

Parent & Family

Information Guide



AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Parent/Family Involvement Advisory Council
September 2005

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Important AISD Contact Numbers

Below is a list of departments and phone numbers to help assist you with questions.

If you have questions about:	AISD Department	Phone
A		
After-school Programs	Dept. of School, Family, and Community	414-0213
Adult Education - English and GED classes	Dept. of School, Family, and Community	414-3187
B		
Bilingual or ESL classes	Bilingual Education	414-4734
Board Policy or Policy Governance	Intergovernmental Relations	414-3960
C		
Campus Safety	AISD Police	414-1703
Career & Technology Education (CATE)	College and Career Preparatory Programs	414-4491
Complaints	District Ombudsman	414-9876
F		
Family and Parent Involvement	Family Resource Center	414-3189
Food Service/School Lunch Menus	Food Services	414-0251
G		
Gifted and Talented Program	Advanced Academic Services	414-9986
Grounds Maintenance	Service Center	414-3299
H		
Health Issues	Health Services	414-9778
Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth	Project HELP	414-3690
I		
International Welcome Center	Bilingual Education	414-8677
O		
Open Records Requests	Office of the Superintendent	414-2482
P		
Peer Mediation (PAL Program)	Peer Assistance	414-0197
Physical Ed Waivers	Health Services	414-9779
Pre-K Issues	Pre-Kindergarten Program	414-4790
PTA (Parent Teacher Association)	Austin Council of PTAs	414-4050
Public Use of School Facilities	Community Education	414-0372
R		
Reading Improvement	Reading Improvement, Dyslexia and 504	414-9741
S		
Special Education	Special Education	414-1731
Student Counseling	Guidance and Counseling	414-0173
Student Discipline	Student Discipline	414-2182
Student Registration and Transfers	Student Services	414-1760
Students in Public Non-school Facilities During School Hours (truancy)	AISD Police	414-1703
T		
TAAS/TAKS Workshops	Community Education	414-0112
Transcripts	Student Services	414-1760
Transportation	Transportation Services	414-0232
Truancy, Dropout Rates, Prevention, etc.	Dropout Prevention	414-0201
V		
Volunteer Opportunities	Partners in Education	637-0900



HOME & FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The mission of the Austin Independent School District is that “all students will progress academically and intellectually and will graduate prepared for personal success and inspired to contribute to society.” Parents and family members must be involved in this process to promote a healthy system of public education and assist in educating all children to meet high academic expectations and standards.



AISD defines parent and family involvement as the engagement of parents, families, and the community as partners with schools for the purpose of promoting success throughout a child’s educational experience. (See AISD Policy GK Local).

Research has proven that family /school/ community partnerships are important. Effectively engaging parents in the education of their children can be a very rewarding aspect of educational reform. When schools, communities and families work together:

- Parents and the community are better able to understand and support what the school is doing.
- The school is better able to understand the needs and concerns of parents and the community.
- Children’s self-esteem improves.
- Children’s grades and test scores improve.
- School programs are adjusted to meet the needs of children and adults more fully.
- Parent-child relationships improve.
- Communities are strengthened through these newly developed partnerships.

This guide will help you to find additional ways to strengthen the home-school-connection. The difference between good schools and great schools is the broad involvement of their families and communities. The Austin School District promotes a wide range of family involvement activities, including:

- *Communicating*: Families and school staff members talking about student needs and learning at school.
- *Parenting*: Creating a home environment that prepares children for learning at school.
- *Student Learning*: Families and school staff members working together to create environments that support children’s learning at home and at school.
- *Volunteering*: Creating opportunities for family and community members to volunteer at school, at home, or in the community.
- *School Decision Making*: Providing opportunities for family involvement and leadership in educational decision-making.
- *Collaborating*: Building partnerships among families and school staff members and community members that provide resources to strengthen families and school programs.

BEST PRACTICES FOR GETTING INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

***Communicating:* Inform the school of your child's needs and listen to what the school has to say.**

- Provide teachers with information about what is going on with your child.
- Read all materials sent to you from school.
- Contact your child's teacher with questions and/or concerns.
- Attend open houses, conferences, parent workshops, and other school events.
- Ask the teacher to explain things in everyday language, not in educational terms.
- Find out the best method of communication with your child's teacher and always respond to phone calls, forms, and e-mail messages from the school.
- Expect to disagree once in a while and embrace the opportunity to see things from a different perspective.

***Parenting:* Create a home environment that gets your child ready to learn.**

- Encourage your child to talk about feelings, accomplishments, and problems.
- Read parenting books or have discussions with other parents to better understand the abilities and behaviors of children the same age as yours.
- Expect your child to do well in school.
- Encourage your child to read every day.
- Let mistakes be okay as long as the child learns from the experience.
- Place limits on the time your child spends watching television and/or playing video games.
- Make sure your child is on time, rested and appropriately dressed for school.
- Serve breakfast at home or take advantage of the food service at school.
- Know your child's friends and know where your child is at all times.
- Talk directly to your child about important family values.
- Take advantage of the learning opportunities your community provides.



***Student Learning:* Support your child's learning at home.**

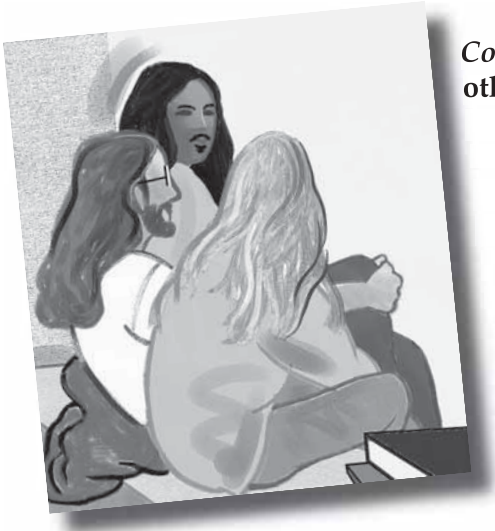
- Provide a regular time and a quiet place for homework.
- Ask the teacher how you can best help with homework.
- Give guidance, not answers, on homework, letting your child find the solution, if at all possible.
- Reward hard work on homework.
- Ask your child questions as you read together.
- If your child is struggling, don't wait to ask the teacher for extra help or find a tutor. Do it before the child falls behind.
- Attend classes that interest you and let your child know you also value learning.

***Volunteering:* Spend time at school, in the community, or at home helping in a way that's comfortable for you.**

- Offer to talk to students about your job, culture, hobbies, and life experiences.
- Agree upon ways to assist your child's teacher in the classroom.
- Prepare learning materials for the classroom at home or at school.
- Help students learn about your family or culture through food and music activities.
- Escort the class on field trips.
- Tutor students who need extra help.
- Set up a classroom phone tree or email list.

School Decision Making: Get informed and get involved in making your school work.

- Join and support the school's parent group and get to know other members.
- Volunteer to serve on your school's decision-making committee, the Campus Advisory Council.
- Assist administrators and staff with improving the school.
- Learn about laws and policies that impact education.
- Ask your legislators to work for education-friendly bills.
- Help organize school programs and projects that benefit families and involve the community.
- Attend school board meetings, especially when issues concerning your children are being discussed.
- Write your school board members about your concerns.
- Participate in school-related elections.
- Attend Back-to-School Nights, PTA/PTO and grade level meetings.



Collaborating: Play a role in building partnerships between school and other groups.

- Ask your employer for flex-time and extended lunch hours so you can be involved in school activities.
- Ask community organizations and businesses to support your school.
- Assist with organizing school events for students, such as a career fair.
- Help connect your school with community organizations to provide information and resources to families.

WHAT FAMILIES CAN EXPECT FROM SCHOOLS AND STAFF

Communicating

- A variety of communication tools on a regular basis to facilitate a two-way exchange of information between home and school.
- Translations of communications into the languages families understand.
- Opportunities for parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year, requested or needed by either the teacher or parent.
- Communication regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just misbehavior or failure.
- Information on all aspects of school operation, including policies, course work and expectations, discipline procedures, school activities, student services, and optional or extra programs.

Parenting

- Respect for families and their primary role in the rearing of children.
- Assistance in linking families with community resources and programs that provide support for families.

Student Learning

- Information about expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.
- Information regarding how parents can help with learning at home.
- Information for parents to understand how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assessments.



Volunteering

- A welcoming environment for family volunteers.
- Activities for parents with limited time and resources so they can participate.
- Effective utilization of parent's volunteer time and effort.
- Appreciation for parents' participation and their diverse contributions.
- An agreed upon program of volunteer activities.

School Decision Making

- Up-to-date information about school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
- Information about ways for parents and families to help make decisions, raise issues or concerns, appeal decisions, and resolve problems.
- Information about Campus Advisory Councils and how parents can be partners.

Collaborating

- Information about cultural, recreational, academic, health, social, and other resources that serve families within the community and support in accessing those resources.
- Partnership efforts among schools, families, local businesses and service groups to improve student learning at schools and at home.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are great opportunities for sharing information about students. Sometimes they become a cause for concern for some parents. Open and frequent communication between parents and teachers helps to ensure that the issues raised in parent-teacher conferences do not catch anyone by surprise.

Parents can prepare for the meeting by talking to their child about the upcoming conference and preparing questions about the child's progress. Here are some examples of questions to ask your child's teacher during the conference:

- *Does my child get along with the other students?*
- *Does my child pay attention in class?*
- *What skills and knowledge will my child be expected to master this year?*
- *How will my child be evaluated?*
- *What are my child's academic strengths and weaknesses?*
- *What can I do to be more involved in my child's academic progress?*
- *How do you accommodate differences in learning?*
- *What problem is my child having?*
- *How can I best help my child's learning success?*

If your child is having difficulties...

- Ask the teacher what is being done to help your child overcome the problem.
- Create a plan, with the teacher, to help your child at home.
- With the teacher, agree on what is expected of your child and schedule a follow-up conference.
- If needed, ask where to get additional help.

If your child is not having any problems...

- Ask the teacher for his/her expectations of your child.
- Find out what goals the teacher has for your child.
- Ask about "extra" learning activities for your child.

After the conference, talk with your child about some of the ideas discussed and keep in touch with the teacher while monitoring your child's progress.

Successful parent-teacher conferences involve trust, confidentiality, and respect. Stay in regular touch with your child's teacher(s) to discuss goals and progress. Meeting with your child's teacher can help build strong parent-teacher partnerships - partnerships that are necessary to help your child get the best education possible and succeed.



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PROBLEM-SOLVING

There may be times when disagreements arise regarding your child's education. If it involves a classroom issue, the most appropriate person with whom to address those issues is usually the teacher. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your meeting with the teacher, you may seek resolution by following the steps below or by contacting the District Ombudsman.

Step 1: The Teacher

The first person to resolve any concerns you might have is the teacher. Parents can request a parent-teacher conference whenever issues have been identified.

Step 2: Assistant Principal or Principal

As the instructional leaders, the Assistant Principal and Principal are responsible for setting the tone of discipline and instruction. If your concerns were not addressed by the teacher to your satisfaction, request a meeting with the Assistant Principal or Principal.

Step 3: Associate Superintendent of Elementary, Middle or High Schools

When a concern cannot be resolved at the campus level, the next step is to visit the principal's supervisor, his/her Associate Superintendent. Questions and concerns may be directed to them by calling the appropriate phone number below:

For Elementary Schools: (512) 414-1708

For Middle Schools: (512) 414-4481

For High Schools: (512) 414-4471

District Ombudsman

The District Ombudsman's Office also handles complaints from AISD parents and the community. While our goal is for the issue to be resolved at the lowest possible level - the campus - the District Ombudsman can be contacted at any point in the process.

You may reach the District Ombudsman at the following:

Beverly E. Reeves
District Ombudsman
1111 West 6th Street, A-230
Austin, Texas 78703
(512) 414-9876 (office)
(512) 414-9962 (fax)
ombudsman@austinisd.org



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO FILING A FORMAL COMPLAINT (AISD Policy FNG Local)

Parents are encouraged to attempt problem resolution at the lowest possible administrative level. When this fails to occur, a formal complaint can be filed with the school's principal, following the process below:

Level 1: The Principal

The parents request a conference with the principal within 15 days of the action or event resulting in the complaint. The principal must schedule a meeting with the parent within seven (7) days of the request. After the meeting, the principal has seven (7) days to send a response to the parent.

Level 2: Superintendent or Designee

If not satisfied with the results of the meeting with the principal, the parent may request a conference with the Superintendent or designee. This meeting must be held within seven (7) days of the request. Prior to the meeting, a signed statement of the complaint must be submitted along with supporting evidence, the solution sought and the date of the conference with the principal. Once the meeting has occurred, the Superintendent or designee has seven (7) days to respond to the parent.

Level 3: Board Agenda

If not satisfied with the response from the Superintendent or designee, the parent may request the matter be placed on the AISD Board of Trustees agenda. This written request must be made within seven (7) days following the receipt of the response. The parent will be informed of the date, time and location of the meeting. At the scheduled time, the complaint will be presented before the Board. The Board decision will be made orally or in writing.

AISD PUBLICATIONS

Several AISD departments publish information guides specific to their individual programs. Questions regarding individual campus publications should be directed to that particular campus. The following are some examples of other AISD publications:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Individual Academic & Career Plan Guide
- TEKS Family Learning Guides
- Student Information Packet
- Secondary School Information Guide (Grades 5 - 11)
- Austin InSider

HELPFUL WEBSITES

AISD website	www.austinisd.org
Austin Council of PTAs	www.myschoolonline.com/tx/acpta
Center for Parent Leadership	www.centerforparentleadership.org
Community Education	www.communityeducation.org
Family Education Network	www.familyeducation.com
Family Friendly Schools	www.familyfriendlyschools.org
Institute for Responsive Education	www.responsiveeducation.org
Intercultural Development Research Association.....	www.idra.org
Just For the Kids	www.just4kids.org
National Association for Bilingual Education	www.nabe.org
National Association for Gifted Children	www.nagc.org
National Information Center for Children & Youth w/Disabilities.....	www.nichcy.org
National Network of Partnership Schools	www.csos.jhu.edu
National Parent Teacher Association	www.pta.org
No Child Left Behind	www.nclb.gov
Parent Information and Resource Center	www.pirc-info.net
Parent Power.....	www.parentpower.org
Region XIII Education Service Center	www.esc13.net
Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented	www.txgifted.org
Texas Education Agency	www.tea.state.tx.us
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.....	www.thecb.state.tx.us
Texas PTA	www.txpta.org
U.S. Department of Education	www.ed.gov
Wright's Law (Special Education Law and Advocacy)	www.wrightslaw.com



EDUCATION TERMS

- ACES** (Alternative Center for Elementary Students). This facility provides a classroom setting for elementary students who have been removed from their home school for disciplinary reasons.
- ALC** (Alternative Learning Center). Located at 901 Neal, this facility provides a classroom setting for secondary students who have been assigned to the disciplinary alternative education program.
- AP** (Advanced Placement). Series of college level courses designed by the College Board for high school students.
- ARD** (Admission, Review, and Dismissal). This process is to develop/ review Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities.
- BE** (Bilingual Education). A full-time program of dual-language instruction that provides for acquisition of basic skills in the primary language of limited English proficient students who are enrolled in the program. In AISD, the native languages of instruction are Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean.
- CAC** (Campus Advisory Council). Made up of parents, community and staff, the CAC addresses the concerns of school communities by ensuring that the goals and plans of the campus are focused on student learning.
- CIP** (Campus Improvement Plan). A campus-level plan required annually by state law to guide decision-making, which addresses improvements in student achievement, attendance, completion, specialized programs, discipline, safety, and parent involvement.
- DAC** (District Advisory Council). Made up of parents, community, business and staff, the DAC addresses the concerns of school communities, and the District as a whole.
- DELTA** (Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics). A computer-based dropout recovery and prevention program in place for all AISD high schools.
- DIP** (District Improvement Plan). A district-level plan required annually by state law to guide decision-making, which addresses improvements in student achievement, attendance, completion, specialized programs, discipline, safety, and parent involvement.
- ESL** (English as a Second Language). Instruction in English listening, speaking, reading, and composition for students who are primary speakers of other languages.
- FMNV** (Food of Minimal Nutritional Value) Defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as a food that possesses minimal or no nutritional value. Examples would include, but not limited to, carbonated beverages, hard candy, gums/jellies, candycoated popcorn, etc.
- G/T** (Gifted/Talented). Refers to services provided to students who are identified as needing differentiated services to challenge them.
- IACP** (Individual Academic/Career Plan). A six-year educational plan designed to prepare students to enter a chosen career field or college upon graduation.

IB	(International Baccalaureate). Currently only at Anderson High School, it offers 11th and 12th grade students an opportunity to earn an IB Diploma, recognized by universities worldwide.
IEP	(Individual Education Plan). Outlines the measurable goals and objectives, instructional modifications, behavioral strategies, and related services needed for a student with disabilities.
IMPACT	(IMPACT Team) This team provides “front line” efforts to assist students who are experiencing significant attendance, academic, or behavioral challenges.
LEP	(Limited English Proficiency). Usually used in elementary and secondary education for students whose English language skills are insufficient for them to succeed in the regular curriculum.
LST	(Local Support Team). This group usually meets to review challenges students may experience in school. They suggest intervention and monitor progress.
SRO	(School Resource Officer). Campus police officer assigned to a particular school.
TAKS	(Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills). State assessment tool for student achievement.
TEKS	(Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). Learning expectations for children at each grade level (K-12) and in each area of study.
VT	(formerly “Visiting Teacher”; now “School to Community Liaison”). Works closely with students and families to assist them in identifying issues and making referrals to the



**Austin Independent School District
BOARD OF TRUSTEES SCHOOLS BY TRUSTEE DISTRICT
(alphabetical by school)**

At-Large Position 8: Doyle Valdez
At-Large Position 9: John Fitzpatrick

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6	District 7
Cheryl Bradley	Rudy Montoya, Jr	Johna Edwards	Ave Wahrmund	Mark Williams	Patricia Whiteside	Robert Schneider
ALC	Allan ES	Barrington ES	Anderson HS	Austin HS	Akins HS	Bailey MS
Andrews ES	Allison ES	T.A. Brown ES	Brentwood ES	Bryker Woods ES	Barton Hills ES	Baranoff ES
Blackshear ES	Brooke ES	Burnet MS	Davis ES	Casis ES	Becker ES	Boone ES
Blanton ES	Dawson ES	Cook ES	Doss ES	ACES (for- merly Dill)	Bedichek MS	Bowie HS
Campbell ES	Galindo ES	Graham ES	Gullett ES	Lee ES	Casey ES	Cowan ES
Clifton Center	Govalle ES	Lanier HS	Hill ES	Maplewood ES	Crockett HS	Covington MS
Dobie MS	Houston ES	McBee ES	Highland Park ES	Mathews ES	Cunningham ES	Kiker ES
Garza HS	Langford ES	Summitt ES	Lamar MS	O. Henry MS	Fulmore MS	Kocurek ES
Harris ES	Johnston HS	Walnut Creek ES	McCallum HS	Pease ES	Joslin ES	Mills ES
Hart ES	Linder ES	Wooldridge ES	Murchison MS	Reilly ES	Menchaca ES	Oak Hill ES
Jordan ES	Martin MS	Wooten ES	Pillow ES	Ridgetop ES	Odum ES	Patton ES
Kealing MS	Mendez MS	(11 campuses)	Rosedale School	Webb MS	Paredes MS	Small MS
LBJ HS	Metz ES		(12 campuses)	(12 campuses)	Pleasant Hill ES	Sunset Valley ES
Norman ES	Palm ES				Porter MS	(13 campuses)
Oak Springs ES	Rodriguez ES				St. Elmo ES	
Ortega ES	Sanchez ES				Travis HS	
Pearce MS	Widen ES				Travis Heights ES	
Pecan Springs ES	Zavala ES				Williams ES	
Pickle ES	(18 campuses)				Zilker ES	
Reagan HS					(19 campuses)	
Sims ES						
Winn ES						
(22 campuses)						

Notes

Austin Independent School District

1111 W. Sixth Street
Austin Texas 78703
512/414-1700 www.austinisd.org

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent

Darlene Westbrook, Ed.D.
Chief Academic Officer

Rosalinda Hernandez, Ph.D.
Associate Superintendent for High Schools

Peggy Gordon, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent for Middle Schools

Yolanda Rocha, Ph.D. and Claudia Tousek
Associate Superintendents for Elementary Schools

John Moore II
Executive Director, Educational Support Services

Gloria L. Williams, Ed.D.
Director
Department of School, Family and Community Education

Parent/Family Involvement Advisory Council

Joyce Lynch, PFIAC Co-chair
Victor Rodriguez, PFIAC Co-chair
Drew Bixby, Austin Sky Technology
Marshall Bruni, Austin Council of PTAs
Patricia Dabbert, Austin Partners in Education
Martha Doolittle, AISD Office of Program Evaluation
Fred Estrello, AISD Family Resource Center
Carol Jackson, Family Connections
Ben Ornelas, Austin Energy
Ronald Reed, AISD Parent Support Specialist
Beverly Reeves, AISD District Ombudsman
Vielka Ridley, AISD Parent Support Specialist
Pamela Wade, AISD Family Resource Center
Wanda Washington, AISD Office of Program Evaluation