High School Exit Survey Results

Postsecondary Aspirations, Parental Engagement, and Support

Establishing a college-going culture requires changes in attitudes and expectations of students, teachers and school personnel, and the community (The College Board, 2006). Teachers and other school personnel must work diligently to remove barriers from learning for all groups of students. Students must believe they can achieve at high levels, and must subsequently achieve at high levels. Students must also aspire to college early in their schooling (Dougherty, 2013). Parents and teachers must provide supportive learning environments, and set high expectations. Parents and community members must engage in school activities.

Table 1.

Over half of AISD seniors planned to work part time while attending college.

Postsecondary plans	2013	2014	2015
Continue my education	.	.	87%
Attend college or technical school without working	.	23%	20%
Attend college or technical school while working full time	.	13%	11%
Attend college or technical school while working part time	.	60%	56%
Work full time only	.	6%	4%
Work part time only	.	3%	1%
Enlist in the military	4%	3%	3%
No plans/ not sure yet	4%	5%	4%
Other	3%	3%	2%

Figure 1.

Of the seniors who planned to enroll in college, 85% planned to start in Fall 2016.
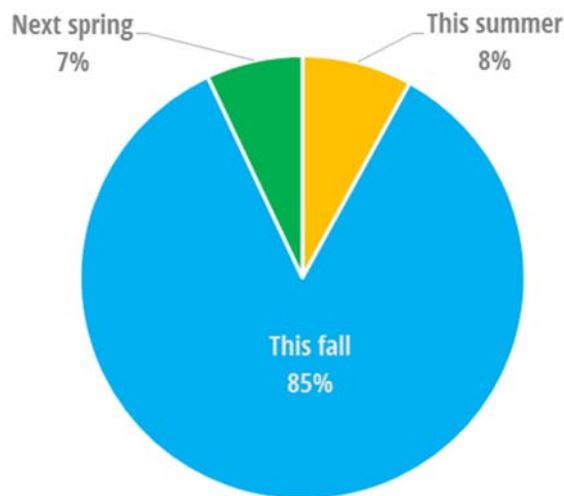

Next spring 7%
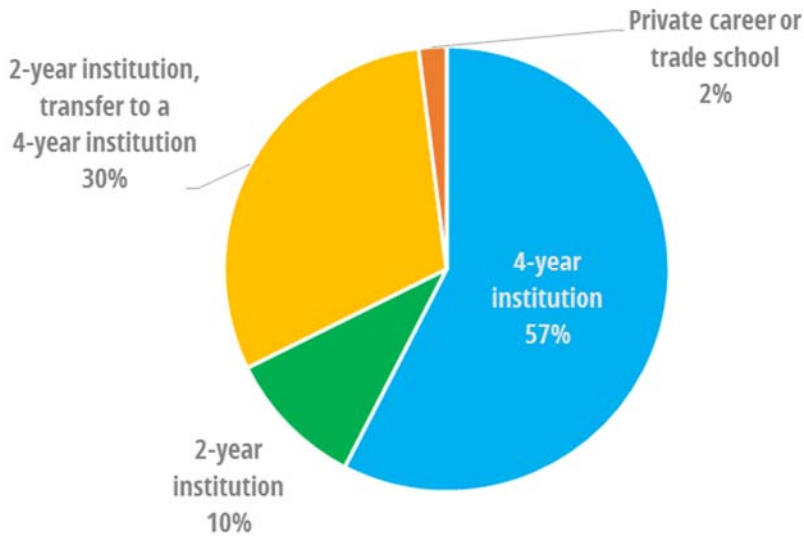
This summer 8%

This fall 85%

Figure 2.

Of the seniors who planned to go to college, most planned to attend a 4-year college or university. Thirty percent planned to attend a 2-year community college and then transfer to a 4-year college.

Which colleges did seniors plan to attend in the fall?

Austin Community College	35%
Other	31%
University of Texas: Austin	9%
Texas State University	8%
University of Texas: San Antonio	4%
Texas A&M University	4%
Texas Tech University	3%
St. Edwards' University	2%
Blinn College	2%
University of North Texas	2%
Stephen F. Austin University	0.5%

Private career or trade school 2%

2-year institution, transfer to a 4-year institution 30%

4-year institution 57%

2-year institution 10%

Figure 3.

Thirty-five percent of AISD seniors who did not plan to enroll in college after high school graduation planned to take a year off from school to pursue other things before enrolling.
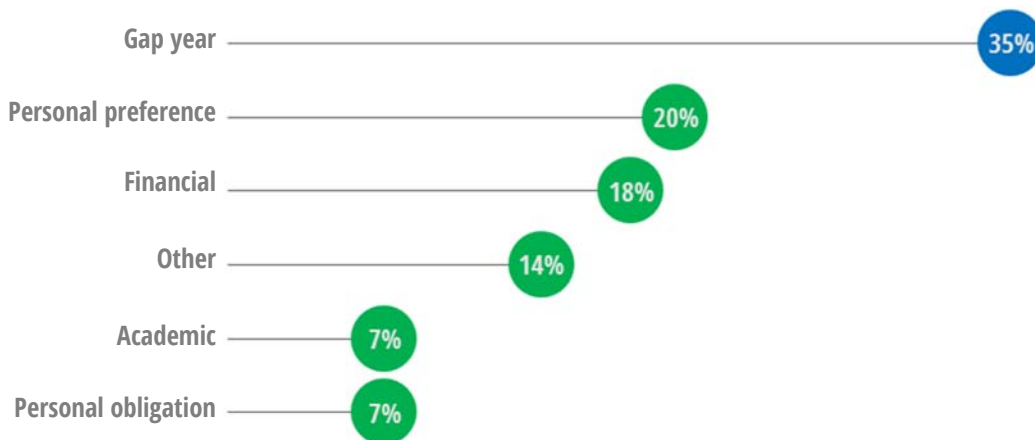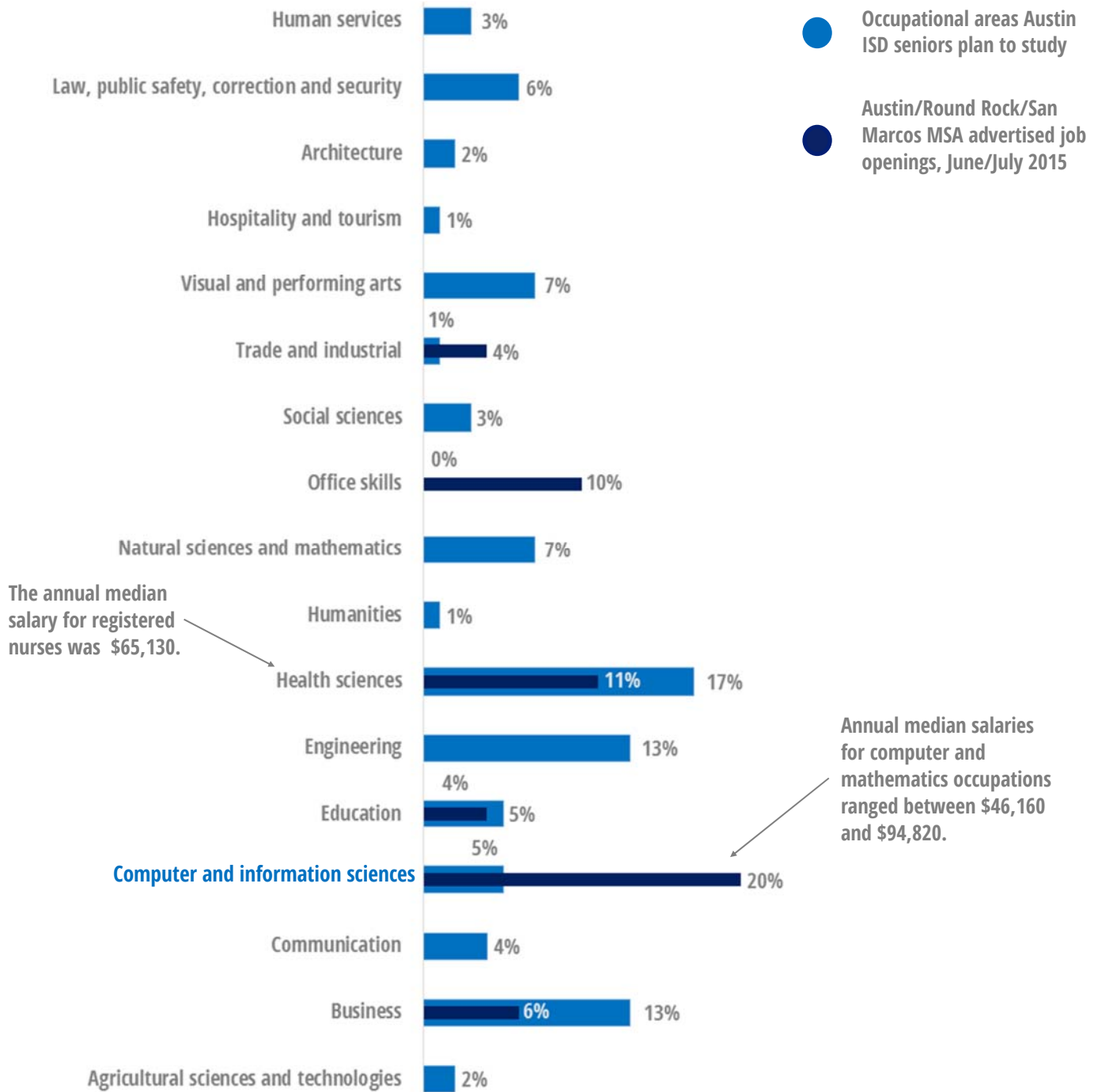
Gap year — 35%

Personal preference — 20%

Financial — 18%

Other — 14%

Academic — 7%

Personal obligation — 7%

Figure 4.

Only 5% of AISD seniors who planned to enroll in college were interested in studying computer and information sciences in college. According to the Austin Chamber of Commerce July 2015 MSA* Job Market Report, 20% of the available job openings between June and July 2015 were in computer and mathematical occupations.

Human services — 3%

Law, public safety, correction and security — 6%

Architecture — 2%

Hospitality and tourism — 1%

Visual and performing arts — 7%

Trade and industrial — 1% / 4%

Social sciences — 3%

Office skills — 0% / 10%

Natural sciences and mathematics — 7%

Humanities — 1%

Health sciences — 11% / 17%

Engineering — 13%

Education — 4% / 5%

Computer and information sciences — 5% / 20%

Communication — 4%

Business — 6% / 13%

Agricultural sciences and technologies — 2%

● Occupational areas Austin ISD seniors plan to study

● Austin/Round Rock/San Marcos MSA advertised job openings, June/July 2015

The annual median salary for registered nurses was $65,130.

Annual median salaries for computer and mathematics occupations ranged between $46,160 and $94,820.

*MSA: metropolitan statistical area

Figure 5.

Over 1/3 of seniors did not take a high school course in the area they planned to study in college.
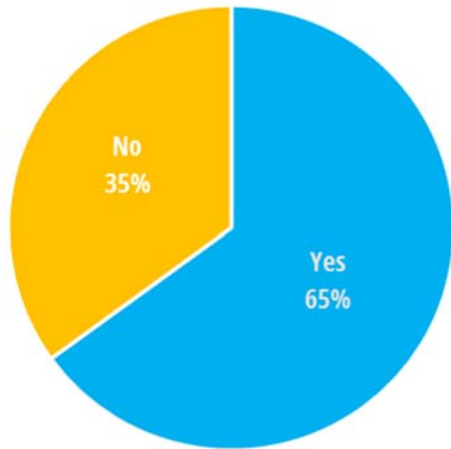

No 35%

Yes 65%

Table 2.

The top reason seniors who did not take a course in the area they planned to study in college was because the course was not offered at their school.

Reasons seniors did not take a course in the area they planned to study in college.	
I wanted to, but there were no such courses offered at my school.	51%
I wanted to, but my schedule would not allow it.	27%
I was not interested in taking a course in this area in high school.	18%
Other	11%
A counselor steered me away from those courses.	1%
My parents did not want me to take a course in that area.	1%

Parental education level influences children's academic achievement, educational aspirations, and success in the workforce (Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2009; Foundation for Child Development, 2014). Regardless of mother's education level, students have high expectations for themselves.

Figure 6.

Forty-one percent of seniors' mothers had a college degree or license/certification.

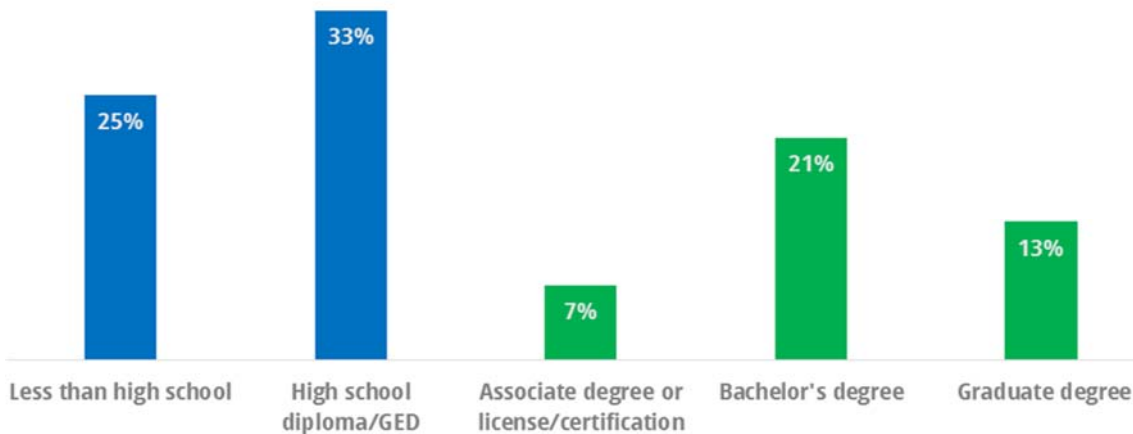| 25%	33%	7%	21%	13%
Less than high school	High school diploma/GED	Associate degree or license/certification	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree

Figure 7.

Regardless of their mother's education level, greater percentages of seniors expected to earn a college degree in their lifetime. Seniors' expectations exceeded perceived expectations of their parents.

Mother's education level: high school diploma/GED or less — 58% — 87%

Mother's education level: Associate degree or above — 82% 91%

According to Perna and Titus (2005), the odds of enrolling in a 2– or 4-year college, relative to not enrolling, increased with the frequency with which parents discussed education-related topics (e.g., grades) with their children. Furthermore, the positive relationship between the frequency of parent-initiated contact with the school about academic issues and the odds of enrolling in a 4-year college were particularly important for African American students.

Table 3.

A high percentage of seniors' parents *sometimes* or *often* talked to them about how they were doing in their classes.

Percentage who responded *sometimes* or *often*	2013	2014	2015
Talking to you about your homework	68%	68%	68%
Making sure you completed your homework	64%	65%	65%
Asking you about what you're learning in school	64%	65%	65%
Helping you decide what classes to take	55%	55%	54%
Talking to you about how you're doing in your classes	**79%**	**80%**	**79%**
Rewarding your when you do well in high school	56%	57%	56%
Communicating with your teachers	46%	46%	46%
Attending school meetings	43%	45%	47%
Attending school events	56%	56%	58%
Volunteering at your school	27%	28%	28%
Joining and participating in the PTA	20%	19%	18%

Figure 8.

Approximately half of the seniors' parents *sometimes* or *often* used Parent Cloud to monitor their grades. The other half *rarely* or *never* used it.
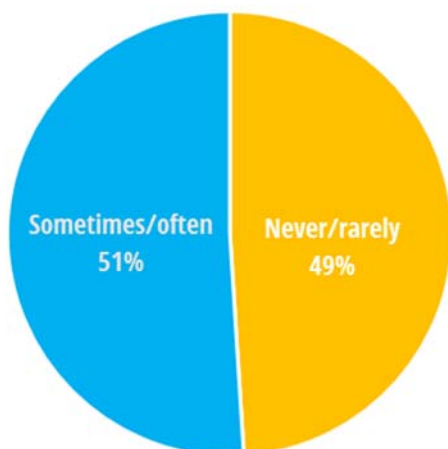

Sometimes/often 51%
Never/rarely 49%

Table 4.

Most seniors indicated they knew at least one teacher who supported them in their high school academics and postsecondary aspirations.

Teacher help	2013	2014	2015
Would be willing to give you extra help with your school work	85%	90%	88%
Would be willing to help you with a personal problem	72%	75%	74%
Cares about how you're doing in school	77%	81%	79%
Would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation	87%	79%	81%
Knows what you will be doing next year	69%	63%	65%
Would be willing to help you even after you graduate	70%	62%	64%
I do not know a teacher who fits any of the items above	--	--	4%

Persistence and Motivation

Motivation to learn, effort, and amount of time students spent studying were found to be key determinants of college attainment and success (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, Gonyea, 2008; Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinback, 2005). When teachers had high expectations and provided an interesting and engaging learning environment, students' self-esteem, confidence, and academic performance improved (Brophy, 2008; 2010).

Table 5.

Seniors indicated their feelings about their persistence, motivation, and interactions with teachers.

Percentage who responded *sometimes* or *often*	2013	2014	2015
I can do even the hardest schoolwork if I try	91%	92%	92%
I enjoy doing my schoolwork.	58%	56%	59%
I feel/felt prepared for STAAR/EOC.	--	79%	84%
I try hard to do my best work.	90%	91%	91%
I feel successful in my schoolwork.	88%	89%	89%
My teachers push us to think hard about the things we read.	83%	86%	87%
My teachers push everyone to try hard.	86%	89%	90%
I can reach the goals I set for myself.	95%	96%	96%
My homework helps me learn things I need to know.	76%	77%	78%
My schoolwork makes me think about things in new ways.	70%	71%	73%
I have fun learning in my classes.	67%	75%	77%
My teachers connect what I am learning to life outside of class.	75%	68%	70%
I like to come to school.	70%	69%	71%

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities provide intellectual and social development opportunities for students. According to a study by Stearnes and Glennie (2009), schools that provide more extracurricular activities and had more student participants had better academic outcomes in terms of students performing at grade level and staying in school than did schools that provided fewer such activities. Participation in extracurricular activities was also linked to higher aspirations for college, college attainment and graduation, and better occupational status (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005).

Table 6a.

Almost 60% of seniors played school sports at some point during high school.

In school	Did not participate	1-2 years	3-4 years
Music	62%	19%	19%
Theater/drama	75%	20%	5%
Dance	78%	14%	7%
Sports	41%	24%	35%
Academic clubs/UIL competitions	57%	22%	21%
Speech/debate	67%	31%	2%
Student government	78%	19%	3%
Career and technical student organizations	83%	12%	5%

Table 6b.

Over half of seniors played out-of-school sports at some point during high school.   Approximately 60% of seniors engaged in community service outside of school at some point during their high school years.

Outside of school	Did not participate	1-2 years	3-4 years
Music	69%	12%	19%
Theater/drama	87%	10%	3%
Dance	84%	10%	6%
Sports	49%	19%	33%
Providing routine care for family members	74%	13%	13%
Community service	39%	26%	35%
Environmental projects/activities	69%	19%	13%
Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts	91%	4%	5%

Work and Study Time

A study conducted by Marsh and Kleitman (2005) found that compared to those who did not work, students who worked longer hours had significantly lower academic achievement, attendance, and educational aspirations. They were less engaged in extracurricular activities and were less likely to enroll in college.

Figure 9.

Seniors who worked during their senior year increased 10 percentage points since 2013. Most of the increase was due to the seniors who worked 20 hours or more.

51%
47%

59%

41%

61% Worked

39% Did not work

50% of seniors indicated they worked during their senior year because they liked the freedom of having their own money.
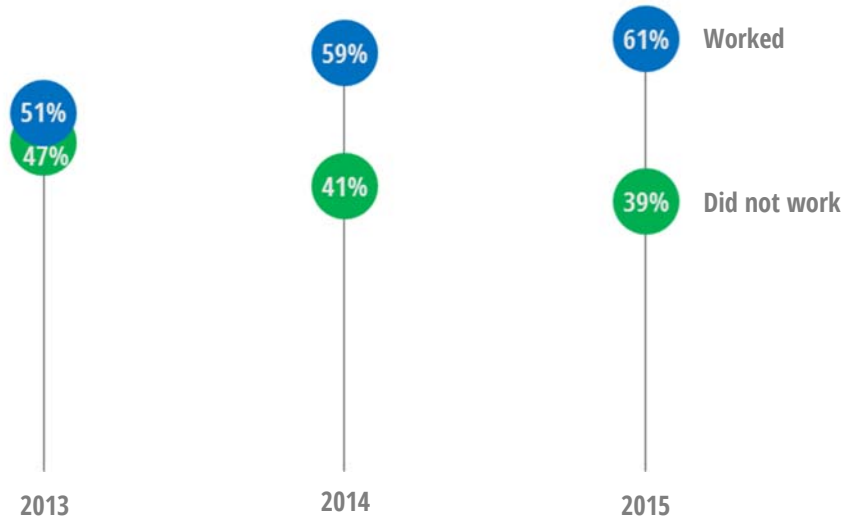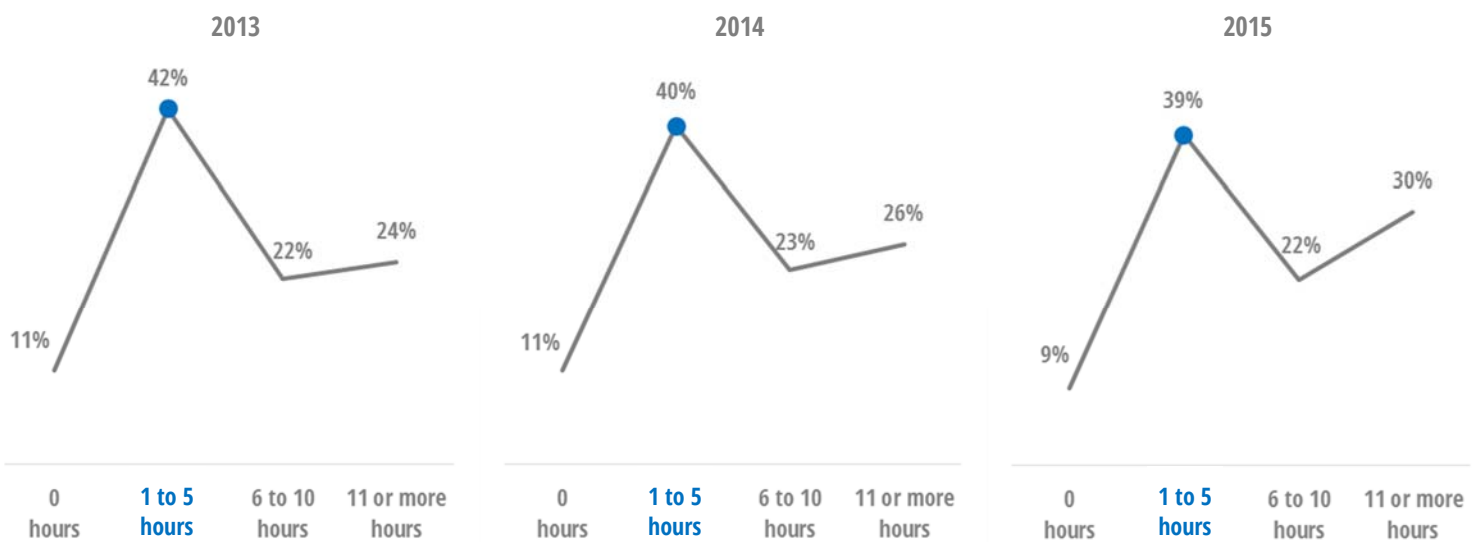
2013   2014   2015

Figure 10.

On average, AISD seniors studied 1 to 5 hours each week. The Penn State Eberly College of Science (The Pennsylvania State University, 2015) recommends a 2:1 study time/course load ratio, whereby students spend at least 2 hours studying for every 1 hour of class time.

2013			
11%	42%	22%	24%
0 hours	1 to 5 hours	6 to 10 hours	11 or more hours

2014			
11%	40%	23%	26%
0 hours	1 to 5 hours	6 to 10 hours	11 or more hours

2015			
9%	39%	22%	30%
0 hours	1 to 5 hours	6 to 10 hours	11 or more hours

Instructional Quality

Researchers have found that students are important sources of information about what happens in classrooms. Students' responses regarding their perspectives of their classroom environments are generally reliable, valid, and stable over time (Ferguson, 2010).

Table 7.

Over 80% of seniors rated the quality of English language arts instruction at AISD high schools good or excellent.

Percentage who responded *good* or *excellent*	2013	2014	2015
English language arts	82%	83%	81%
Social studies	77%	78%	75%
Mathematics	70%	70%	73%
Performing/fine arts	74%	74%	73%
Career and technical (CTE)	62%	74%	71%
Science	69%	71%	70%
Computer/technology	67%	67%	64%
Foreign language	60%	60%	59%

Table 8.

Since 2013, 90% or more of seniors indicated AISD high schools actively helped them develop knowledge and skills in problem solving, teamwork, and creative thinking somewhat or very well.

Percentage who responded *somewhat well* or *very well*	2013	2014	2015
Teamwork	91%	91%	91%
Creative thinking	91%	90%	90%
Problem solving	93%	93%	93%
Conflict resolution	87%	88%	87%
Personal health/fitness	83%	81%	81%
Time management	84%	84%	84%
Technology	87%	85%	84%

Technology Access and Use

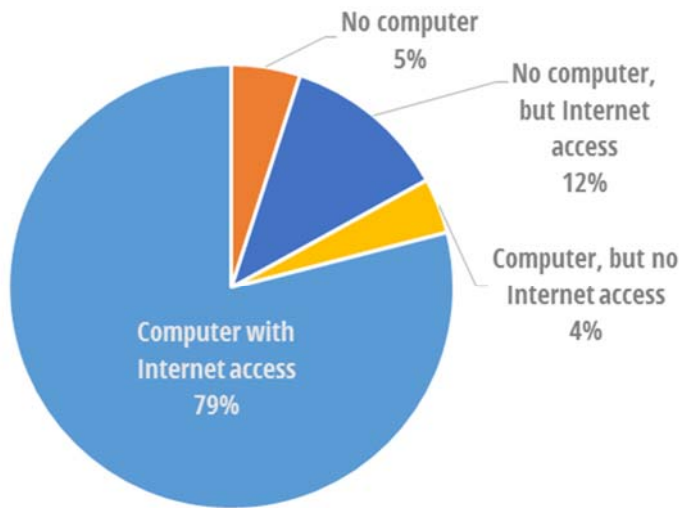**Almost 8 in 10 AISD seniors had a computer with Internet access at home.**

Table 9.

Overall, student use of Naviance decreased in 2015, compared to use reported in 2014. AISD seniors mostly used Naviance to check their class rank and grade point average (GPA), search colleges, and complete counselor-directed activities.

Naviance/Family Connections activities	2014	2015
Class rank and grade point average inquiry	84%	81%
College search	73%	70%
Counselor-directed activities (e.g., 4-year plan)	65%	63%
College visit sign up	56%	55%
Career exploration	51%	48%
Resume building	37%	36%

Naviance is comprehensive college and career software for middle and high schools that helps align students' postsecondary interests and academic strengths.

Postsecondary Preparation and Advising

"Middle school is the crucial stage" at which parents and students should begin to think about preparing for college (Cunningham, Erisman, & Looney, 2007). By the time a student reaches junior high school, it may be too late to acquire the necessary coursework and GPA for admission to college (Dougherty, 2013). Fifty-six percent of White seniors and 53% of Asian seniors indicated they had been thinking about college for "as long as [they] can remember;" compared to 27% and 25% of Black and Hispanic seniors, respectively.

Figure 12.

Thirty-seven percent of AISD seniors had been thinking about college for as long as they can remember. Thirty-one percent of seniors did not think about college until they were in high school.
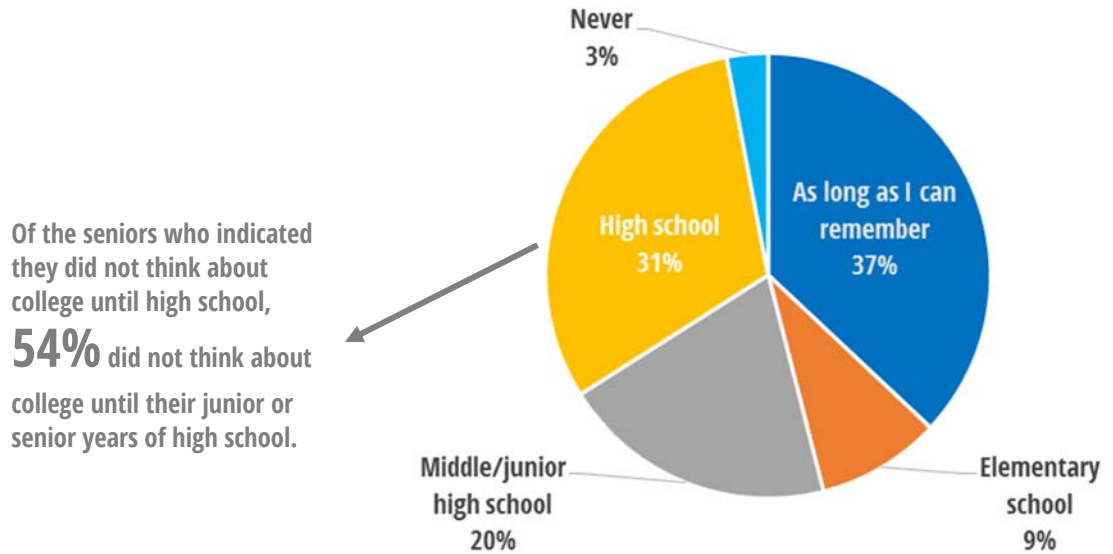
Of the seniors who indicated they did not think about college until high school,

54% did not think about college until their junior or senior years of high school.

Never
3%

High school
31%

As long as I can remember
37%

Middle/junior high school
20%

Elementary school
9%

Figure 13.

A greater percentage of Hispanic seniors did not think about college until high school, compared with their peers of other races/ethnicities.
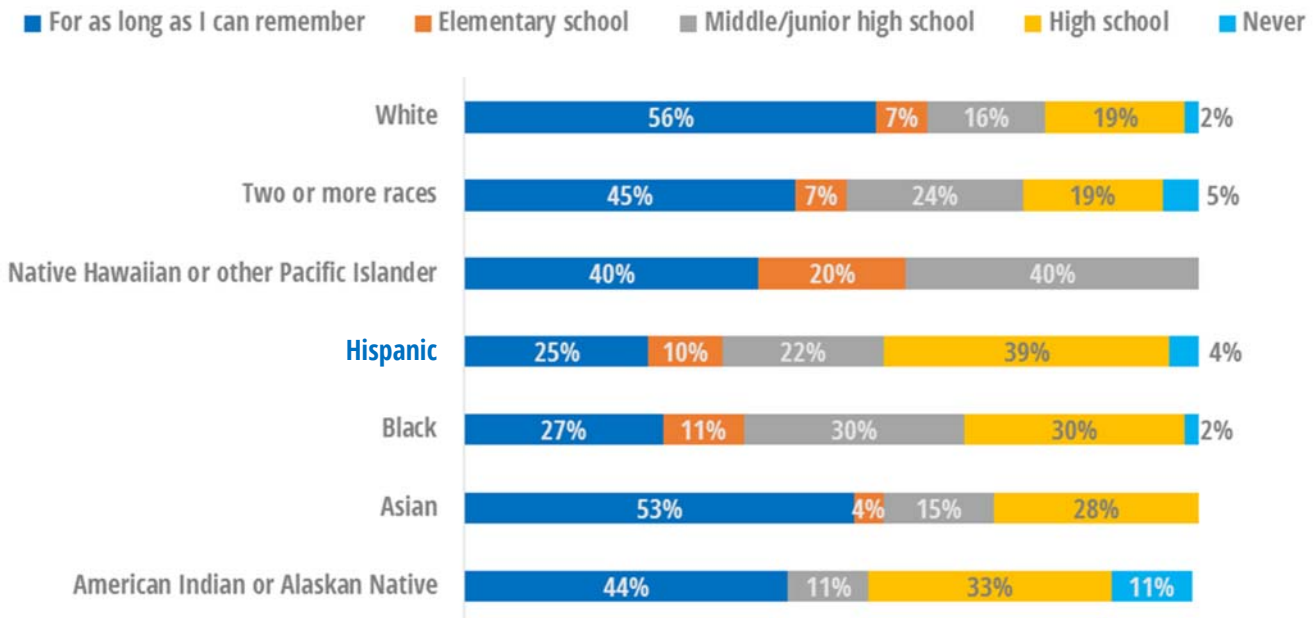
■ For as long as I can remember ■ Elementary school ■ Middle/junior high school ■ High school ■ Never

Race/Ethnicity	For as long as I can remember	Elementary school	Middle/junior high school	High school	Never
White	56%	7%	16%	19%	2%
Two or more races	45%	7%	24%	19%	5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	40%	20%	40%		
Hispanic	25%	10%	22%	39%	4%
Black	27%	11%	30%	30%	2%
Asian	53%	4%	15%	28%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	44%		11%	33%	11%

Table 10.

Fifty percent or more of AISD seniors prepared for college by taking college entrance exams, visiting colleges, taking Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes, and/or meeting with a school counselor or college and career advisor.

Academic preparation for college	2013	2014	2015
Took college entrance tests	66%	67%	60%
Visited one or more colleges or trade/technical schools	56%	60%	58%
Took one or more Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes	50%	51%	51%
Met with a school counselor or college and career advisor	56%	53%	50%
Took test prep classes for the PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.	39%	40%	45%
Attended one or more college fairs	39%	45%	43%
Met with a college representative or recruiter at my high school	41%	43%	41%
Completed or enrolled in Austin Community College (ACC) courses	39%	36%	32%
Participated in ACC College Connections	36%	35%	24%
Attended financial Aid Saturday event(s)	--	--	10%
Took other college-level courses	6%	6%	9%

Table 11.

Sixty-eight percent of seniors submitted a financial aid form (e.g., FAFSA) in preparation for college.

College preparation forms	2013	2014	2015
Completed and submitted a financial aid form (FAFSA)	66%	67%	68%
Ordered and submitted a transcript	56%	60%	56%
Completed and submitted a scholarship application	50%	51%	47%

Figure 14.

Most AISD seniors were able to meet with their college and career advisor or their school counselor.

Yes, this person was available and we met. — 63% 71%

I never tried to meet with this person. — 22% 24%

I tried to this person, but we weren't able to meet. — 7% 13%

Table 12.

AISD seniors' teachers, school counselors, and college and career advisors all encouraged them to continue their education after high school.

Postsecondary preparation help and encouragement	Teacher	School counselor	College and career advisor	None of these people
Select courses needed for work or admission to college	18%	38%	29%	35%
Push your academic abilities further	57%	24%	15%	26%
Take Advanced Placement or honors courses	42%	26%	9%	40%
Get information about careers and/or occupations	28%	26%	31%	37%
Continue your education after high school	44%	36%	38%	27%
Apply to multiple schools	23%	24%	37%	40%
Decide what school to attend	20%	15%	25%	54%
Complete applications for college	18%	18%	37%	43%
Write college application essays or personal statements	43%	16%	28%	35%

Applications to Postsecondary Institutions

On average, seniors who applied to 2-year colleges and/or technical schools submitted fewer than 4 applications. AISD Class of 2014 seniors who submitted applications to four or more institutions were significantly more likely to enroll in college than were students who submitted fewer than four applications (Wiggins, 2015).

Figure 15.

More than half of seniors who applied to 4-year institutions submitted 4 or more applications. Almost all seniors who applied to 2-year institutions submitted 3 or less applications.

4-year colleges — 49% 51%

2-year colleges — 7% 93%

Business/technical/vocational school — 23% 77%
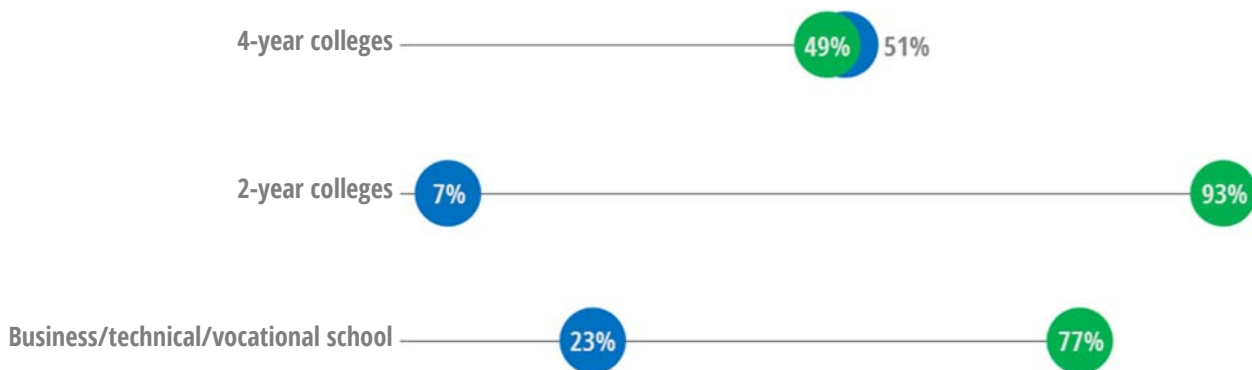
Postsecondary Financial Literacy

The completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is important to entering and completing postsecondary education, especially for economically disadvantaged students (Roderick, Coco, & Nagoaka, 2011). AISD students who submitted the FAFSA enrolled (Wiggins, 2014; 2015) and persisted (Wiggins, 2015) in college at significantly higher rates than did their than did their peers who did not submit the FAFSA.

Table 13.

Seniors planned to pay for college mostly through scholarships, family or personal savings, and/or working during the summer or school year.

Financial aid source	2013	2014	2015
Scholarships	59%	70%	68%
Loans	35%	42%	42%
Family or personal savings	51%	65%	63%
Tuition and fees exemption (e.g., military)	8%	11%	10%
Working during the school year	52%	62%	59%
Working during the summer	54%	64%	61%
I don't know	6%	4%	4%

Figure 16.

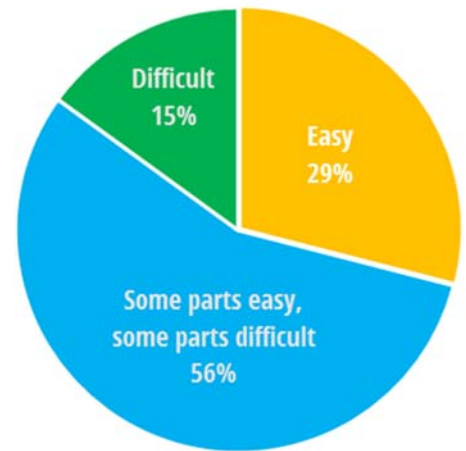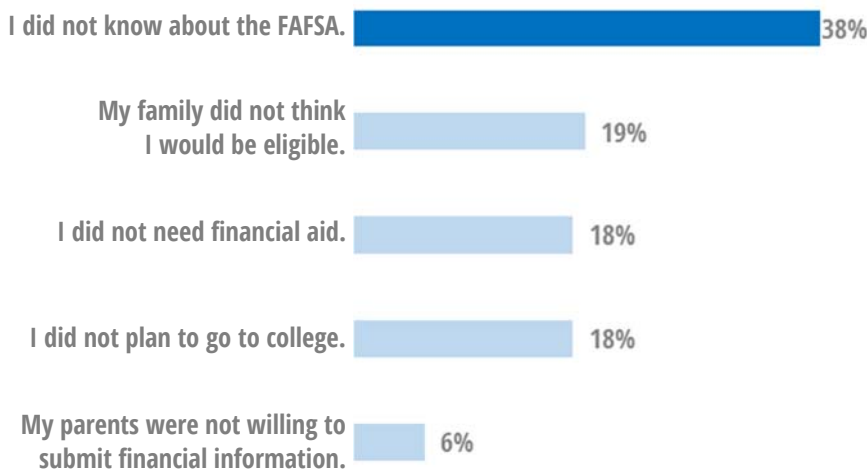**Most AISD seniors indicated completing the FAFSA was "some parts easy, some parts difficult."**

Difficult 15%
Easy 29%
Some parts easy, some parts difficult 56%

Figure 17.

Almost 40% of seniors did not submit the FAFSA because they did not know about it.

I did not know about the FAFSA. 38%
My family did not think I would be eligible. 19%
I did not need financial aid. 18%
I did not plan to go to college. 18%
My parents were not willing to submit financial information. 6%

Acronym Key

ACT - American College Testing. THEA is Texas Higher Education Assessment

ASSET - American College Testing placement exam for students in community/technical education

COMPASS - American College Testing Computer-adapted Placement Assessment and Support

EOC - End of Course Assessments

PSAT - American College Testing placement exam for students in community/technical education

SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test. ACT is American College Testing

STARR - State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

THEA - Texas Higher Education Assessment

TSTC - Texas State Technical College

UIL - University Interscholastic League

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