paraprofessional assistance does not appear to be linked to lower teacher involvement/ responsibility.	50.00
7d) Paraprofessional proximity does not limit student-to-student interactions.	47.37
<b>Specialized Support Classroom</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
8a) Standards based general education is the framework for instructional delivery.	75.00
8b) Teacher does not address multiple subjects or grade levels at the same time.	53.85
8c) Age-appropriate materials and activities characterize instruction	96.43
8d) Paraprofessionals have clear roles and responsibilities for providing student support	90.00
8e) One or more students might be candidates for services in the general education classroom	38.10

# APPENDIX C

## Focus Group Summary

**AUSTIN ISD'S FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY BY FOCUS GROUP**

<b>FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
SLPs and RS	Communication	Administration does not come see us, don't understand our roles
SLPs and RS	Communication	We are bombarded with emails, some not for us
Assessment Staff	Communication	Monthly department meetings are a waste of time, can email information
SLPs and RS	Communication	Poor communication from administration
SLPs and RS	Communication	My supervisor left without notice and I don't know who is replacing
SLPs and RS	Communication	My emails from September to SPED administration have not been answered
SLPs and RS	Communication	No answers from administration
Elementary principals	Communication	I am CC'd on emails for campus SPED, don't need to know it all
Elementary principals	Communication	Little or no collaboration with coordinators -
Elementary principals	Communication	Teachers don't know parts of their job due to poor communication from SPED
Elementary principals	Communication	Disconnect between principals and SPED department
Elementary principals	Communication	Questions are not answered, or we get push back
Elementary principals	Communication	We want to work more closely with SPED department
Elementary principals	Communication	Need clarity on process
Elementary principals	Communication	SPED administration has never been to my campus
Secondary principals	Communication	Lack of support and communication
Secondary principals	Communication	Our questions bother them
Secondary principals	Communication	Shut down for asking questions
Secondary principals	Communication	Email chains with questions are never answered
Secondary principals	Communication	PLN is not working, inconsistent and mixed messages
Secondary principals	Communication	I am missing an FTE. HR data does not match SPED data
Gen Ed teachers	Communication	Good to collaborate with inclusion teacher
Executive Directors	Communication	Now send newsletter to parents and staff
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Get information late
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Information is inconsistent
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Told that is the coordinators job, the specialists job - run around

**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	TAs need personal technology
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Attend campus meetings that don't always apply to us
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Coordinators don't always know either
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Coordinators are spending time putting out fires
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Emails will not be answered for days or not at all
Elem. SPED teachers	Communication	Short notice for trainings

SPED Administration	Compliance	Teachers do not develop new IEP goals each year
Assessment Staff	Compliance	Parents don't have access to have child tested, only one place to go and too far
Assessment Staff	Compliance	80-100 out of date evaluations in my pod
Elementary principals	Compliance	We are not in compliance
Elem. SPED teachers	Compliance	They check our paperwork and then we have to fix errors, being punished
Secondary SPED teachers	Compliance	Re-evaluations are not getting done
Secondary SPED teachers	Compliance	I was told no new FIE in secondary. All REEDs - that is how it is done
Secondary SPED teachers	Compliance	Evaluations were out of compliance before COVID
Secondary SPED teachers	Compliance	Less attention given to low SES students
Secondary SPED teachers	Compliance	IEPs are not being translated

Assessment Staff	Culture	Feel shamed at the monthly department meetings, get yelled at.
Assessment Staff	Culture	Don't feel valued as an employee
Assessment Staff	Culture	In virtual meetings admin doesn't show their face
Assessment Staff	Culture	In Zoom meetings, cannot ask question in chat box
Assessment Staff	Culture	In Zoom meetings, forced to stay muted
Assessment Staff	Culture	Emails sent in all CAPS and with!!!!!!
Assessment Staff	Culture	Feel I have principal support
Assessment Staff	Culture	I won't reach out because I will get my hand slapped
SLPs and RS	Culture	Got yelled at in meeting (May 2019)
SLPs and RS	Culture	Chat turned off in Zoom meetings and unable to unmute yours self
Elementary principals	Culture	Need to move past us VS them
Elementary principals	Culture	My diag and LSSP were treated poorly last year, she was moved and then quit

**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

Secondary principals	Culture	SPED publicly talking about previous administrators in a negative way
Gen Ed teachers	Culture	Love the inclusion teacher at the HS
Gen Ed teachers	Culture	SPED is feeling beat down
Elem. SPED teachers	Culture	Gen Ed and SPED are silos
Secondary SPED teachers	Culture	Downtown culture issues
Secondary SPED teachers	Culture	New system just laid on top of other problems
Secondary SPED teachers	Culture	punitive culture
Secondary SPED teachers	Culture	I am being pushed out of my job
Secondary SPED teachers	Culture	My campus is what keeps me here

Secondary SPED teachers	Curriculum	Want access to Gen Ed curriculum to use for Resource
Elem. SPED teachers	Curriculum	Different programs for instruction in each self-contained class
Elem. SPED teachers	Curriculum	Materials are not culturally sound - "Teach town"
Elem. SPED teachers	Curriculum	No suggestions for how to modify BLEND
Elem. SPED teachers	Curriculum	Need curriculum for Math and ELA resource
Elem. SPED teachers	Curriculum	SPED and Gen Ed use different curriculum materials/programs

Assessment Staff	Mentorship	No mentor program for LSSPs and diagnosticians
Assessment Staff	Mentorship	No support for new hires - assessment staff
SLPs and RS	Mentorship	No mentorship program for SLP
SLPs and RS	Mentorship	No one to ask questions, need more coordinator support
Secondary SPED teachers	Mentorship	No support

Elementary principals	Policies and Procedures	No consistency
Secondary SPED teachers	Policies and Procedures	Inconsistent across campuses
SPED Administration	Policies and Procedures	Need a master schedule at the elementary level
SPED Administration	Policies and Procedures	SPED department does not determine what campus units will be housed
Elementary principals	Policies and Procedures	Took 6 months to get 1:1 support
Gen Ed teachers	Policies and Procedures	TAs should not be on their cell phone
Executive Directors	Policies and Procedures	Caps on # of students in life skills, numbers not student need based

**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

Executive Directors	Policies and Procedures	Need to review ARD process
Elem. SPED teachers	Policies and Procedures	No coverage for ARD meetings

SPED Administration	Professional Development	TAs need training
SPED Administration	Professional Development	Need training on behaviors
SPED Administration	Professional Development	Campus administration does not know how to support SPED students
SPED Administration	Professional Development	Teachers need training on how to use TA support
SPED Administration	Professional Development	Many teachers have alt. certification and little SPED knowledge
SPED Administration	Professional Development	PL is one day at the beginning of the school year for SPED department
SPED Administration	Professional Development	Need more days for SPED PL
SLPs and RS	Professional Development	Would like summer trainings
Gen Ed teachers	Professional Development	Some TAs do too much for students, no accountability
Executive Directors	Professional Development	Teachers need more training
Executive Directors	Professional Development	TAs need more training
Elem. SPED teachers	Professional Development	PLNs have to train on things they were not trained on
Secondary SPED teachers	Professional Development	years ago had summer training, not any more

SLPs and RS	Resources/Materials	No budget for supplies
SLPs and RS	Resources/Materials	It is hard to get students adaptive equipment
Secondary SPED teachers	Resources/Materials	Not given tools to do the job
Secondary SPED teachers	Resources/Materials	We need resources

SPED Administration	Salary	Pay for TA is very low, \$14 per hour
SPED Administration	Salary	Low pay has caused people to turn down the job
Assessment Staff	Salary	Bilingual teachers get a \$6000 stipend, I get \$2500
Assessment Staff	Salary	Make less money as a diagnostician than as a teacher
SLPs and RS	Salary	Cost of living is high for lower pay, can't afford to stay
SLPs and RS	Salary	No stipend for bilingual, supervisor, lead, etc.
SLPs and RS	Salary	Stipends only given if you are assigned to a school

**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	Training today on how to do progress reports and they were due last week
SPED Administration	SPED documentation system	New system for IEPs this year, teachers received one day of training
Assessment Staff	SPED documentation system	Excellify has lots of bugs and problems
Assessment Staff	SPED documentation system	Takes 5 - 6 hours to put ARD paperwork in the new system
SLPs and RS	SPED documentation system	New IEP system has missing student information
SLPs and RS	SPED documentation system	New IEP system pushed out with no training
SLPs and RS	SPED documentation system	FIE training was a 2 min 21 sec video
SLPs and RS	SPED documentation system	Frontline help line takes too long to answer, just sit on phone
Elementary principals	SPED documentation system	Frontline system takes too long
Elementary principals	SPED documentation system	Frontline roll out was poorly done
Secondary principals	SPED documentation system	New data system - can't close out ARD
Secondary principals	SPED documentation system	Sending 5 - 8 hours to input ARD with new program
Secondary principals	SPED documentation system	No training on how to do 504 in new system
Secondary principals	SPED documentation system	New system is taking time away from other duties
Gen Ed teachers	SPED documentation system	In the new system ARDs take hours
Executive Directors	SPED documentation system	ARDs take a lot of time and numbers growing
Elem. SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	Took me an entire Sunday to do one ARD paperwork
Elem. SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	Not enough training on new system
Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	New system takes 5 times as much time - one click can take up to 1 minute
Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	I need more training on the new system
Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	ARDs don't lock in the new system
Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	Asked for help with excellify and told to go to the flow chart and video
Secondary SPED teachers	SPED documentation system	Takes 6 hours to prep an ARD

SPED Administration	Staffing	An expectation that SPED students must have person for support
SPED Administration	Staffing	Staffing for classrooms is one teacher and one TA
SPED Administration	Staffing	Staffing based on the number of students in a self-contained class (13 max)
SPED Administration	Staffing	Staffing using a Tier model
SPED Administration	Staffing	TAs being used for clerical work - in front office.

**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

SPED Administration	Staffing	Need more district level specialists for support
Assessment Staff	Staffing	Understaffed with assessment staff
Assessment Staff	Staffing	Use a lot of contractors for assessments
SLPs and RS	Staffing	We have to hire contractors to fill in the gaps
SLPs and RS	Staffing	We have several SLP vacancies
Elementary principals	Staffing	Need more TAs - asked for positions, nothing posted
Elementary principals	Staffing	Units come from HR, not SPED
Elementary principals	Staffing	Need ARD facilitators
Secondary principals	Staffing	Need more TAs in the self-contained and behavior classes
Gen Ed teachers	Staffing	Need more inclusion teachers
Executive Directors	Staffing	Lots of 1:1 requests at elementary and SPED saying no
Elem. SPED teachers	Staffing	Understaffed with TAs
Elem. SPED teachers	Staffing	Constant fight for staff
Elem. SPED teachers	Staffing	Numbers drive staffing not student needs
Elem. SPED teachers	Staffing	We need ARD facilitators
Secondary SPED teachers	Staffing	Never worked in a district with such low numbers of staff

Assessment Staff	Vacancies/Turn over	Have to use less qualified people just to fill position
Secondary principals	Vacancies/Turn over	Can't keep teachers
Gen Ed teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	I know teachers who are leaving
Gen Ed teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	No consistency of staff
Gen Ed teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	We are missing a bilingual SPED teacher and 504 teacher
Executive Directors	Vacancies/Turn over	Hiring is an obstacle, lack of applicants, many vacancies
Executive Directors	Vacancies/Turn over	Shortage of bilingual teachers and specialized positions
Executive Directors	Vacancies/Turn over	Shortage of diagnosticians
Elem. SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	Need Spanish speaking TAs
Elem. SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	120 TA vacancies now
Elem. SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	Open positions filled with long term sub, won't hire because then get benefits
Secondary SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	Last year LSSPs left, this year teachers and TAs



**Appendix C: Focus Group Summary**

Secondary SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	Inclusion teachers are being called to cover Life Skills because teacher left
Secondary SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	Every year I spend time training the new teachers who then leave
Secondary SPED teachers	Vacancies/Turn over	We are doing the work of the vacant spots
SPED Administration	Vacancies/Turn over	There is high teacher turnover
Assessment Staff	Vacancies/Turn over	Lost 40 assessment staff last year
SLPs and RS	Vacancies/Turn over	Lead OT/PT retired and will not be replaced
Secondary principals	Vacancies/Turn over	Struggle because never full staff, hard to retain
Assessment Staff	Vacancies/Turn over	Several openings for assessment staff that cannot be filled
Assessment Staff	Vacancies/Turn over	Some campuses do not have an assigned assessment person

Gen Ed teachers	Workload	Hard to find time to collaborate with the TA
SPED Administration	Workload	SPED teacher responsibilities are different at each campus
Assessment Staff	Workload	I have to work from 6 am to 6 pm to get my work done
Assessment Staff	Workload	Contractors don't give extra time it takes
Assessment Staff	Workload	No way to complete the evaluations across the district
Assessment Staff	Workload	Emails come into complete spreadsheets for department, takes too much time
Assessment Staff	Workload	To get evaluations done we have to do minimal testing
SLPs and RS	Workload	Caseload is too high
SLPs and RS	Workload	As case manager we do all the work for an ARD
SLPs and RS	Workload	Doing double the work for tracking
Elementary principals	Workload	See coordinator less and less
Elementary principals	Workload	My LSSP is backlogged
Secondary principals	Workload	Coordinators are trying but it is too much
Elem. SPED teachers	Workload	Too much to do
Elem. SPED teachers	Workload	Make choice between serve student or fulfill IEP
Elem. SPED teachers	Workload	Coordinators are limited - try to help but too many schools
Secondary SPED teachers	Workload	Workload is different in other districts; TAs help with ARD paperwork

# APPENDIX D

## Faculty Survey

# Austin ISD Faculty Survey

## Frequency Report

### Position

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	General education teacher	367	42.4	100.0
	Special education teacher	254	29.3	29.3
	Other instructional staff	130	15.0	57.6
	Paraeducator	74	8.5	42.6
	Principal/Assistant Principal	41	4.7	34.1
	Total	866	100.0	

### Level

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Early Childhood	38	4.4	100.0
	Pre-K/Early Childhood	36	4.2	4.2
	Elementary	415	47.9	95.6
	Middle School	156	18.0	24.4
	Middle/High School	19	2.2	6.4
	High School	202	23.3	47.7
	Total	866	100.0	

### School

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Akins HS	31	3.6	3.6
	ALC	12	1.4	5.0
	Allison ES	10	1.2	6.1
	Anderson HS	16	1.8	8.0
	Andrews ES	3	.3	8.3
	Ann Richards YWLA	2	.2	8.5
	Austin HS	15	1.7	10.3
	Bailey MS	13	1.5	11.8
	Baldwin ES	9	1.0	12.8
	Baranoff ES	11	1.3	14.1
	Barrington ES	5	.6	14.7
	Barton Hills ES	2	.2	14.9
	Bear Creek ES	1	.1	15.0
	Becker ES	1	.1	15.1
	Bedichek MS	9	1.0	16.2
	Blackshear ES	3	.3	16.5
	Blanton ES	11	1.3	17.8
	Blazier ES	8	.9	18.7
	Boone ES	6	.7	19.4
	Bowie HS	31	3.6	23.0
	Brentwood ES	11	1.3	24.2
	Brown/Webb Primary	2	.2	24.5

Bryker Woods ES	6	.7	25.2
Burnet MS	11	1.3	26.4
Campbell E	7	.8	27.3
Casey ES	11	1.3	28.5
Casis ES	7	.8	29.3
Clayton ES	12	1.4	30.7
Clifton	6	.7	31.4
Cook ES	9	1.0	32.4
Covington MS	14	1.6	34.1
Cowan ES	12	1.4	35.5
Crockett HS	19	2.2	37.6
Cunningham ES	8	.9	38.6
Davis ES	8	.9	39.5
Dawson ES	7	.8	40.3
Dobie HS	9	1.0	41.3
Doss ES	12	1.4	42.7
Eastside	3	.3	43.1
Galindo ES	14	1.6	44.7
Garcia YMLA	5	.6	45.3
Garza HS	3	.3	45.6
Gorzycki MS	15	1.7	47.3
Govalle ES	5	.6	47.9
Graham ES	8	.9	48.8
Guerrero Thompson ES	4	.5	49.3
Gullett ES	4	.5	49.8
Harris ES	5	.6	50.3
Hart ES	8	.9	51.3
Highland Park ES	3	.3	51.6
Hill ES	7	.8	52.4
Houston ES	5	.6	53.0
International HS	2	.2	53.2
Jordan ES	6	.7	53.9
Joslin ES	9	1.0	55.0
Kealing MS	11	1.3	56.2
Kiker ES	11	1.3	57.5
Kocurek ES	3	.3	57.9
Lamar MS	7	.8	58.7
Langford ES	4	.5	59.1
LASA HS	6	.7	59.8
LBJ HS	8	.9	60.7
Lee ES	5	.6	61.3
Linder ES	2	.2	61.5
Maplewood ES	7	.8	62.4
Martin MS	6	.7	63.0
Mathews ES	3	.3	63.4
McBee ES	5	.6	64.0
McCallum HS	19	2.2	66.2
Menchaca ES	5	.6	66.7

Mendez MS	4	.5	67.2
Mills ES	14	1.6	68.8
Murchison MS	8	.9	69.7
Navarro HS	11	1.3	71.0
Norman- Sims ES	2	.2	71.2
Northeast HS	8	.9	72.2
O. Henry MS	7	.8	73.0
Oak Hill ES	6	.7	73.7
Odom ES	4	.5	74.1
Ortega ES	4	.5	74.6
Overton ES	3	.3	74.9
Padron ES	10	1.2	76.1
Palm ES	7	.8	76.9
Paredes MS	8	.9	77.8
Patton ES	4	.5	78.3
Pecan Springs ES	2	.2	78.5
Perez ES	15	1.7	80.3
Pickle ES	5	.6	80.8
Pillow ES	7	.8	81.6
Pleasant Hill ES	6	.7	82.3
Reilly ES	1	.1	82.4
Ridgetop ES	4	.5	82.9
Rodriguez ES	2	.2	83.1
Rosedale	9	1.0	84.2
Sadler Means YWLA	5	.6	84.8
Sanchez ES	4	.5	85.2
Sarah Lively MS	5	.6	85.8
Small MS	20	2.3	88.1
St.Elmo ES	6	.7	88.8
Summit ES	9	1.0	89.8
Sunset Valley ES	8	.9	90.8
Travis Heights ES	6	.7	91.5
Travis HS	15	1.7	93.2
United Way	1	.1	93.3
Uphaus ES	5	.6	93.9
Walnut Creek ES	2	.2	94.1
Webb MS	4	.5	94.6
Widen ES	4	.5	95.0
Williams ES	8	.9	96.0
Winn ES	2	.2	96.2
Wooldridge ES	5	.6	96.8
Wooten ES	5	.6	97.3
Zavala ES	14	1.6	99.0
Zilker ES	9	1.0	100.0
Total	866	100.0	

## CSC

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	247	28.5	100.0
2	222	25.6	71.5
3	188	21.7	45.8
4	209	24.1	24.1
Total	866	100.0	

## Vertical Team

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Akins Vertical	93	10.7	10.7
Anderson Vertical	67	7.7	18.5
Austin Vertical	77	8.9	27.4
Bowie Vertical	129	14.9	42.3
Crockett Vertical	114	13.2	55.4
Eastside Vertical	47	5.4	60.9
LBJ Vertical	50	5.8	66.6
McCallum Vertical	82	9.5	76.1
Navarro Vertical	60	6.9	83.0
North East Vertical	50	5.8	88.8
Special Campuses	41	4.7	93.5
Travis	56	6.5	100.0
Total	866	100.0	

1. Educators on our campus demonstrate a commitment to shared responsibility for all students, including students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	Count	339
		Valid %	39.1%
	Agree	Count	383
		Valid %	44.2%
	Disagree	Count	112
		Valid %	12.9%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	32
		Valid %	3.7%
2. The school principal provides strong leadership in ensuring quality special education services.	Strongly Agree	Count	340
		Valid %	39.3%
	Agree	Count	347
		Valid %	40.1%
	Disagree	Count	119
		Valid %	13.7%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	60
		Valid %	6.9%
3. The District's Special Services department staff provide strong leadership in ensuring quality special education services	Strongly Agree	Count	86
		Valid %	9.9%
	Agree	Count	271
		Valid %	31.3%
	Disagree	Count	304
		Valid %	35.1%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	205
		Valid %	23.7%
Strongly Agree	Count	55	

4. Special education services are consistently delivered across AISD campuses.	Agree	Valid %	6.4%
		Count	221
	Disagree	Valid %	25.5%
		Count	341
	Strongly Disagree	Valid %	39.4%
		Count	249
	Valid %	28.8%	
	Count	134	
5. Inclusive education is a priority for AISD schools.	Strongly Agree	Valid %	15.5%
		Count	415
	Agree	Valid %	47.9%
		Count	213
	Disagree	Valid %	24.6%
		Count	104
Strongly Disagree	Valid %	12.0%	
	Count	179	
6. My experience in implementing inclusive practices has been positive.	Strongly Agree	Valid %	20.7%
		Count	471
	Agree	Valid %	54.4%
		Count	178
	Disagree	Valid %	20.6%
		Count	38
Strongly Disagree	Valid %	4.4%	
	Count	360	
7. General education students benefit when special needs students are educated in the same classroom.	Strongly Agree	Valid %	41.6%
		Count	385
	Agree	Valid %	44.5%
		Count	103
	Disagree	Valid %	11.9%
		Count	18
Strongly Disagree	Valid %	2.1%	
	Count	107	
8. Our faculty has received sufficient training to effectively implement inclusive education.	Strongly Agree	Valid %	12.4%
		Count	264
	Agree	Valid %	30.5%
		Count	320
	Disagree	Valid %	37.0%
		Count	175
Strongly Disagree	Valid %	20.2%	
	Count	96	
9. Transitions of special needs students from level to level are coordinated to prevent loss of forward progress for each student.	Strongly Agree	Valid %	11.1%
		Count	413
	Agree	Valid %	47.7%
		Count	274
	Disagree	Valid %	31.6%
		Count	83
Strongly Disagree	Valid %	9.6%	
	Count	83	
10. AISD teachers have received professional development and	Strongly Agree	Valid %	9.6%
		Count	265
	Agree	Count	

coaching to effectively teach special needs students in the standards-based general education curriculum as appropriate.	Disagree	Valid %	30.6%	
		Count	338	
	Strongly Disagree	Valid %	39.0%	
		Count	180	
11. I am knowledgeable of the IEPs content for each student I teach who receives special education services.	Strongly Agree	Count	386	
		Valid %	44.6%	
	Agree	Count	365	
		Valid %	42.1%	
	Disagree	Count	96	
		Valid %	11.1%	
	Strongly Disagree	Count	19	
		Valid %	2.2%	
	12. Our faculty uses instructional accommodations appropriately for any student who needs them.	Strongly Agree	Count	215
			Valid %	24.8%
		Agree	Count	454
			Valid %	52.4%
Disagree		Count	165	
		Valid %	19.1%	
Strongly Disagree		Count	32	
		Valid %	3.7%	
13. Our faculty modifies the curriculum for students with disabilities if specified in the IEP.		Strongly Agree	Count	232
			Valid %	26.8%
		Agree	Count	451
			Valid %	52.1%
	Disagree	Count	142	
		Valid %	16.4%	
	Strongly Disagree	Count	41	
		Valid %	4.7%	
	14. Common planning time is provided to support quality collaboration among general and special education faculty.	Strongly Agree	Count	77
			Valid %	8.9%
		Agree	Count	234
			Valid %	27.0%
Disagree		Count	282	
		Valid %	32.6%	
Strongly Disagree		Count	273	
		Valid %	31.5%	
15. The special education department demonstrates clear and effective two-way communication with AISD schools.		Strongly Agree	Count	67
			Valid %	7.7%
		Agree	Count	237
			Valid %	27.4%
	Disagree	Count	289	
		Valid %	33.4%	
	Strongly Disagree	Count	273	
		Valid %	31.5%	
	16. Parents are welcome and valued partners in the educational process in our school.	Strongly Agree	Count	330
			Valid %	38.1%
		Agree	Count	438
			Valid %	50.6%
Disagree		Count	69	
		Valid %	8.1%	



		Valid %	8.0%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	29
		Valid %	3.3%
17. Special needs students are equal members of our school community and in-school friendships reflect this level of acceptance.	Strongly Agree	Count	354
		Valid %	40.9%
	Agree	Count	370
		Valid %	42.7%
	Disagree	Count	107
		Valid %	12.4%
Strongly Disagree	Count	35	
	Valid %	4.0%	
18. Staffing and scheduling decisions are based on individual student decisions and not based on labels, places, or available services.	Strongly Agree	Count	149
		Valid %	17.2%
	Agree	Count	323
		Valid %	37.3%
	Disagree	Count	231
		Valid %	26.7%
Strongly Disagree	Count	163	
	Valid %	18.8%	
19. The placement decisions for students with disabilities in separate classrooms are reviewed frequently to determine if a return to a general education classroom is appropriate.	Strongly Agree	Count	161
		Valid %	18.6%
	Agree	Count	462
		Valid %	53.3%
	Disagree	Count	170
		Valid %	19.6%
Strongly Disagree	Count	73	
	Valid %	8.4%	
20. Students with disabilities are not denied service due to inappropriate or insufficient staffing.	Strongly Agree	Count	123
		Valid %	14.2%
	Agree	Count	282
		Valid %	32.6%
	Disagree	Count	223
		Valid %	25.8%
Strongly Disagree	Count	238	
	Valid %	27.5%	
21. The special education referral process is efficient and effective on our campus.	Strongly Agree	Count	97
		Valid %	11.2%
	Agree	Count	300
		Valid %	34.6%
	Disagree	Count	238
		Valid %	27.5%
Strongly Disagree	Count	231	
	Valid %	26.7%	
22. I have received training regarding the special education referral and assessment processes within the past year.	Strongly Agree	Count	113
		Valid %	13.0%
	Agree	Count	318
		Valid %	36.7%
	Disagree	Count	283
		Valid %	32.7%
Strongly Disagree	Count	152	
	Valid %	17.9%	

		Valid %	17.6%
23. I am aware of the required timelines for completing the various stages of the special education referral process.	Strongly Agree	Count	196
		Valid %	22.6%
	Agree	Count	409
		Valid %	47.2%
	Disagree	Count	171
		Valid %	19.7%
Strongly Disagree	Count	90	
	Valid %	10.4%	
24. Special education assessment staff collaborate effectively with campus staff in completing the referral process for individual students.	Strongly Agree	Count	113
		Valid %	13.0%
	Agree	Count	374
		Valid %	43.2%
	Disagree	Count	207
		Valid %	23.9%
Strongly Disagree	Count	172	
	Valid %	19.9%	
25. Special education referrals are completed on a timely basis on our campus.	Strongly Agree	Count	77
		Valid %	8.9%
	Agree	Count	294
		Valid %	33.9%
	Disagree	Count	228
		Valid %	26.3%
Strongly Disagree	Count	267	
	Valid %	30.8%	
26. The district's Student Support System (SST) process is effective in guiding problem-solving for students who are struggling in school.	Strongly Agree	Count	55
		Valid %	6.4%
	Agree	Count	300
		Valid %	34.6%
	Disagree	Count	297
		Valid %	34.3%
Strongly Disagree	Count	214	
	Valid %	24.7%	

# APPENDIX E

## Parent Survey

# Austin ISD Parent Survey

## Frequency Report

### Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Early Childhood	5	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Pre-K/Early Learning	19	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Elementary School	215	51.3	51.3	52.5
	Elementary/Middle	15	3.6	3.6	56.1
	Middle School	78	18.6	18.6	92.8
	Middle/High	11	2.6	2.6	95.5
	High School	76	18.1	18.1	74.2
	Total	419	100.0	100.0	

### School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No School	5	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Akins HS	5	1.2	1.2	2.4
	Allison ES	2	.5	.5	2.9
	Anderson HS	9	2.1	2.1	5.0
	Andrews ES	1	.2	.2	5.3
	Ann Richards YWLA	1	.2	.2	5.5
	Austin HS	12	2.9	2.9	8.4
	Bailey MS	5	1.2	1.2	9.5
	Baldwin ES	7	1.7	1.7	11.2
	Baranoff ES	6	1.4	1.4	12.6
	Barrington ES	3	.7	.7	13.4
	Barton Hills ES	3	.7	.7	14.1
	Bear Creek ES	7	1.7	1.7	15.8
	Becker ES	1	.2	.2	16.0
	Bedichek MS	4	1.0	1.0	16.9
	Blackshear ES	3	.7	.7	17.7
	Blanton ES	3	.7	.7	18.4
	Blazier ES	11	2.6	2.6	21.0
	Boone ES	1	.2	.2	21.2
	Bowie HS	13	3.1	3.1	24.3
	Brentwood ES	7	1.7	1.7	26.0
	Brown/Webb Primary	1	.2	.2	26.3
	Bryker Woods ES	3	.7	.7	27.0
	Burnet MS	1	.2	.2	27.2
	Campbell E	1	.2	.2	27.4
	Casey ES	6	1.4	1.4	28.9
	Casis ES	6	1.4	1.4	30.3
	Clayton ES	12	2.9	2.9	33.2
	Covington MS	9	2.1	2.1	35.3

Cowan ES	6	1.4	1.4	36.8
Crockett HS	8	1.9	1.9	38.7
Cunningham ES	5	1.2	1.2	39.9
Davis ES	6	1.4	1.4	41.3
Dawson ES	3	.7	.7	42.0
Dobie HS	1	.2	.2	42.2
Doss ES	8	1.9	1.9	44.2
Eastside	1	.2	.2	44.4
Galindo ES	2	.5	.5	44.9
Garcia YMLA	1	.2	.2	45.1
Garza HS	3	.7	.7	45.8
Gorzycki MS	10	2.4	2.4	48.2
Govalle ES	2	.5	.5	48.7
Graham ES	1	.2	.2	48.9
Gullett ES	6	1.4	1.4	50.4
Harris ES	1	.2	.2	50.6
Hart ES	3	.7	.7	51.3
Highland Park ES	2	.5	.5	51.8
Hill ES	2	.5	.5	52.3
Houston ES	2	.5	.5	52.7
Jordan ES	3	.7	.7	53.5
Joslin ES	2	.5	.5	53.9
Kealing MS	4	1.0	1.0	54.9
Kiker ES	12	2.9	2.9	57.8
Kocurek ES	5	1.2	1.2	58.9
Lamar MS	11	2.6	2.6	61.6
Langford ES	3	.7	.7	62.3
LBJ HS	3	.7	.7	63.0
Lee ES	5	1.2	1.2	64.2
Linder ES	3	.7	.7	64.9
Maplewood ES	4	1.0	1.0	65.9
Martin MS	2	.5	.5	66.3
Mathews ES	1	.2	.2	66.6
McBee ES	4	1.0	1.0	67.5
McCallum HS	9	2.1	2.1	69.7
Menchaca ES	5	1.2	1.2	70.9
Mendez MS	2	.5	.5	71.4
Metz ES	1	.2	.2	71.6
Mills ES	8	1.9	1.9	73.5
Murchison MS	10	2.4	2.4	75.9
Norman- Sims ES	2	.5	.5	76.4
Northeast HS	2	.5	.5	76.8
O. Henry MS	8	1.9	1.9	78.8
Oak Hill ES	3	.7	.7	79.5
Oak Springs ES	1	.2	.2	79.7
Odom ES	1	.2	.2	80.0
Padron ES	4	1.0	1.0	80.9
Palm ES	1	.2	.2	81.1

Paredes MS	7	1.7	1.7	82.8
Patton ES	4	1.0	1.0	83.8
Perez ES	1	.2	.2	84.0
Pickle ES	1	.2	.2	84.2
Pillow ES	1	.2	.2	84.5
Pleasant Hill ES	2	.5	.5	85.0
Reilly ES	1	.2	.2	85.2
Ridgetop ES	4	1.0	1.0	86.2
Rosedale	12	2.9	2.9	89.0
Sadler Means YWLA	2	.5	.5	89.5
Sarah Lively MS	2	.5	.5	90.0
Small MS	8	1.9	1.9	91.9
St.Elmo ES	1	.2	.2	92.1
Summit ES	4	1.0	1.0	93.1
Sunset Valley ES	1	.2	.2	93.3
Travis Heights ES	5	1.2	1.2	94.5
Travis HS	2	.5	.5	95.0
Uphaus ES	1	.2	.2	95.2
Walnut Creek ES	2	.5	.5	95.7
Webb MS	1	.2	.2	95.9
Widen ES	1	.2	.2	96.2
Williams ES	5	1.2	1.2	97.4
Winn ES	1	.2	.2	97.6
Wooldridge ES	2	.5	.5	98.1
Zavala ES	3	.7	.7	98.8
Zilker ES	5	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	419	100.0	100.0	

### CSC

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No School	5	1.2	1.2	1.2
1	114	27.2	27.2	28.4
2	130	31.0	31.0	59.4
3	61	14.6	14.6	74.0
4	109	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	419	100.0	100.0	

## Vertical Team

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No School	5	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Akins Vertical	44	10.5	10.5	11.7
	Anderson Vertical	40	9.5	9.5	21.2
	Austin Vertical	53	12.6	12.6	33.9
	Bowie Vertical	86	20.5	20.5	54.4
	Crockett Vertical	39	9.3	9.3	63.7
	Eastside Vertical	11	2.6	2.6	66.3
	LBJ Vertical	18	4.3	4.3	70.6
	McCallum Vertical	58	13.8	13.8	84.5
	Navarro Vertical	11	2.6	2.6	87.1
	North East Vertical	16	3.8	3.8	90.9
	Special Campuses	16	3.8	3.8	94.7
	Travis	22	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	419	100.0	100.0	

		Count	Table Valid N %
1. My child's school provides quality services for students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	126	31.6%
	Agree	179	44.9%
	Disagree	61	15.3%
	Strongly Disagree	33	8.3%
2. I believe my child's teachers have the skills and experience to provide the quality instruction that my child needs.	Strongly Agree	149	37.3%
	Agree	172	43.1%
	Disagree	53	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	25	6.3%
3. My child is considered a full member of the student body in his/her school.	Strongly Agree	183	47.5%
	Agree	145	37.7%
	Disagree	35	9.1%
	Strongly Disagree	22	5.7%
4. Faculty members we have talked with seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility for all students, including students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	177	44.6%
	Agree	150	37.8%
	Disagree	47	11.8%
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.8%
5. The district's special education referral process is efficient and effective for our child.	Strongly Agree	85	22.8%
	Agree	119	31.9%
	Disagree	77	20.6%
	Strongly Disagree	92	24.7%
6. I provide input into the creation of my child's IEP/BIP.	Strongly Agree	202	50.1%
	Agree	169	41.9%
	Disagree	20	5.0%
	Strongly Disagree	12	3.0%
8. I am encouraged to be an active participant in our child's IEP meeting.	Strongly Agree	207	51.5%
	Agree	159	39.6%
	Disagree	29	7.2%
	Strongly Disagree	7	1.7%

9. I attended our child's most recent IEP team meeting.	Strongly Agree	270	66.7%
	Agree	125	30.9%
	Disagree	7	1.7%
	Strongly Disagree	3	0.7%
10. My child's teachers accommodate and modify instruction as specified in the IEP/BIP.	Strongly Agree	152	39.3%
	Agree	164	42.4%
	Disagree	48	12.4%
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.9%
11. I understand how my student's grades are determined.	Strongly Agree	116	29.5%
	Agree	162	41.2%
	Disagree	83	21.1%
	Strongly Disagree	32	8.1%
12. My experience in attending ARD meetings in the district has been positive.	Strongly Agree	169	41.5%
	Agree	172	42.3%
	Disagree	38	9.3%
	Strongly Disagree	28	6.9%
13. My child's general and special education teachers work together to plan his/her educational program.	Strongly Agree	153	39.7%
	Agree	158	41.0%
	Disagree	45	11.7%
	Strongly Disagree	29	7.5%
14. The educators at my child's school treat us as full and equal partners in matters concerning my child's educational program.	Strongly Agree	195	48.4%
	Agree	157	39.0%
	Disagree	27	6.7%
	Strongly Disagree	24	6.0%
15. I feel supported by my child's principal in our efforts to ensure my child receives a quality education.	Strongly Agree	159	42.3%
	Agree	130	34.6%
	Disagree	50	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	37	9.8%
16. I feel supported by the central office staff in my efforts to ensure my child receives a quality education.	Strongly Agree	117	34.0%
	Agree	101	29.4%
	Disagree	66	19.2%
	Strongly Disagree	60	17.4%



# APPENDIX F

## Resources

## FORM 2: ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTIONAL AND PERSONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Q: What level and type of instructional support, if any, will the student need in order to participate in the classroom activity? Please use multiple sources of data to answer this question and complete this form. Data sources may include test results, benchmarks, student interviews, grades, observations, and behavioral data.

Current School: \_\_\_\_\_ Receiving School: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Case Manager (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ Grade (upcoming school year): \_\_\_\_\_ ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT/COURSE	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT Attach Accommodations Sheet or BIP								PERSONAL SUPPORT					
	As Designed	Are there aspects of Tier 1 instruction that can be incorporated to enable the student to be successful?		With Accommodations		With Curricular Modifications		With Assistive Technology	Behavior Intervention	Advance Support	In-Class Support			Specialized Support
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO				Supports Prior to Instruction	Peers	Support Facilitation	
	Yes													
	No													
	Yes													
	No													
	Yes													
	No													
	Yes													
	No													

**Accommodation:** A change made to HOW content is taught and/or learning is assessed in order to provide a student with access to information and to create and equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills. **Modification:** A change in WHAT the student is expected to learn and/or demonstrate. **Co-Teacher (CT):** A formal, yearlong or semester-long commitment between a general education teacher and a special education teacher to jointly plan, deliver, and assess instruction for all students in the general education class. (WHO? Certified and/or licensed personnel partnered with the general education teachers) **Support Facilitator (SF):** An individual who provides a variety of supports, either to students and/or the general education teacher, which meets the needs identified through collaborative planning. (WHO? certified special populations teachers; licensed personnel, such as OT, PT, Speech, Paraprofessionals) **Behavior Interventions** that apply across the school day (if any). **Peer Support** refers to peers who have been formally trained as part of a school-wide peer support or peer assistance program.

Example of potential for adding detail to decision-making re:  
**ACCOMMODATIONS** (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/o2t5nbb>)

**Presentation:** A change in the way information is presented. Text-to-speech software, graphic organizers, color coded materials, chapter outline, vocabulary bank, sentence starters, large print textbooks, flow charts

**Response:** A change in the way a student completes assignments or tests. Oral responses, keyboard responses, smaller segments of the test questions, questions presented in a different format (short essay, true/false, etc.)

**Setting:** A change in the learning environment. Preferential seating, structured learning centers, a quiet time space, fewer visual distractions

**Timing and Scheduling:** Change in the timing for an activity or test, providing more time to complete a task, use of a timer to establish appropriate pace, etc.

Example of potential for adding detail to decision-making re:  
**MODIFICATIONS**

**Partial Modification:** The student is able to master selected components, but not the entire grade level objective

**Complexity Modified:** The student masters the entire objective but at a different level of complexity (Bloom's Taxonomy)

**Level Modified:** The student is able to achieve a below-level objective related to the concept(s) or "big idea(s)" of the lesson

**Alternative Objective:** The student is able to meet an alternative objective that is aligned to the concepts of the grade-level objective.

**Functional Objective:** The student is able to master an objective that is designed to increase the student's level of independence in a functional life skill?

Example of potential for adding detail to decision-making re:  
**BEHAVIOR**

Have typical behavior management techniques (contracts, location of seating, explicit instruction in appropriate behaviors, etc.) been tried?

Has the school social worker or counselor visited the student and observed in the classroom to suggest Tier One strategies for improving behavior for this student?

If a BIP has been developed, is it implemented as designed and with fidelity?