

Summary of Community Survey on Austin Independent School District's Priorities for Special Education Services, December 2010

Overview

Austin Independent School District's (AISD) special education department hosted a community meeting on December 9, 2010 to review the following:

- A report summarizing the first year of services provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) grant
- A report from the Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS) that summarized a review and provided recommendations for the district's special education services

At the end of the meeting, a survey was administered in both English and Spanish to obtain attendees' opinions about how to prioritize recommendations made in the CGCS report. In addition, input was requested about prioritizing activities to guide the district in choosing meaningful activities for the district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) instructional advancement plan. The 21-item survey was completed by 26 meeting attendees, representing 21 parents from all school levels (10 elementary, nine secondary) and five community members who did not have students attending AISD schools.¹

Key Findings

A majority of respondents rated the following as the most important priorities among the CGCS report recommendations:

- Ensure students receiving special education services receive targeted and intensive interventions that are reviewed and adjusted regularly through progress monitoring.
- Remove barriers to effective instruction.
- Ensure campus-based management and coordination are effectively structured, and that special educators, teaching assistants, and related-service personnel are available and distributed equitably and sufficiently to meet the needs of students receiving special education services.
- Build on AISD's initiative with Stetson & Associates, Inc. to maximize increased and effective inclusion practices.

All three recommendations for AYP planning were rated as important by most respondents; however, the recommendation for purchase and implementation of a universal assessment for individual education plan (IEP) development and progress monitoring was rated *most important* by the highest percentage of respondents. Some respondents to the survey provided comments for district decision makers to consider in improving how special education services are provided to students. All these results are explained in detail in the remainder of this report.

Priorities in the CGCS Report Recommendations

Table 1 summarizes survey results of recommendations from the CGCS report. Most respondents indicated that the most important CGCS recommendations were in the category of instruction and performance of students receiving special education services. For example, 73% selected the *most important* rating for ensuring special education students receive targeted and intensive interventions that are reviewed and adjusted regularly through progress monitoring. Other recommendations commonly rated as *most important* were removing barriers to effective instruction (65%) and increasing the use of effective inclusion practices (50%). In the category of organizational structure and staff resources supporting special education services, the top-rated recommendation was ensuring effective, equitably distributed use of campus-based staff in support of special education services (65%).

¹ Twenty-four respondents completed the English version, and two respondents completed the Spanish version.

**Table 1. Community Members' Priorities for Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS)
Report Recommendations for Special Education Services, December 2010**

Statement	% Most important	% Very important	% Somewhat important	% Not Important	% No Answer
A. Identifying students receiving special education services					
1. Ensure AISD utilizes a district-wide system of academic and behavior interventions with progress monitoring to improve student outcomes.	38	50	4	0	8
2. Review and improve special education assessment and eligibility process to include Response to Intervention (RtI) considerations.	19	54	15	4	8
B. Instruction and performance of students receiving special education services					
3. Increase the number of first-year students on track to graduate.	23	23	35	4	15
4. Increase and/or initiate policy or procedure changes needed regarding statewide assessments to influence students with disabilities' appropriate participation.	31	34	31	0	4
5. Ensure students receiving special education services receive targeted and intensive interventions that are reviewed and adjusted regularly through progress monitoring.	73	19	8	0	0
6. Remove barriers to effective instruction.	65	31	4	0	0
7. Build on AISD's initiative with Stetson & Associates, Inc. to maximize increased and effective inclusion practices.	50	34	8	4	4
8. Improve identification and support for English language learner (ELL) students with disabilities needing and receiving autism support and the provision of in-home services.	19	42	23	8	8
9. Increase effective support for positive behavior.	38.5	38.5	19	0	4
10. Improve support for transition services by increasing enrollment at Clifton Career Technical School and improving access to career and technical education (CTE).	19	38	23	12	8
C. Organizational structure and staff resources supporting special education services					
11. Centralize relevant functions under the chief academic officer (CAO) to reduce program fragmentation and maximize collaboration and coordination of activities related to student improved academic performance and positive behavior/physical health.	15	46	27	4	8
12. Enhance effectiveness of the Special Education department's organization.	27	42	23	4	4
13. Ensure campus-based management and coordination are effectively structured and that special educators, teaching assistants, and related-service personnel are available and distributed equitably and sufficiently to meet the needs of students receiving special education services.	65	27	4	0	4

Source. Community Survey on Special Education Priorities, December 2010

Note. Highlighted percentages indicate the most common response. If percentages for two answer choices were close, both are highlighted.

Table 1 continued on next page

Table 1. continued

Statement	% Most important	% Very important	% Somewhat important	% Not Important	% No Answer
D. Accountability for expected practices and results					
14. Enhance AISD's system of co-accountability to incorporate expectations for RtI, inclusive instruction, transition support, and other performance required by Texas' SPP/PBMAS indicators.	35	38	19	4	4
15. Include in AISD's system of accountability provisions for including performance of all students, overuse of TAKS-M, and acceptance of students with challenging needs.	23	35	35	8	0
16. Engage East Austin vertical team schools in development of co-accountability framework and expedite its use for these schools.	19	38	27	4	12
17. Enhance use of Special Education department's Operating Guidelines for Special Education.	23	38	27	4	8
18. Increase usefulness of the SEEDS and analytical data reports.	19	31	15.5	15.5	19

Source. Community Survey on Special Education Priorities, December 2010

Note. Highlighted percentages indicate the most common response. If percentages for two answer choices were close, both are highlighted.

Priorities in the District's AYP Plan Recommendations

When community members attending the meeting were asked to rate the importance of the district's AYP/Instructional Advancement Plan Recommendations, all three priorities were rated similarly.

Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Community Members' Priorities for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Recommendations for Special Education Services, December 2010

Statement	% Most important	% Very important	% Somewhat important	% Not Important	% No Answer
1. Purchase and implementation of a district-wide social skills curriculum.	34.5	34.5	27	0	4
2. Development of demonstration classrooms for in-district professional development.	34.5	34.5	27	0	4
3. Purchase and implementation of a universal assessment for IEP development and progress monitoring.	42	38	8	8	4

Source. Community Survey on Special Education Priorities, December 2010

Note. Highlighted percentages indicate the most common response. If percentages for two answer choices were close, both are highlighted.

Comments

Some community members provided comments on the survey about special education services. Common themes in the comments centered on providing training to staff, distributing staff to schools in an equitable way, and ensuring students receive the individualized services they need.²

² Actual comments are available from the AISD Department of Program Evaluation or the Department of Special Education.