HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN STUDENT ADVISORY EVALUATION, YEAR 2 IMPLEMENTATION, 2008–2009

Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation

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About the Department of Program Evaluation

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE), a department within Austin Independent School District's (AISD) Office of Accountability, is charged with evaluating federal, state, and locally funded programs in AISD. DPE works with program staff throughout the district to design and conduct formative and summative program evaluations. DPE's methods for evaluating programs vary depending on the research question, program design, and reporting requirements. The evaluations report objectively about program implementation and outcomes, and serve to inform program staff, decision makers, and planners in the district. DPE also responds to information needs at all levels. DPE reports may be accessed online at http://www.austinisd.org/inside/accountability/evaluation/reports.phtml.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in the 2008–2009 school year, all Austin Independent School District (AISD) high schools implemented a Student Advisory/Family Advocacy Program for all students in grades 9 through12.[1] In the first year of implementation, 2007–2008, the advisory program was not uniformly implemented across all grade levels within particular schools (e.g., Anderson High School). Although each program has been personalized to the unique needs of each campus, the following four goals are common to each campus's program[2]:

- Building relationships and community
- Supporting academic achievement and skill building
- Promoting postsecondary planning, access, and completion
- Supporting healthy development toward adulthood

For the 2008–2009 school year, the program evaluation examined two program implementation outcomes and five student outcomes:

- What program practices were identified by teachers as working well?
- What program challenges were identified by teachers?
- At the district level, how did students perceive the advisory program?
- Did students' perceptions of the advisory program differ across campuses? Did they differ within campuses?
- Did perceptions of the advisory program differ between students who had been assigned to the same advisor for more than one year and students who had been newly assigned to a different advisor in the 2008–2009 school year?
- Did the students' perceptions of the advisory program differ across grade levels?
- Did students' experience in the advisory program differ by race, socioeconomic status, and previous academic performance?

[1] Given the different terminology used across campuses and external service providers to describe the advisory program, *advisory* is used for the sake of brevity to refer to the program.

[2] These goals did not apply to Garza High School.

FINDINGS

Several key findings emerged from this evaluation. They are summarized here and categorized according to the structure of the report.

The district-level survey results for campus administrators and advisors were as follows:

- Overall, the campus administrators (principals, assistant principals or directors, and school improvement facilitators) who completed the advisory program implementation questions on the Employee Coordinated Survey responded favorably, indicating they had support for and leadership in the program.
- Seventy-eight percent of the advisors reported program expectations were clearly communicated by their campus leaders, 79% understood the purpose of the program, and 85% understood their roles and responsibilities in program implementation. Most advisors (80%) reported they implemented the program according to district and campus expectations.
- Most (60%) of advisor respondents reported that additional professional development activities pertaining to the advisory program were not warranted.
- Advisors' perceptions of students' commitment and attachment to the advisory program were varied. More than about one-third of advisors felt that *all* or *most* of their advisory students were vested in the program. Nearly the same percentage reported that only *some* or *none* of their advisory students were vested in the group.

The teacher focus group findings were as follows:

- Overall, the tone of the teachers' conversations about the advisory program was improved, compared with the tone about the program in the previous year. The majority of teachers interviewed reported lower levels of resistance to the program on their respective campuses, compared with levels the previous year.
- Advisory teachers identified several activities that were particularly effective in stimulating student interest and engagement during advisory periods. Teachers gave high ratings to activities focused on content of interest to students (e.g., college and career preparation, academic advising, financial planning, prom, and drunk driving), as well as time devoted to academic advising and consultations with students about their academic performance.
- Teachers continued to report difficulties embracing and adequately fulfilling their roles as advisor. They often thought being an advisor was not or should not be part of their job description. Uneven implementation within a campus, according to focus group participants, often spawned feelings of unfairness among compliant advisors.

Findings related to looping success and its impact on students' relationships with their advisors were as follows:

- To foster strong bonds between students and advisory teachers, program managers instructed campus staff to loop advisors with the same group of students across multiple school years.
- Overall, in the 2008–2009 school year, approximately 71% of students were successfully looped with their prior year's advisor, although the looping rate varied noticeably across campuses and across student subgroups.
- Across district high schools, looping rates were lowest among African American and economically disadvantaged students.
- Of those students who were not successfully looped with their advisory teacher between the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school year, the largest group (39%) were assigned to an advisor who was not on a district campus during the 2007–2008 school year.
- According to survey data, looped students reported stronger connections to their advisor across a range of survey items, compared with the connections reported by their peers who were not looped.

Students' perceptions of the advisory program's implementation were as follows:

- Grade point average was positively and significantly related to the likelihood of students responding that advisory leaders *often* or *almost always* discussed students' academic performance data during advisory class.
- Most of the variance in response to this question was found within schools, as opposed to between them. Although some schools had a higher share of students responding *often* or *almost always* to this survey item than did others, much of the variance arose within schools and between classes.
- Teachers who were new to AISD during the 2008–2009 school year had fewer students report that their advisory teachers conducted academic advising *often* or *almost always* than did teachers who were in the district prior to 2008–2009.
- As students approached graduation, they were more likely to report having conversations with their advisor about their postgraduation aspirations and plans than were students who were freshmen and sophomores. Students enrolled at high schools with a high percentage of graduates from the prior graduating class who enrolled in a postsecondary institution were less likely than their counterparts at campuses with low postsecondary enrollment rates to indicate these discussion occurred *often* or *almost always.*

CONCLUSION

The district's mission was to ensure that all students had at least one adult in their school life who knew them well, to build community by creating stronger bonds across social groups, to teach important life skills, and to establish a forum for academic advisement and college and career coaching. Toward this end, Student Advisory/Family Advocacy classes were established and supported through a combination of efforts provided by the district's Office of School Redesign, teacher leaders, and contracted support providers in all high schools during the 2008–2009 school year. The initiative will continue in the 2009–2010 school year, with a focus on ensuring students are engaging in the tasks and requirements necessary to achieve success after graduation. Currently, program-related expenses are covered by a Gates Foundation grant, which will expire in October 2010. However, staff from the Office of High School Redesign have applied for a funding extension which secures program funding until December 2011. Funding for continued program support efforts must be obtained from local district funds or external sources. However, program staff have stated that the architecture for sustaining the program is established, and continuation of the program without support from external providers may be cost neutral, although ongoing support of campus leadership will require a small fraction of the previous allocation to the program.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the 2008–2009 school year, all Austin Independent School District (AISD) high schools implemented a Student Advisory/Family Advocacy Program for all students in grades 9 through 12.[3] In the first year of implementation, 2007–2008, the advisory program was not uniformly implemented across all grade levels within particular schools (e.g., Anderson initially only implemented the advisory program for 9th graders, although it was expanded campus wide during the 2008–2009 school year). Although each program has been personalized to the unique needs of each campus, the following four goals are common to each campus's program[4]: (a) building relationships and community; (b) supporting academic achievement and skill building; (c) promoting postsecondary planning, access and completion; and (d) supporting healthy development toward adulthood.

Each high school student in AISD is assigned an advisor (i.e., a 17:1 average ratio) to ensure every student has one adult on campus with whom they have a supportive relationship. At a minimum, all high school advisory programs meet once per week; however, the frequency and length of the periods vary widely across schools. During these meeting times, the advisor facilitates student exploration of the four common goals, with support from curriculum personalized for each campus by campus advisory committees. Grade-level advisory programs are designed to meet the developmental and college and career planning needs of students as they progress through high school.

Since 2007, a significant capacity has been built at the campus level to lead and sustain the high school advisory programs. Twelve school improvement facilitators (SIFs) and more than 60 teacher leaders serve as the core leadership for the advisory committee that has been established on each campus. Many committees include assistant principals, counselors, Project ADVANCE facilitators, and librarians. These committees, which have a total membership of more than 150 faculty and staff, have convened during each summer since 2007 to write advisory curricula and make programmatic adjustments. Beginning in 2009, multiple campuses have involved their 11th- and 12th-grade students in the curriculum writing and program revision process.

Although each program is unique, each campus's program has followed a similar path with regard to program development. In 2007–2008, advisory committees collaborated with their external partners to introduce the key program components to their peers, students, and community. In addition, the advisory committees worked to educate their peers about the roles

[3] Given the different terminology used across campuses and external service providers to describe the advisory program, *advisory* is used for the sake of brevity to refer to the program.

[4] These goals did not apply to Garza High School.

and responsibilities of an advisor. In 2008–2009, the focus of the programs broadened to include more intensive development of academic advisement skills for students and advisors. Particular emphasis was placed on collaboratively "reading" student-level data and creating action plans for improvement. In 2009–2010, the focus will broaden to include a heightened emphasis on postsecondary preparation and planning.

From August 2008 to July 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided approximately $207,932 for the advisory program's development and support across the district. By July 2009, $163,338 had been expended. Funding is available to continue to support the development of AISD's high school advisory program through October 2010. However, staff from the Office of High School Redesign have applied for a funding extension which would secure program funding until December 2011.

METHODS

PURPOSE

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) conducted the evaluation to provide information for district decision makers about program implementation and effectiveness, and to facilitate decisions for program modification or improvement. In the second year, the focus of the evaluation shifted from describing program development and beginning implementation practices to identifying best practices, ongoing challenges, and outcomes for participants.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following questions were explored in the evaluation of the district's student advisory program:

Program Implementation

- What program practices were identified by teachers as working well?
- What program challenges were identified by teachers?

Student Outcomes

- At the district level, how did students perceive the advisory program?
- Did students' perceptions of the advisory program differ across campuses? Did they differ within campuses?
- Did perceptions of the advisory program differ between students who had been assigned to the same advisor for more than 1 year and students who had been newly assigned to a different advisor in the 2008–2009 school year?
- Did the students' perceptions of the advisory program differ across grade levels?
- Did students' experience in the advisory program differ by race, socioeconomic status, and previous academic performance?

DATA COLLECTION

Both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to clearly defined performance measures were collected to assess the program's progress toward its goals. A detailed description of data collection activities follows.

School Administrator Surveys

The district's online Employee Coordinated Survey was used to survey to all high school administrators (e.g., principals, assistant principals or directors, and SIFs) regarding the implementation of the student advisory program. Of the 84 persons invited to participate, 43 responded, with a response rate of 51.2%. The data presented here represent only the opinions

of those who responded to the survey. Results cannot be generalized to all high school administrators.

Advisor Surveys

In May 2009, the district's online Employee Coordinated Survey was used to administer the advisor survey, originally developed in the 2007–2008 school year, to minimize the burden on campuses. The Employee Coordinated Survey allowed multiple questionnaires to be administered in a single data collection instrument. Of the 437 persons invited to respond to the survey, 258 responded, with a response rate of 59.0%.

The sampling design for the 2008–2009 advisor survey was not stratified to ensure sufficient campus-level representation; thus, reporting campus-level results was inadvisable, although results will be reported for the district. Moreover, the advisory survey response rate for the previous school year was too low, creating a large margin of error. Consequently, the respondents were determined not to be representative of the high school population. Thus, the survey data were not analyzed in 2007–2008, preventing a comparison of results across school years.

Teacher Interviews and Focus Groups

Teacher focus groups were conducted at all high school campuses in April and May 2009. Focus groups averaged 3 to 8 members and included teachers from varying content areas and grade levels. Approximately 137 teachers participated in these discussions. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details, themes, and patterns within the focus group data.

Student Surveys

The 2007–2008 version of the student advisory survey was modified based on feedback from the previous year's survey implementation experience and results. The changes were made to provide results that would more useful to program staff. Most significantly, the survey response categories were changed from an indication of agreement with a statement, to a report of the frequency in which an event might occur. Thus, survey results could not be compared across the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years. Furthermore, at the program manager's request, the survey included additional questions about the instructional environment of the school. However, these questions were not closely aligned with the expected outcomes of the advisory program and were not explored in this evaluation.

In May 2009, an advisory student survey was administered using a stratified random sample of students in advisory groups. Using this approach, 5,376 students were sampled by high school of enrollment and by student grade levels, and 3,138 (58.4%) responded.

DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION

DPE staff used a mixed-methods approach for the evaluation of the district's student advisory program in 2008–2009. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze survey results. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details, themes, and patterns within the qualitative data provided through focus groups. Results from the analyses were triangulated to verify the consistency of data and to clarify results, increasing the validity and reliability of results.

Analyses were segmented and examined by myriad variables, including student- and school-level characteristics. At the school level, the most salient attribute used for inter-school comparative analysis was school organization. These unique school-level characteristics were used to develop a taxonomy of school organization. First, several schools were identified as having embraced and implemented smaller learning communities (SLC) or academies.[5] These features included small, intra-school groupings; regular, embedded planning targeted at the advisory program; and small schools within a larger, comprehensive school setting (e.g., thematic academies or defined SLCs). Second, two schools (International and Eastside Memorial) were identified as small schools. Small schools were defined as having fewer than 400 students. Although Eastside Memorial had more than 600 students enrolled, the additional faculty allotted there in 2008–2009 allowed for adult-to-student ratios more akin to those of the small schools. The remainder of the schools were classified as traditional schools.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is organized into three major sections summarizing results pertaining to articulated evaluation questions, followed by discussion and recommendations. The first section reports the results from the Spring 2009 student, staff, and administrator surveys, as well as the overarching themes gleaned from the teacher focus group. In this section, campus staff's assessment of the functioning, implementation, and effectiveness of the advisory program are summarized. In the second section, a deeper, more finely grained investigation of several of the advisory program's core objectives is undertaken. In particular, patterns of students' reports about their advisory group's adherence to the key goals of the program are explored using a variety of methodological strategies. Lastly, a discussion section highlights the evaluation findings, implications for the district, and fiscal considerations. Conclusions and recommendations identified throughout the report are presented and briefly summarized in the last section.

[5] District staff identified four campuses that met this qualification in the 2008–2009 school year: Reagan, LBJ, Travis, and Akins.

EVALUATION RESULTS

SECTION I: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the report summarizes the results from a variety of survey instruments and questionnaires designed, in collaboration with program stakeholders, to gauge teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward the advisory program. The school administrator survey, advisor survey, and teacher focus groups were designed to elicit information pertaining to the implementation of the student advisory program, to identify practices that worked well, and to describe challenges to quality implementation. The Student Feedback Survey included several instruments to explore students' attachment to their advisor and advisory group, as well as to capture students' perceptions about how frequently advisors carried out many activities and about expectations ascribed to the advisor role. In this section, a summary of the advisor survey and focus group findings is presented. Detailed results are provided in the Appendices.

District-Level Survey Results for Campus Administrators and Advisors

Overall, the campus administrators (i.e., principals, assistant principals or directors, and SIFs) who completed the advisory implementation questions on the Employee Coordinated Survey responded favorably, indicating they had support for and leadership in the program (Appendix A). Approximately 83% of them *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that the district leadership clearly communicated their expectations for program implementation, 85% *strongly agreed* or *agreed* they fully understood the vision and goals for the school's advisory program, and 90% understood their roles and responsibilities in its implementation. Eighty-six percent of the administrators *strongly agreed* or *agreed* the advisory program would improve students' experiences in school, while 51% requested additional support from the Office of Redesign to implement the program.

On the district survey of advisors, respondents also answered questions regarding communication pertaining to the initiative, their understanding about the program and their program implementation practices (Appendix B). Seventy-eight percent of the advisors reported program expectations were clearly communicated by their campus leaders, 79% understood the purpose of the program, and 85% understood their roles and responsibilities in program implementation. Most advisors (80%) reported they implemented the program according to district and campus expectations. For example, they treated students with respect, helped them with problems, and discussed their academic progress. About 85% of the advisors reported they were trying to get to know the students in their advisory group individually.

Regarding program implementation, several issues emerged that warrant further investigation. Approximately 60% of advisors reported they did not need more professional development opportunities to implement the advisory program. They had mixed perceptions about whether the professional development opportunities they received helped them to be a

better advisor, with 56% agreeing the training helped and 44% disagreeing. Although their responses indicated the advisors were exhibiting behaviors expected of an advisor (e.g., treating students with respect, helping them with problems, and discussing academic progress), a substantial percentage indicated they might not have implemented the district and campus advisory curriculum with fidelity. Fifty-four percent of the advisors reported they *always* or *often* used the advisory lesson plans and related materials provided. Almost 43% of the advisors *always* or *often* used their own ideas and/or materials to facilitate their advisory group. It is important to note, however, that advisors were encouraged to devise instructional strategies and curricula tailored to the needs of their advisory class. Finally, the advisors indicated varying levels of student buy in or engagement with their advisory program. Thirty-seven percent reported *all* or *most* of their students were vested in the group, 25% reported *about half* their students were vested in the group, and 38% reported *some or none* of their students were vested in the group.

Teacher Focus Groups

In teacher focus groups, much of the discussion explored their implementation of the advisory program. Overall, the tone of the teachers' conversations about the advisory program showed improvement, compared with the conversations in the previous year. The majority of teachers interviewed reported lower levels of resistance to the program on their respective campuses. Specifically, the teachers were not as concerned about what they should be implementing in the advisory group; instead, they were more confident about making decisions regarding their advisory group. However, their decisions about the implementation of the advisory program were not always aligned with the goals of the program.

The development and ongoing efforts to improve the advisory curriculum was a focus of program development for the 2008–2009 school year. All of this work was conducted by the campus-level advisory leadership committees, and the resulting curriculum development work was recognized and appreciated by the teachers. With this continuing development of the advisory curriculum and materials, many teachers perceived an improvement in the program because it was more organized and comprehensive in scope (e.g., it contained more activities and resources).

During focus groups, teachers identified lessons and practices they thought worked well for their students. The teachers described the importance of generating student interest because interested students were likely to be highly engaged with a particular topic or activity. Teachers gave high ratings to activities focused on content of interest to students (e.g., college and career preparation, academic advising, financial planning, prom, and drunk driving).

Academic advising was reported to be an activity that was engaging for students. Teachers reported high levels of engagement while reviewing students' grades and progress,

and said their sessions with students were interactive. Most teachers reported using Gradespeed, rather than Student Teacher Advisement Reports (STARs) reports, because the former offered the most current grade and attendance data.

Many teachers liked when students played games during advisory class. Teachers thought the games built a sense of community. They also thought students still needed time to decompress and build social skills. They believed having fun in a structured setting was important.

Teachers liked using older students as mentors for younger students. Many suggested using seniors in a mentoring capacity and wanted to develop a curriculum focused on planning for life after high school (college and career) and adult life skills (e.g., financial planning and time management). The older students were pleased to impart their words of wisdom in an engaging and informative manner. The freshman responded well to the advice from their older peers.

When the conversations turned to the implementation of the advisory program, many teachers admitted they still struggled with accepting the role of advisor as a part of their teaching responsibilities. They often thought being an advisor was not or should not be a part of their job description. As a result, they did not put forth the effort to teach the advisory lessons as intended. Some teachers struggled with a sense of fairness. Because they perceived that some of their colleagues choose not to implement the curriculum, they felt disgruntled about having to do so. Office of High School Redesign staff, if conjunction with the Department of Program Evaluation and external support providers, are in the process of developing an observation protocol to conduct advisory classroom observations in order to measure fidelity to the expectations of advisory throughout the district.

Teachers also reported great variability in the implementation of the advisory curriculum because advisors were encouraged to adapt it to the needs of their students. Many liked the variability and were comfortable with tailoring their lessons and activities. Advisors often reported they "knew the needs of their kids better" than did others in the school and chose not to follow the published curriculum, selecting alternate activities they liked rather than following the scope and sequence articulated in the curriculum. This may have been a function of the maturation of the advisory programming, whereby advisors were expected to (a) align with program goals and (b) tailor the program according to student need. Many teachers admitted they let the kids have "down time" during the advisory period and justified their decision by reporting that the time spent studying or talking with their peers was important to academic achievement and developing relationships. Only a few teachers reported implementing the advisory curriculum verbatim.

The teachers reported continuing challenges in the program's implementation. Even with the lessons and resources provided, teachers found the advisory program required a

significant amount of preparation and energy, in addition to everything else they did during the school day. Many were not able to devote sufficient time to prepare. Additionally, many teachers pointed out they still did not feel prepared or experienced to teach the advisory classes. They struggled with sensitive issues and college and career preparation topics. However, when asked on the advisor survey whether they understood their role and responsibilities as an advisor, nearly 84% reported they *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.

Teachers often discussed the difficulty in engaging their students during an advisory group. These teachers reported that students might be polite, but they did not buy in or participate. It is important, however, to note that without an observation protocol to quantify the level of student engagement and buy-in during an advisory period, it is indeterminate how ubiquitous this disengagement is. They attributed this difficulty to the lack of consequences for students who chose not to participate or attend their advisory group. This issue was especially apparent at the end of the school year for seniors who were reported to be particularly resistant to attending and participating in an advisory group.

Finally, teachers reported the need to further develop the advisory curriculum to address college and career preparation steps and concerns, which is the major focus for the 2009–2010 school year. They recognized the need to start postsecondary planning conversations early in the students' high school experience. Some teachers addressed college and career preparation on their own because specific activities were not provided in the advisory curriculum. These activities included recommending courses for college goers; calculating grade point averages (GPAs); providing information about college admissions tests, applications, and testing deadlines; writing essays and letters of recommendation for college applications; completing job applications; and participating in interest and aptitude inventories. Teachers also recommended that sessions address all postsecondary plans, not just college, and suggested ways to do so. They recommended focusing on academic preparation (e.g., course selection, and GPA) with 9th-grade students; providing research-based information about careers to 9th- and 10th-grade students (e.g., interest inventories, websites, and guest speakers) to establish a foundation for academic and college preparation; and finding school alumni who were in college to talk with students (sophomores/juniors) about the college experience.

District-Level Survey Results for Students

On the student survey, students evaluated their experiences in the advisory program. The survey results were summarized at both the district and campus levels and detailed survey results are provided in Appendices C and D. At the district level, the mean student responses to the survey questions ranged between *sometimes* and *often* (Table 1). The items with the highest means indicated students and advisors *often* treated one another with respect and *often* discussed grades, attendance, and graduation. The items with the lowest means indicated

students did not perceive (a) others noticed when the student was good at something, (b) their advisory teacher was interested in hearing their family's point of view, and (c) the advisory group changed or supported their plans for attending college. Fifty-two percent of students reported they would enroll in a 4-year college or university within a year of high school graduation, and 39% reported they had no plans at this time (Appendix C).

Table1. Summary of District-Level Student Advisory Survey Results, May 2009

	Rarely or never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)	Mean
I feel like a real part of my advisory group.	13.5%	30.6%	27.3%	28.5%	2.7
People in my advisory group notice when I'm good at something.	**21.7%**	32.9%	23.9%	21.4%	2.4
Other students in my advisory group treat me with respect.	6.7%	21.1%	27.4%	44.7%	**3.1**
My advisory teacher treats me with respect.	5.1%	14.4%	20.3%	60.1%	**3.3**
My advisory teacher helps me to figure out or fix problems at school when needed.	9.8%	24.3%	26.5%	39.3%	2.9
My advisory group teaches me about colleges and careers.	13.9%	28.0%	28.7%	29.4%	2.7
My advisory teacher talks with me about grades, attendance and what I need to do to graduate.	8.7%	22.0%	26.4%	42.9%	**3.0**
I feel comfortable sharing problems or challenges with my advisory teacher.	18.5%	29.8%	23.5%	28.3%	2.6
My advisory teacher would notice if I were having a problem or in a slump.	15.0%	29.6%	25.8%	29.5%	2.7
My advisory teacher is interested in hearing my family's point of view.	**20.0%**	33.1%	23.8%	23.1%	2.5
My advisory group has changed or supported my plans for attending college.	**23.1%**	28.3%	24.7%	23.9%	2.5

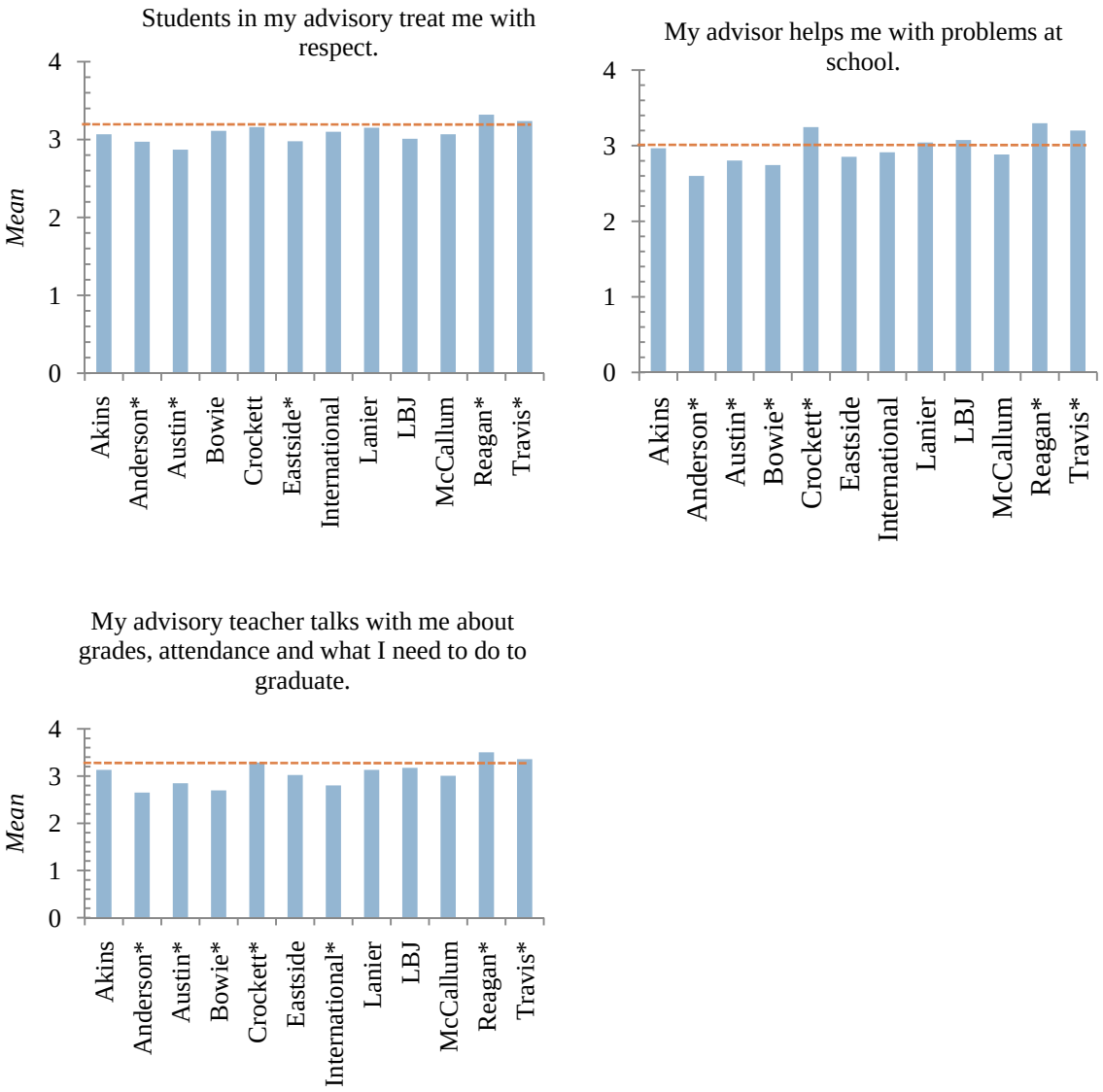
Source. District student advisory survey, Spring 2009

Note. Red font denotes more than 20% of respondents selected *rarely* or *never* for a particular survey item; green font indicates a mean response rate of greater than or equal to 3.0 for a single survey question.

Across campuses, mean responses also ranged between *sometimes* and *often*. However, the mean responses varied across schools, and some campus-level means differed significantly from the district mean. The mean responses on most survey items for students enrolled in Reagan, Travis, and Crockett were consistently and significantly higher, compared with the district means. Mean responses for students enrolled in Anderson and Austin were often significantly lower than the district mean. Importantly, however, 2008-2009 was the first year

that advisory was implemented for all grade levels at these two campuses. A few examples are provided in Figure 1, and all results are provided in Appendix D.

Figure 1. Student Responses for Selected Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey Items, by Campus



Source. District student advisory surveys, Spring 2009.

Note. The district mean is indicated by a red line.

*$p < .05$

SECTION II: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE ADVISORY PROGRAM

In this section of the report, student responses to several critical items from the Student Feedback Survey are analyzed in greater detail. First, students' responses were segmented according to whether they were successfully looped with their advisory instructor between 2007–2008 and 2008–2009. Next, student perceptions of program implementation were disaggregated by school structure and student grade level. Finally, multivariate techniques were employed to reach a deeper understanding about the underlying patterns and determinants of students' responses to the survey.

The Role of Looping and Grade Level

A critical feature of the advisory program is the connections and relationships forged between advisors and their students. One method to facilitate the formation of these linkages is by looping students and teachers together throughout their high school tenure. Thus, students are assigned the same advisory instructor as they progress through high school. Research about the traits of effective schools extols the importance of "personalizing education" to ensure students are not disconnected from their school or campus staff (Pecheone, Tytler, & Ross, 2006).

Qualitative findings, derived from teacher focus groups conducted in Spring 2009, indicated strong and widespread support among teachers for this goal, while lending tentative empirical support to the claim that looping strengthens bonds between teachers and students within the advisory program. Looping, according to several teachers, promoted two distinct yet complementary goals. Looping strengthened their connections to individual students, which improved the odds of building meaningful relationships, and as an outgrowth of this, enabled the effective delivery of the advisory lessons. However, during these focus groups, teachers also lamented the inconsistency with which students were looped to their advisory teacher. The cause of this discontinuity was attributed to multiple factors, including both student and teacher mobility.

Table 2 summarizes how successfully teachers were linked to the same advisor between the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years. Schools that did not have a campus-wide advisory in 2007–2008 were excluded from these calculations. Moreover, incoming freshman in 2008–2009 were omitted. Lastly, looping was prescribed only for the 10^{th} to 12^{th} grades at Akins, while the looping pattern at Austin entailed looping students from 9^{th} to 10^{th} grade and from 11^{th} and 12^{th} grade; thus, the looping pattern for juniors was interrupted during 2008–2009, and juniors at Austin were eliminated from the calculation. Overall, in the 2008–2009 school year, approximately 71% of students were successfully looped with their prior year's advisor, although the looping rate varied noticeably across campuses and across student sub-groups.

Aggregately, advisory continuity was least likely among African American and economically disadvantaged students. When disaggregated by the campus organizational structure, similar patterns appeared at campuses categorized as having a traditional structure. Despite this miniscule intra-campus difference, the looping success rate of economically disadvantaged students on these campuses was approximately 9 percentage points greater than the looping rate of economically disadvantaged students enrolled at SLC campuses. Indeed, the looping success rate at traditional campuses was consistently higher than rates at SLC campuses for each of the student sub-groups presented.

Table 2. Students Looped to the Same Advisory Teacher Between 2007–2008 and 2008–2009, by Ethnicity, Economic Disadvantage Status, and School Grouping Indicator

Student sub-group	All schools	Traditional	Small learning community schools
Asian/Pacific Islander	78%	81%	64%
African American	**62%**	**64%**	60%
Hispanic	69%	75%	62%
White	78%	80%	**55%**
Economically disadvantaged	**66%**	**70%**	61%
Not economically disadvantaged	78%	81%	**59%**
Overall	**71%**	**76%**	**61%**

Source. Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009

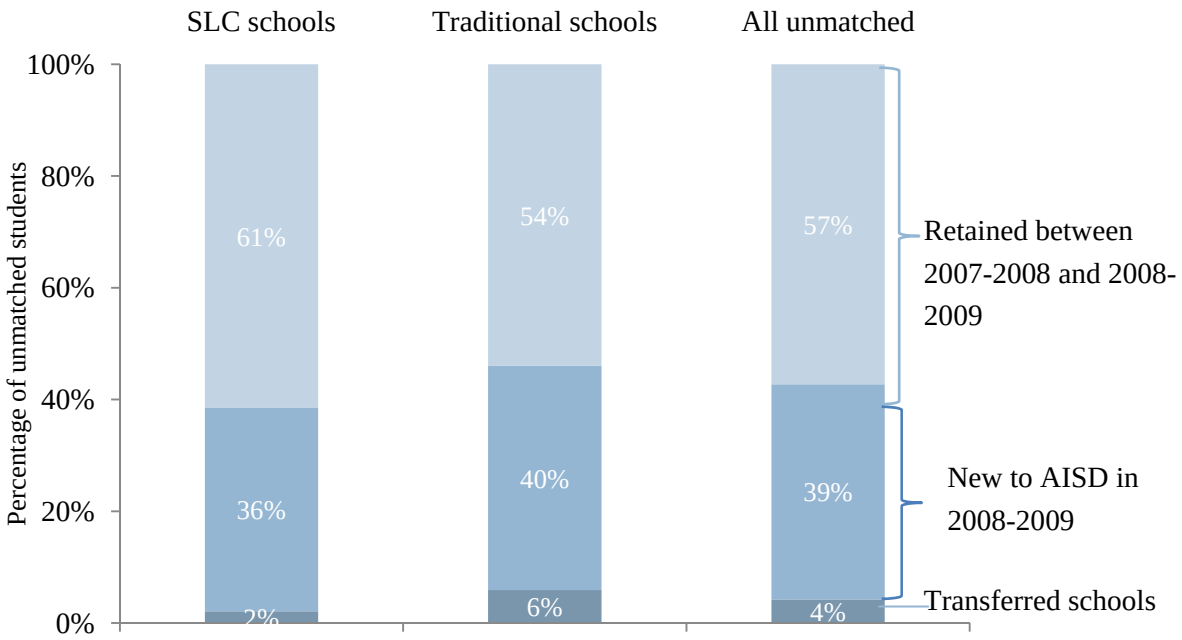
Note. Only students who were enrolled in both the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school year and who did not change schools were included in the looping rate calculation. In addition, only schools in which the advisory program was implemented school wide in 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 were retained in the calculation. Eastside Memorial was excluded due to repurposing and staff reassignment. The lowest percentages within a particular sub-group category and within each school structure segment are shaded red.

Discussions between SIFs and program managers proffered several explanations for the imperfect looping success rate, some of which may explain the disparities that arose between campus structure and student sub-groups. Staff turnover was cited as a primary contributor to looping discontinuity. Additionally, rushed campus scheduling negatively impacted looping success rates. These last-minute scheduling decisions hindered staff's ability to ensure advisor continuity across school years. Furthermore, although representatives could not confirm how pervasive such decisions were, stakeholders speculated that students or their parents could request reassignment to a different advisor for a variety of reasons, including dissatisfaction with particular advisors, or students having formed a strong bond with another advisor on

campus. Lastly, district and campus stakeholders cited the critical importance of campus leadership's support and commitment to the advisory program in boosting looping rates.

To gain a better understanding about the sources of non-looped students, which could shape future strategies for improving student looping rates, Human Resource (HR) data containing teacher disposition and tenure with the district were used to explore the determinants of the mismatch. Simply, teachers who received the same school assignment in both school years were flagged as "retained," while teachers without a school assignment in 2007–2008 were categorized as "new to AISD." Teachers who were with the district in 2007–2008, but transferred campuses, were labeled "transferred schools" (Figure 2). Although the majority of non-looped students were assigned to an advisor who was retained, approximately 39% percent were assigned to an advisory group with an instructor who was new to the district. The percentage of students at non-SLC campuses who were linked to an advisor who was either new to the district or to the school in the 2008–2009 school year was higher than the percentage of students at traditional schools who were similarly linked.

Figure 2. Advisory Teacher Disposition of Non-Looped Advisory Students, by School Structure, 2008–2009

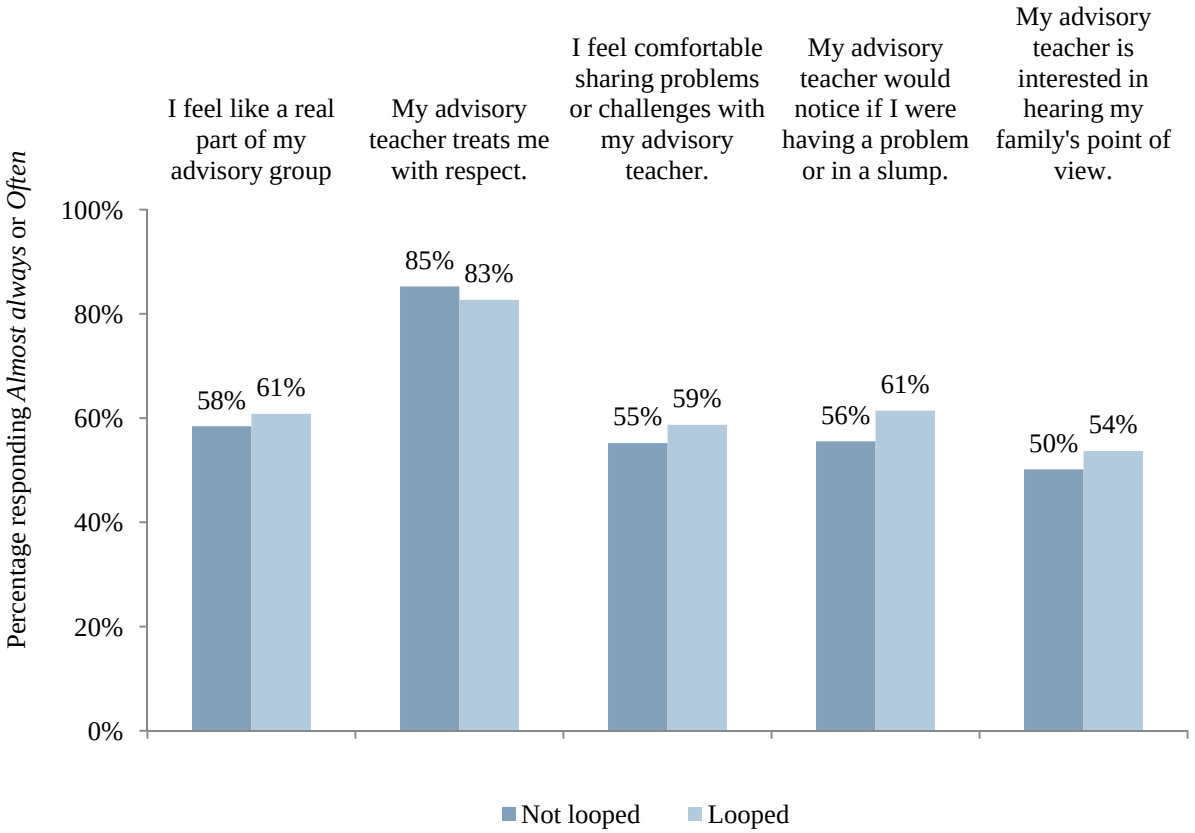


Source. AISD student and staff records, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009

The Spring 2009 student advisory survey asked a range of questions exploring students' experiences in their advisory group. Thematically, the questions examined several dimensions, including students' perceptions of group belonging, the strength and authenticity of students'

and their families' connections to their advisory teacher, and types and efficacy of activities conducted during the advisory group meetings. Figure 3 illustrates the importance of looping status for five questions asking students about their relationships with their advisor. Except for one survey item, students who were looped to their advisor were more likely to respond *almost always* or *often* to questions gauging their connections to their advisory group and instructors compared to students who were not looped to their advisor.

Figure 3. Students Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Their Relationship With Their Advisory Teacher, by Looping Status, Spring 2009

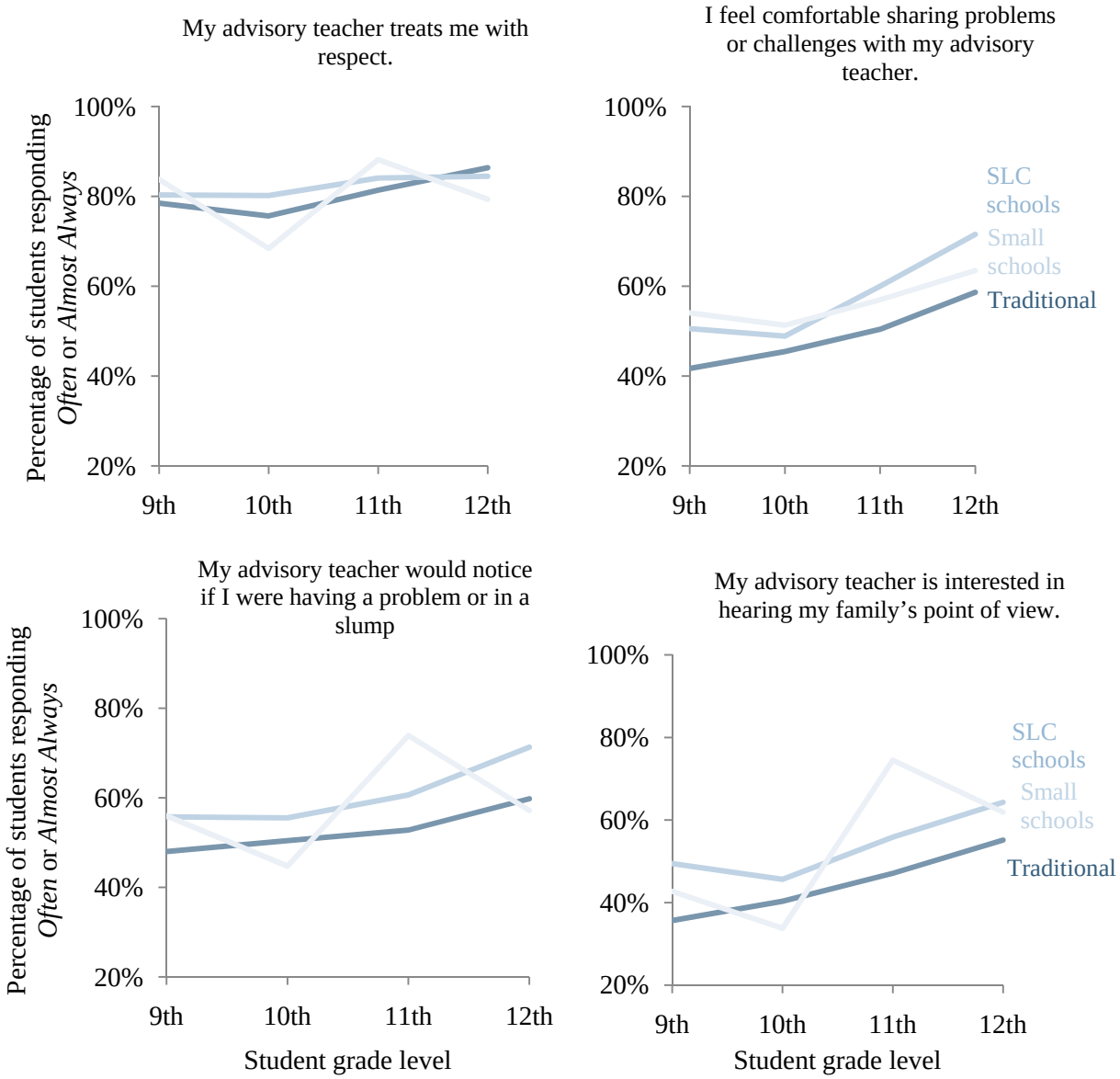


Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey and student course enrollments, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009

Figure 4 presents students' responses to the questions displayed in Figure 2 disaggregated by two additional attributes: student grade level and school organizational structure. With the exception of one item ("My advisory teacher treats me with respect"), a clear, positive relationship emerged between student grade level and the share of students responding *often* or *almost always* to questions exploring students' relationships with their advisory. Whether this positive, linear trend appeared because upper-level students had been embedded in advisory groups for multiple years was not determinate because the duration of

student exposure to these groups was not captured. However, in conjunction underscoring the importance of student and advisory looping, these patterns lend tentative empirical evidence to the notion that students' attachment to the advisory program develop and strengthen during their high school tenure. Moreover, they reinforce many of the sentiments expressed by advisory teachers during focus groups, in which staff articulated widespread support for looping with the same cadre of students.

Figure 4. Students Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Their Relationship With Their Advisory Teacher, by Grade Level and School Grouping, Spring 2009



Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey and student course enrollments, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009

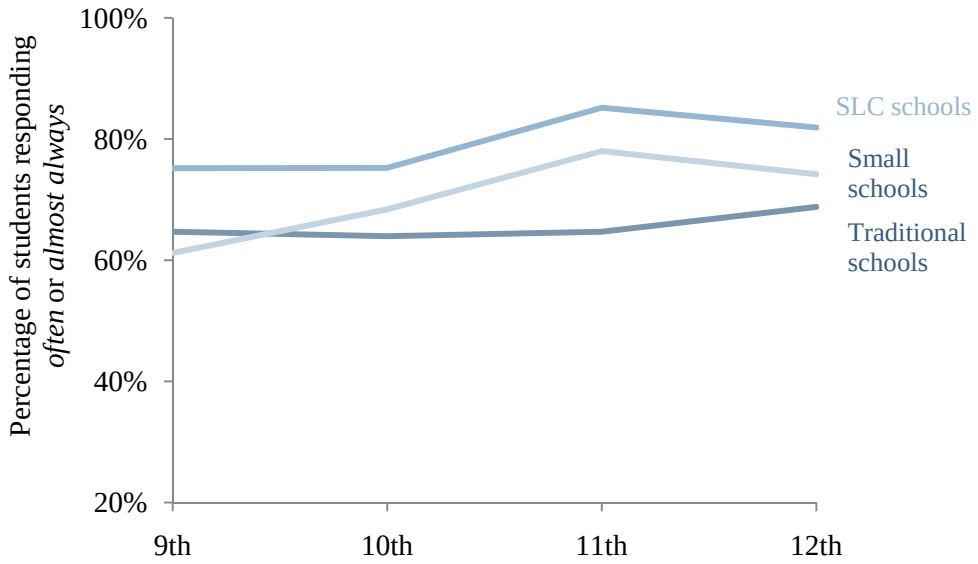
Students Reporting Frequent Data Conferences With Their Advisor

One cornerstone of the advisory program is the regular, institutionalized interaction between students and their advisor about individual students' course performance, attendance records, and progress toward graduation. These embedded interactions were designed to raise the level of personalization that may be missing in the context of large comprehensive high schools, in which struggling students may disengage from school in the absence of an adult ally on campus. Thus, these interactions allow staff to respond quickly to students' academic, behavioral, and social needs, while also providing a mechanism to monitor whether students are staying on track to accomplish their goals. For instance, advisors are instructed to regularly review students' academic performance through the use of STAR reports and/or Gradespeed, and to closely collaborate with their advisory students' classroom teachers about their course performance, attendance, and behavior. Discussions with advisors during focus groups indicated broad support for this activity, and many reported that academic advising was an engaging activity for students. According to the advisory survey, 82% of advisors discussed student performance data with at least 50% of their students. Only 5% reported they did not discuss student performance data with any of their students.[6]

Students' assessments about how frequently these types of interactions occurred yielded additional information about how pervasively student performance data were reviewed with advisory students. Figure 5 presents the percentage of students who responded *often* or *almost always* to the item "My advisory teacher talks with me about grades, attendance, and what I need to do to graduate." Responses are reported by grade level and by schools' organizational structure. Two patterns are discernable from the disaggregation. First, at each grade level, a higher share of students at SLC campuses, compared with students at other campuses, reported their advisory teacher *often* or *almost always* discussed academic data with them. Second, a weak, albeit positive trend across grade levels suggests these data conferences were more frequent at high grade levels than at low grade levels. This may be a function of advisory teachers conveying essential information about individual students' graduation requirements and postsecondary options as graduation nears.

[6] Disaggregation by school or by other advisor-level characteristics was inadvisable due to the low response rate for the survey.

Figure 5. Students Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Frequency of Discussions About Student Data, by Grade Level and School Grouping Indicator, Spring 2009



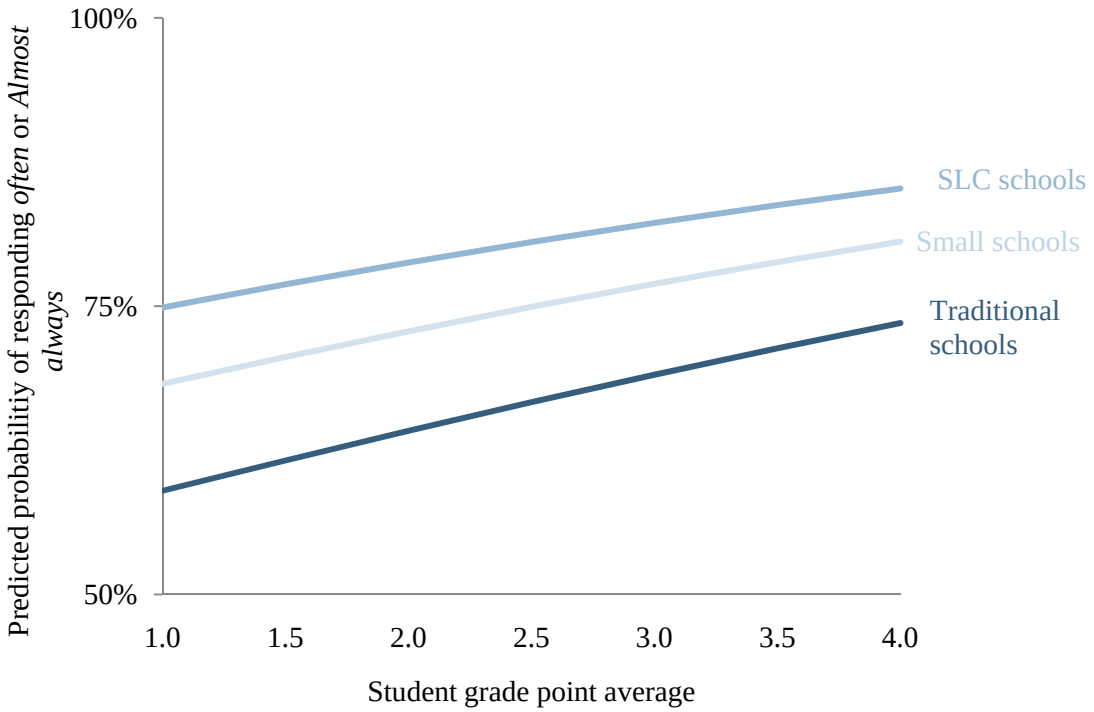
Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey and student course enrollment, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009
Note. The survey item was "My advisory teacher talks with me about grades, attendance, and what I need to do to graduate."

To develop a deeper understanding about the factors associated with more frequent student-data-related interactions between students and advisors, a two-level hierarchical generalized linear model (HGLM) was estimated. This technique helped isolate the most important variables associated with the outcome variable, while controlling for other confounding school-level and student-level explanatory factors.[7] The analysis revealed several important patterns that should inform the content and direction of the district's and external providers' ongoing support for the advisory program.

First, GPA was positively and significantly related to the likelihood of students responding that advisory leaders discussed students' academic performance data during advisory class *often* or *almost always* (Figure 5). The strong positive relationship held even after controlling for confounding student- and school-level factors. That high-achieving students may approach their advisor for academic advising and achievement data more frequently than do low-achieving students is not surprising. However, this finding suggests the academic advising that struggling students receive during their advisory class may be inadequate and inconsistent. A more institutionalized and proactive system may be needed to ensure that particular student groups are not overlooked because advisors' academic advisory time may be consumed by motivated, high-achieving students.

[7] More information about the functional form specified in this model can be found Appendix B.

Figure 5. Predicted Probabilities and Confidence Intervals of Responding *Often* or *Almost Always* Regarding Whether Advisory Teachers Discussed Student Data With Advisory Students, by Cumulative Grade Point Average



Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey and ASTU, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009
Note. Predicted probabilities were derived from a two-level hierarchical generalized linear model, holding all other variables constant at their mean value.

Second, students at SLC campuses were more likely to report having these discussions *often* or *almost always* than were students at traditional campuses. Differences between these campus structural variables were statistically significant, meaning that students attending SLC campuses may rely more on their advisor to obtain academic performance data than do their peers at other schools. Third, most of the variance in response to this question resided within schools, as opposed to between them. Although some schools had a higher share of students responding *often* or *almost always* to this survey item than did other schools, much of the variance arose within schools and between classes. For instance, approximately 17% of the total variance was between unique classes within a given school, compared with 9% between campuses. These findings are congruent with focus group conversations revealing vast differences in advisory implementation and facility with the curriculum between teachers within the same school. This indicates that fidelity to this critical outcome measure for

advisory classes varies widely within specific campuses that are receiving, theoretically, comparable professional development support from external providers and have similar structural characteristics.

Lastly, teachers who were new to AISD during the 2008–2009 school year had fewer students report their advisory teachers conducted academic advising *often* or *almost always* than did teachers who were in the district prior to 2008–2009. The effect was small (approximately 4 percentage points), but statistically significant and robust to the inclusion of other confounding effects. Moreover, evidence from the Advisor Survey buttresses this finding. Advisory teachers who responded to the survey and who were new to AISD were approximately 8 percentage points (86% compared with 78%) less likely to respond *agree* or *strongly agree* to a survey item asking whether they understood their role and responsibilities as an advisor than were advisors with prior experience in the district. In addition, advisors who were new to the district in 2008–2009 also were more likely than their colleagues to *agree* or *strongly agree* they needed more professional development support to conduct an effective advisory group. In light of these results, new teachers placed into an advisory role without prior experience with the requirements and expectations for the position may need additional support from district staff and external providers to familiarize them with the demands of the position. Coordinated and regularized mentoring by advisors on campus who are comfortable with the expectations of the position also may fulfill this need. During the 2008-2009, program staff developed a campus and web-based induction system for incoming advisors. Introduction of this system will occur during the 2009-2010 school year.

What variables mattered most for explaining how frequently students reported conferences about academic standing occurred?

- **Grade point average (↑)**
- **Advisor new to AISD (↓)**
- **Female students (relative to males) (↑)**
- **School grouping (SLC relative to others) (↑)**

What variables were not significantly related?

- **Student ethnicity**
- **Student limited English proficiency status**
- **Student economic disadvantage status**
- **Student daily attendance rate**
- **Number of students in advisory class**
- **Student grade level**

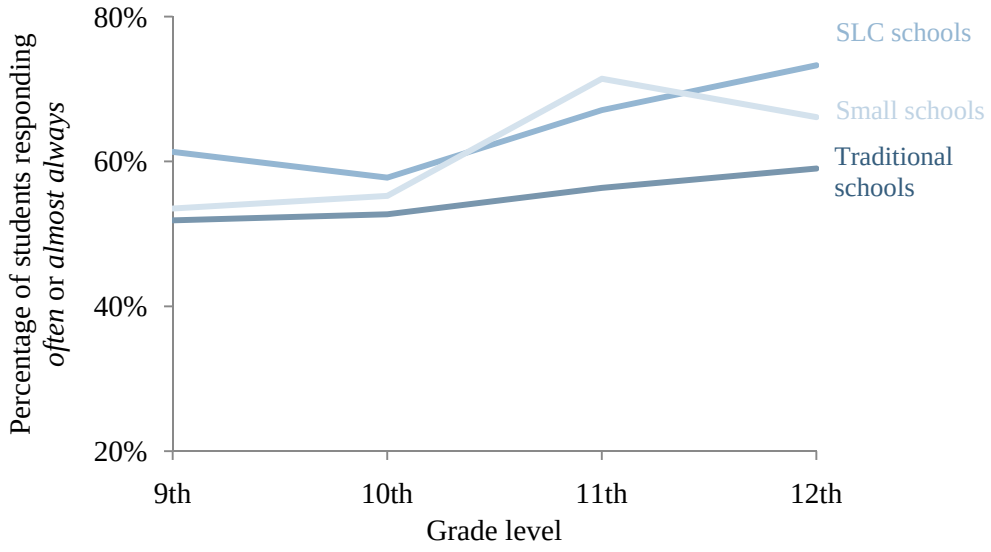
Students Reporting Their Advisor Frequently Discussed College and Career Options

Providing college and career planning and guidance was another key role ascribed to the advisors. Rather than concentrating the responsibility of college and career advising among campus guidance counselors, the advisory setting provides a more structured, frequent, and smaller forum for ensuring students receive the information and guidance they need. It is

important to note that this phase of advisory implementation will begin in earnest in 2009–2010. Although focus group discussions revealed uniform support for this objective among advisors, many teachers were concerned about the adequacy of the advisory curriculum to address the college and career preparation needs. Given this shortcoming, many advisors reported they designed and wove these activities into the existing curriculum to ensure this objective was met. Advisor survey responses were more positive than was the qualitative evidence gleaned from focus group interviews; approximately 69% of respondents reported they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement that "(their) school's advisory curriculum addresses their students' college and career preparation needs."

Figure 6 shows disaggregated student survey responses to the question pertaining to whether their advisory instructor "teaches me about colleges and careers," by grade level and campus organizational structure. Each point denotes the percentage of students who responded *often* or *almost always* at each grade level. Students in advanced grade levels were more likely to respond *almost always* or *often* than were students in lower grade levels. Although differences appeared between campus classifications, they were not statistically significant.

Figure 6. Students Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Whether Their Advisory Teacher Taught Them About Colleges and Careers, by Grade Level and School Structure



Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey and ASTU, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009
Note. The survey was "My advisory group teaches me about colleges and careers."

Estimates from a two-level multivariate HGLM model confirmed the weak, albeit positive relationship between grade level and how frequently students reported their advisory teacher discussed college and career opportunities during their advisory class. Furthermore, the

multivariate procedure revealed a strong negative relationship between the percentage of students at a given school from the previous graduating class (Class of 2008) who enrolled in any type of postsecondary institution and the percentage of student respondents in Spring 2009 who reported their advisors discussed college and career opportunities *often* or *almost always* (Figure 7). This relationship persisted even after controlling for other school- and student-level factors. Less technically, students at campuses with a historically high postsecondary enrollment rate rely less heavily on their advisory teacher for information about colleges and careers than do their peers at schools with lower historic college placement rates. Moreover, female students were more likely than males to report their advisory teacher discussed college and career opportunities *often* or *almost always*. And, mirroring a finding from the previous analysis, students assigned to an advisor with no prior experience in the district were less likely to report college and career conversations occurred frequently than were students who had been assigned to a teacher with prior experience.

What variables mattered most for explaining how frequently students reported college and career discussions with their advisor?

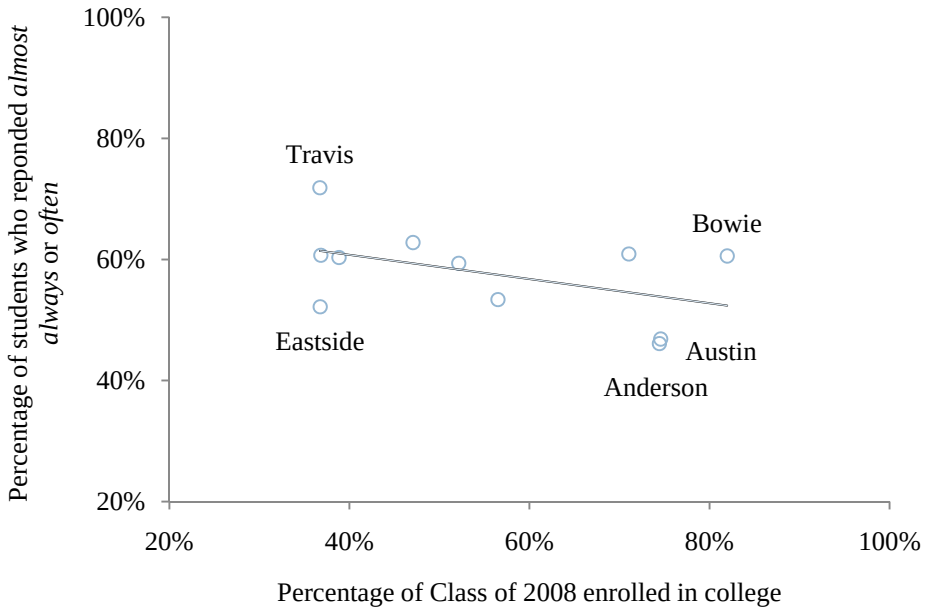
- **Grade level (↑)**
- **Advisor new to AISD (↓)**
- **Female students (relative to males) (↑)**
- **Percentage of prior graduating class who enrolled in a postsecondary institution (↑)**

What variables were not significantly related?

- **Student ethnicity**
- **Student limited English proficiency status**
- **Student economic disadvantage status**
- **Student daily attendance rate**
- **SLC status**
- **Number of students in advisory class**

Similarly, on the advisor survey, advisory instructors were asked to estimate how many students from their advisory classes would finish high school, enroll in a postsecondary institution of any type, and earn a degree or certificate from a college or technical school. The percentage of teachers at a given campus who responded that more than half (*all of my advisory students* or *most of my advisory students)* of their advisory class would attend a postsecondary institution was also strongly and positively related to the percentage of students from the preceding year's graduating class who entered a postsecondary institution.

Figure 7. Students Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Whether Their Advisory Teacher Taught Them About Colleges and Careers, by Class of 2008 Postsecondary Enrollment Rate



Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey, ASTU, and Garland (2009), prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009
Note. The survey item was "My advisory group teaches me about colleges and careers."

Jointly, these findings raise important questions about the motivations and content of activities conducted within the advisory program, and carry important implications for program design that will have an impact on forthcoming expansions to the advisory curriculum and on the fidelity with which these redesigns are implemented. For instance, beginning in year 3 of advisory implementation (i.e., the 2009–2010 school year), program managers, in collaboration with Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) have designed and introduced an explicit, clearly defined curriculum centered upon guiding and monitoring students' career and college pathways.

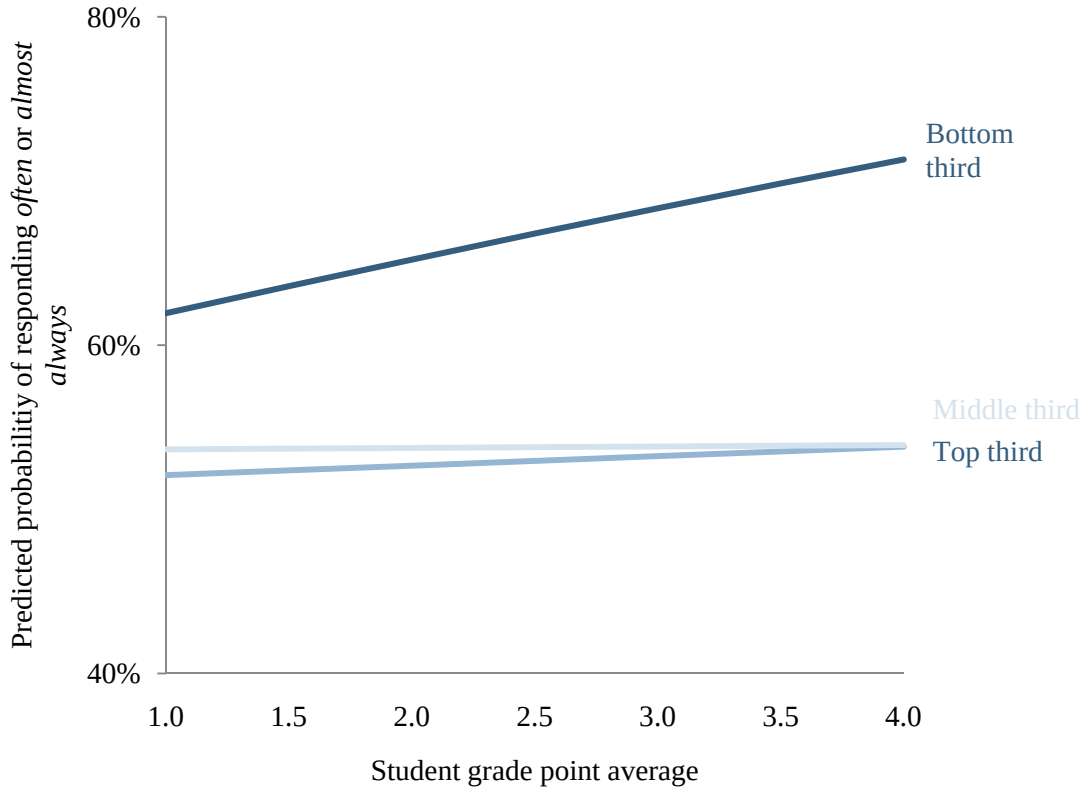
The findings suggest adherence to these expectations, and milestone mapping may be based on advisors' expectations about the needs of their advisees. Or, conversely, campus environment (e.g., the accessibility or number of counselors or Project ADVANCE staff) or even students' objective need for guidance from campus staff may govern how likely students are to approach their advisors for this type of information. A mature body of research has traced motivation and eventual enrollment in a postsecondary institution to both parental involvement and school-level networks (see Perna and Titus [2005] for a synthesis and extension of extant literature). If these networks are already in place on a campus, or students

are able to draw upon the social capital accumulated by their parents, students may be less likely to use their advisor for these resources than they would existing resources. Moreover, advisors in these schools may, in turn, be less likely to perceive their students are in need of this information compared to advisors in campuses lacking these resources. In the absence of these networks, the advisory program may operate as a mechanism to compensate for the lack of frequency with which teachers interact with a small group of assigned students.

One strategy to tease out how students draw on advisory resources differentially, based upon contextual, campus-level attributes, is to examine whether students with comparable characteristics report having more or less frequent discussions about colleges and careers in different campus environments. For instance, are students with high GPAs at a school without a strong legacy of sending students to college more likely to rely on the advisory program to obtain information about colleges and careers than are students enrolled in a campus with a longstanding record of high college placement for graduates? Figure 8 explores this possibility by graphing the average adjusted probability, derived from the HGLM model, that a student in one of the three campus groupings, based upon the postsecondary enrollment rate of their school's Class of 2008, reported their advisory group taught them about colleges and careers. This probability is plotted against a student's GPA, thus permitting a comparison between students who are alike in all the respects controlled for in the HGLM estimation, with the exception of the prior graduating class's postsecondary placement rate.

Figure 8 illustrates several important patterns. First, students who attended a school with a postsecondary enrollment rate in the bottom third ("Bottom") of all schools reported more frequent discussions with their advisors about colleges and careers than did their peers who attended a school in the middle or top third ("Middle" and "Top," respectively). Moreover, this relationship was conditioned on their GPA. That is, at schools in the "Bottom" segment, students' GPA was strongly and positively associated with the likelihood of reporting their advisor discussed colleges and careers with their advisory group. Conversely, at schools with a postsecondary enrollment rate greater than 52% for members of the Class of 2008 (students within the "Middle" and "Top" segments), students with above a B average were less likely to report having frequent discussions with their advisor about postgraduation opportunities than were C students.

Figure 8. Predicted Probabilities of Responding *Almost Always* or *Often* Regarding Whether Their Advisory Teacher Taught Them About Colleges and Careers, by Class of 2008 Placement Rate and Grade Point Average



Source. AISD Spring 2009 Student Feedback Survey, ASTU, and Garland (2009), prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, November 2009
Note. Predicted probabilities were derived from a two-level hierarchical generalized linear model, holding all other variables constant at their mean values. The survey item was "My advisory group teaches me about colleges and careers."

DISCUSSION

In the first year of district-wide advisory implementation in all grade levels for each high school, focus group discussions revealed teachers reported a higher level of acceptance of the advisory initiative compared to the prior year. Many teachers expressed considerable support for the objectives of the program, and reinforced the importance of advisory group continuity through students' high school tenure. Furthermore, students' self-reported level of attachment to their advisor and advisory group was encouragingly high; nearly 56% of respondents to the Student Feedback Survey indicated they *often* or *almost always* felt like a really part of their advisory, and approximately 80% reported their advisor *often* or *almost always* treated them with respect. Students' self-reported perceptions of attachment to advisors also rose as grade level increased, providing tentative evidence that students' relationships with advisors strengthens across time.

Several of the overarching goals of the advisory program, particularly those centered on developing, nurturing, and maintaining relationships between students and advisors, rest on assumptions about the fidelity of implementation, both within a given school and within a given classroom. As Anfara's (2006) synthesis of current research on advisory programs in middle schools noted, successful and consistent implementation remains a formidable obstacle to establishing effective advisory programs. Although, as district program staff observed, these obstacles often arise during large-scale programmatic changes. One obstacle detected in this evaluation was the challenge in coordinating student advisory scheduling to ensure students were successfully looped with advisors across school years. Although approximately 70% of students were looped between the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, this success rate was not consistent across schools, nor consistent across student sub-groups. In particular, economically disadvantaged students and African American students were the least likely student groups to be looped between 2007–2008 and 2008–2009. This finding carries added importance because results from a range of survey items on the Student Feedback Survey indicated students who were looped reported stronger relationships with their advisor or advisory group.

Another obstacle was the uneven implementation of advisory expectations both within schools, and across them. As the evaluation demonstrated, high-achieving students were more likely to report using advisory time to discuss their academic performance than were low-achieving advisees. If a pillar of advisory is to ensure students have a defined advocate on campus tasked with ensuring students do not "fall through the cracks" in a large, comprehensive high school environment, struggling students should be as likely as successful students to claim these conversations occurred. Moreover, this finding has important

implications for the establishment of an accountability system to monitor advisors' fidelity to the objectives of the advisory program to help ensure uniform implementation.

An additional challenge uncovered by the evaluation was the importance of advisor exposure to the districts' advisory program. Although teacher experience (i.e., years in the district) was not significantly associated with the outcomes assessed in the evaluation, students assigned to teachers who were new to the district reported less desirable outcomes than did student assigned to those with prior experience in the district, for each of the measures investigated in the evaluation. Moreover, new advisors reported feeling less comfortable with their role as an advisor, and the corresponding responsibilities, than did their peers who were in the district prior to the 2008–2009 school year. Ayres (1994), in the context of a middle school advisory program, reported similar findings for inexperienced advisors. Lack of familiarity with program goals and responsibilities, according to Ayres, interferes with advisors' commitment to implementation.

Finally, outcomes apart from the students' perceptions were not explored in this evaluation; however, other research studies have found positive outcomes for students. These research findings were summarized by Makkonen (2004) and include improved student and teacher relationships, an increased sense of trust and belonging, reduced instances of substance abuse, lower dropout rates, and improved school attendance. One challenge in assessing these outcomes is the absence of objective classroom-level metrics that can capture the fidelity of program implementation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The district's mission was to ensure that all students had at least one adult in their school life who knew them well, to build community by creating stronger bonds across social groups, to teach important life skills, and to establish a forum for academic advisement and college and career coaching. Toward this end, Student Advisory/Family Advocacy classes were established and supported through a combination of efforts provided by the district's Office of School Redesign, teacher leaders, and contracted support providers in all high schools during the 2008–2009 school year. An evaluation was conducted to describe the implementation of Student Advisory/Family Advocacy programs across the high schools, to describe advisor and family advocate perceptions of the advisory programs, and to describe the perceptions of students who participated in the second year of program implementation.

Overall, the evaluation results were promising. Although they expressed informational issues and personal concerns, most teachers understood the program and were beginning to implement it. Students appeared to have positive feelings about their advisory experience. Program effectiveness might be improved through relatively minor changes in implementation or the continuance of existing practices. The following recommendations are provided for consideration:

1. *Articulate expectations for advisory program implementation at the campus- and district-levels and design accountability measures to ensure uniform implementation.* Measurable differences in the frequency with which students reported their advisors carried out responsibilities ascribed to the advisory role were found across campuses. However, most of the variance in students' perceptions of implementation was detected within campuses, as opposed to between. Similarly, Brown and Anfara (2001) found that administrative expectations and support were critical in the ongoing development and support of well-functioning advisories, a sentiment echoed by program stakeholders. Burns (1996) stated that leaders should assertively champion the program to promote staff buy in, to supply necessary resources, and to ensure quality implementation.
2. *Allot adequate time for the master scheduling process to ensure students are successfully looped with their advisory teacher.* Students who were successfully looped reported stronger relationships with and greater attachment to their advisors, a cornerstone of the advisory program. In focus groups, advisors expressed widespread support for this objective, while also articulating several benefits achieved through looping. Campus and district stakeholders identified several obstacles that could interfere with meeting this objective, including last-minute scheduling changes and decisions that hinder the looping success rate.

3. *Establish an advisory induction program to ensure new advisors are comfortable with the expectations of their advisory role.* Evidence from the advisor survey suggests that advisory teachers who responded to the survey and who were new to AISD were less likely to report they fully understood their role as an advisor, and more likely to report needing additional professional development activities and technical assistance to satisfy these expectations than were advisors who were in the district during the prior school year.
4. *Continue to tailor the advisory curriculum to include college and career preparation activities appropriate for each grade level and for the unique needs of each campus.* The redesign of the advisory curriculum for the 2009–2010 school year incorporated an intensification of activities and strategies to prepare students for postgraduation success. Evidence from the evaluation indicated program managers may encounter difficulties in achieving uniform implementation across high school campuses because campuses with a large population of students predisposed to enroll in a postsecondary institution may not fully embrace this objective.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. ADMINISTRATOR RESULTS FROM ADVISORY PROGRAM SURVEY, 2008–2009

The district's online Employee Coordinated Survey was used to survey all high school administrators (e.g., principals, assistant principals or directors, and SIFs) regarding the implementation of the student advisory program. Of the 84 persons invited to participate, 43 responded, with a response rate of 51.2%.

Table A1. Administrator Responses to the Employee Coordinated Survey, 2008–2009

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know/not sure
The expectations about the implementation of the advisory program have been clearly communicated by district leadership.	35.7%	47.6%	7.1%	7.1%	2.4%
I fully understand the vision and goals for my school's advisory program.	47.6%	38.1%	7.1%	4.8%	2.4%
I understand my role(s) and responsibilities in the implementation of my school's advisory program.	47.6%	45.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
I effectively communicate the vision and goals of the advisory program to my faculty and staff.	50.0%	40.5%	7.1%	0.0%	2.4%
I promote advisory and answer questions about it with parents and community members.	50.0%	42.9%	4.8%	2.4%	7.1%
If fully implemented, advisory will improve students' experiences at my school.	50.0%	35.7%	4.8%	2.4%	7.1%
I know what our next steps are to fully implement advisory.	42.9%	35.7%	4.8%	4.8%	11.9%
I help the advisory committee navigate challenges in the change process.	39.0%	46.3%	9.8%	0.0%	4.9%

Source. Advisory program questions for school administrators, district Employee Coordinated Survey, Spring 2009

Note. Respondents included all high school principals, assistant principals, and school improvement facilitators.

APPENDIX B. DISTRICT ADVISOR RESULTS FROM EMPLOYEE COORDINATED SURVEY, 2008–2009

Of the 437 persons invited to respond to the survey, 258 responded, yielding a response rate of 59.0%.

Table B1. Advisor Responses to the Employee Coordinated Survey, 2008–2009

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	Mean
1. The expectations about implementation of the advisory program have been clearly communicated by my school's leadership.	20.0%	58.0%	15.2%	6.8%	2.9
2. I understand the vision and goals for my school's advisory program.	18.7%	60.9%	14.3%	5.9%	2.9
3. I understand the rationale for the design of our advisory at my school (e.g., scheduling and student grouping).	19.2%	54.4%	17.6%	8.8%	2.8
4. I understand my role and responsibilities as an advisor.	22.5%	62.3%	13.3%	2.0%	3.0
5. I implement advisory according to campus and district expectations.	17.4%	62.4	16.2	4.1%	2.9
6. The professional development provided on advisory has helped me to become a better advisor.	9.9%	46.4%	29.1%	14.5%	2.5
7. I need more professional development support to effectively facilitate my advisory group.	7.3%	33.9%	40.3%	18.6%	2.2
8. I believe that the advisory lesson plans and materials are relevant to my students.	4.9%	53.0%	30.4%	11.7%	2.5
9. My school's advisory curriculum addresses students' academic support needs.	8.5%	59.1%	23.5%	8.9%	2.7
10. My school's advisory curriculum addresses students' socio-emotional development needs.	6.5%	51.8%	30.4%	11.3%	2.5
11. My school's advisory curriculum addresses students' college and career preparation needs.	9.3%	60.5%	22.2%	8.1%	2.7

How many of the students in your advisory group will…	All of my advisory students (5)	Most of my advisory students (4)	About half of my advisory students (3)	Some of my advisory students (2)	None of my advisory students (1)	Mean
12. I believe _____are vested in my advisory group.	5.3%	31.8%	24.9%	31.8%	6.1%	2.9
13. I am comfortable communicating with the parents/guardians of……	35.2%	29.9%	13.1%	16.4%	5.3%	3.7
14. I have personally contacted the parents/guardians of ...	28.3%	17.6%	10.6%	27.5%	15.9%	3.1
15. I use the STAR reports and/or other student data systems to facilitate discussions with …	69.1%	12.7%	12.7%	8.6%	4.9%	4.3
How many of the students in your advisory group will…						
16. finish high school.	33.3%	56.5%	7.7%	1.6%	0.8%	4.1
17. go to some kind of school or training after high school.	18.8%	49.2%	17.2%	13.9%	0.8%	3.7
18. finish some kind of school or training after high school.	15.8%	47.9%	17.9%	17.5%	0.8%	3.6
Please indicate how often the following activities occur in your advisory period.	**Always (5)**	**Often (4)**	**Sometimes (3)**	**Occasionally (2)**	**Never (1)**	**Mean**
19. I use the advisory lesson plans and related materials provided to me by the advisory committee.	18.8%	35.1%	28.6%	14.7%	2.9%	3.5
20. I use my own ideas and/or materials to facilitate my advisory group.	6.5%	36.0%	40.5%	14.2%	2.8%	3.2
21. I help my students feel like a real part of our advisory group.	29.4%	41.6%	20.8%	6.9%	1.2%	3.9
22. I notice when the students in my advisory group are good at something.	22.9%	52.9%	26.7%	4.9%	1.2%	3.9
23. I effectively facilitate discussions and/or activities in advisory group.	19.8%	43.2%	26.8%	9.1%	1.2%	3.7
24. Students treat their peers with respect in my advisory group.	34.0%	42.6%	17.2%	5.3%	0.8%	4.0

	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Occasionally (2)	Never (1)	Mean
25. Students in my advisory group listen to others' opinions.	21.4%	51.0%	20.1%	6.6%	0.8%	3.8
26. I treat each of my advisory students with respect.	78.8%	15.8%	3.7%	0.8%	0.8%	4.7
27. If students in my advisory have a problem at school, I help them evaluate their options.	39.3%	40.6%	13.8%	4.6%	1.7%	4.1
28. I am comfortable talking with my advisees if they have a challenge.	47.9%	36.8%	12.4%	2.1%	0.8%	4.2
29. I encourage my advisory students come to me with problems or challenges.	44.8%	36.8%	15.1%	2.5%	0.8%	4.2
30. I help my advisory students prepare for college and careers.	26.0%	37.6%	28.5%	6.2%	1.7%	3.8
31. I talk with my advisory students about their grades in other classes.	53.7%	31.4%	10.3%	3.3%	1.2%	4.3
32. I help my advisory students set goals and reflect on how they are doing at school.	33.7%	38.7%	20.9%	4.9%	1.7%	3.9
33. I try to know my advisees as individuals.	43.2%	41.9%	11.9%	2.1%	0.8%	4.2
34. I try to know my advisees as learners.	36.9%	39.0%	18.7%	4.2%	1.2%	4.0
35. I notice when my advisory students are having a problem or in a slump.	26.6%	40.9%	25.0%	6.1%	1.2%	3.8

Source. Advisor responses from the district's Employee Coordinted Survey, Spring 2009

APPENDIX C. DISTRICT-LEVEL STUDENT ADVISORY SURVEY SUMMARY, 2008–2009

Stratified random sampling, with students sampled to represent grade-level populations within each district high school, was used. Of the 5,376 students sampled, 3,138 responded, yielding a response rate of 58.4% and confidence interval of +/- 1.13%, for a confidence level of 95%.

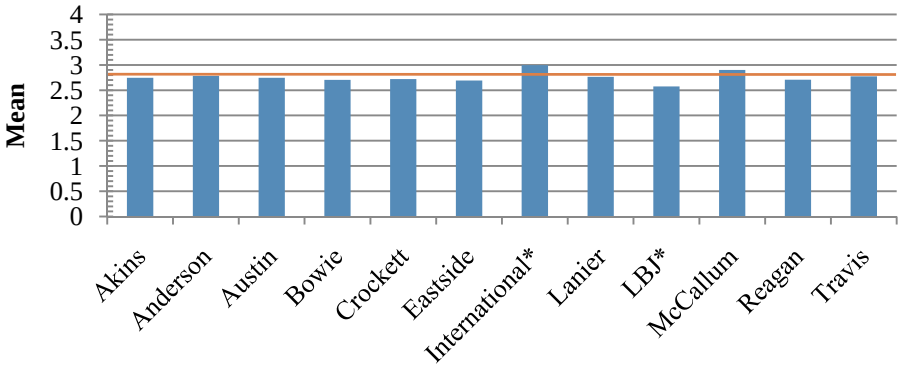
Table C1. Students' Postgraduation Expectations, 2008–2009

Within a year after graduating from high school, what do you plan to do? (Select all that apply.)	Percentage of respondents
Two-year postsecondary institution	22.3%
Four-year postsecondary institution	52.9%
Business, technical, or vocational school	9.5%
Travel	18.9%
Full-time parent	4.1%
Enlist in military	5.2%
Work full-time	11.8%
Work part-time	23.6%
No specific plans	15.5%

Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. Students could select multiple postgraduation outcomes; consequently, the percentages do not sum to 100%.

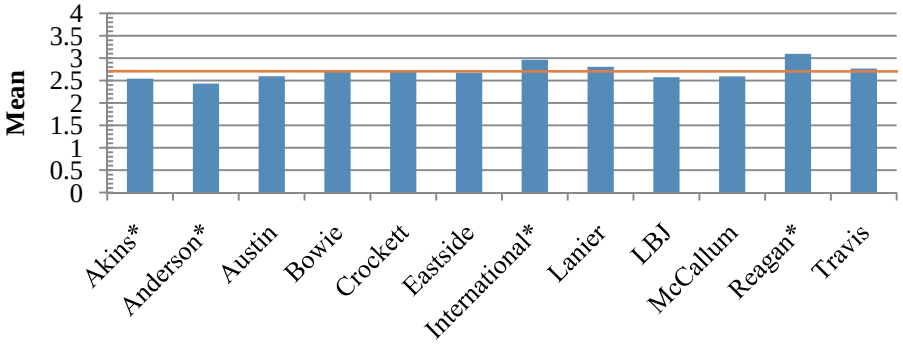
APPENDIX D. CAMPUS-LEVEL STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY SUMMARY, 2008–2009

1. I feel safe enough to participate, share my ideas, ask questions, and listen to others.

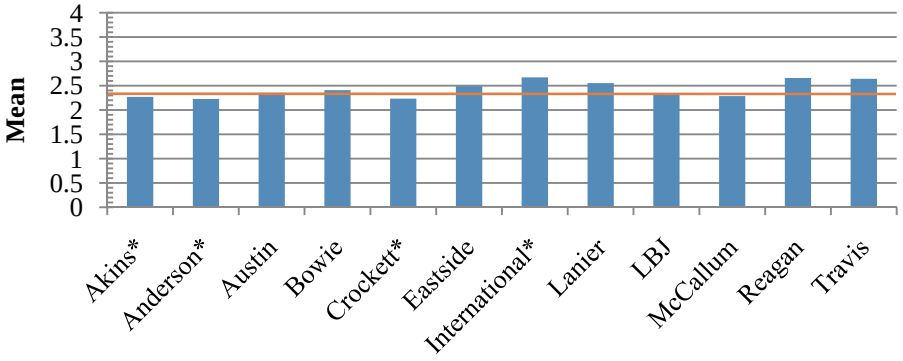


Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. District mean indicated by red line.
* p <.05

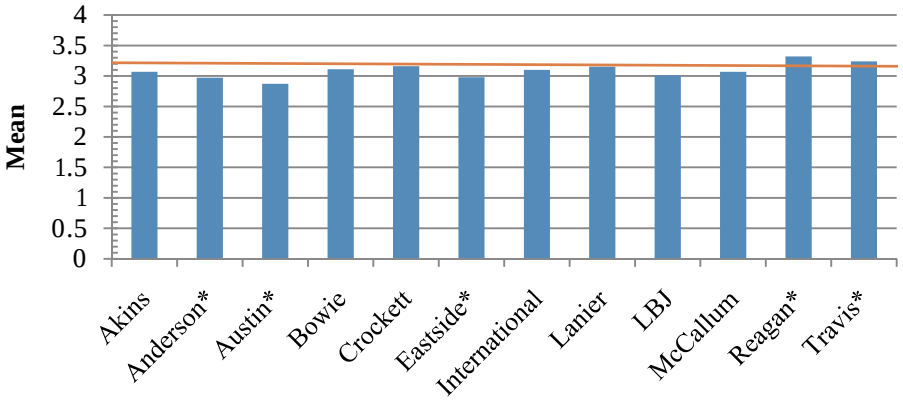
2. I feel like a real part of my advisory group.



3. People in my advisory group notice when I'm good at something.

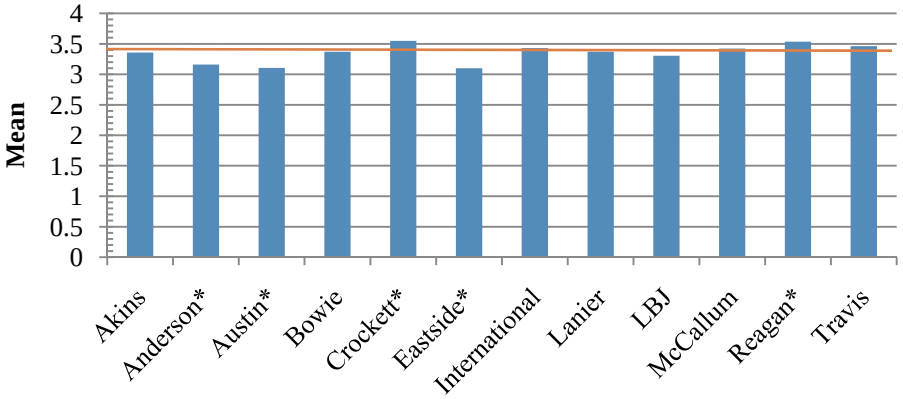


4. Other students in my advisory group treat me with respect.

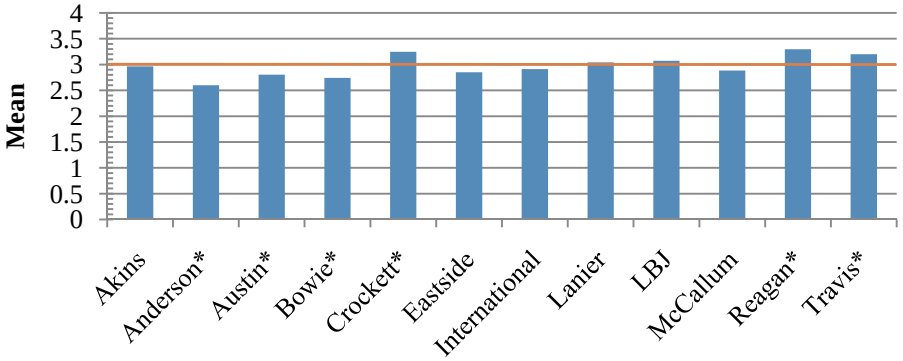


Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. District mean indicated by red line.
* $p < .05$

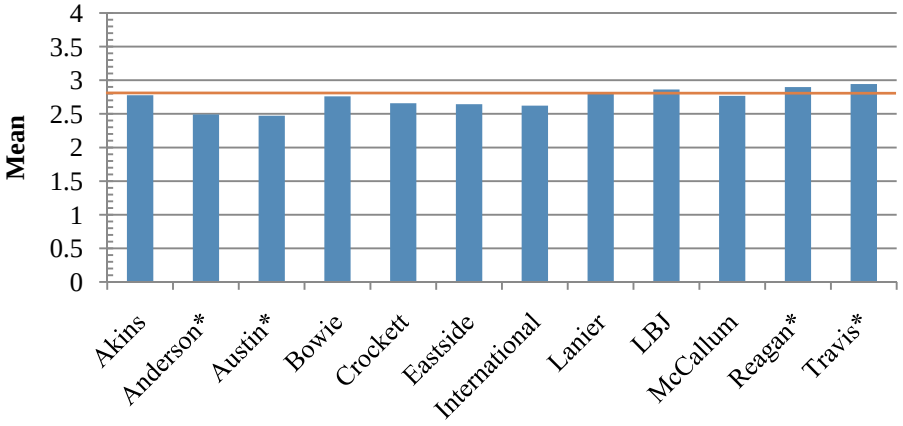
5. My advisory teacher treats me with respect.



6. My advisory teacher helps me to figure out or fix problems at school when needed.

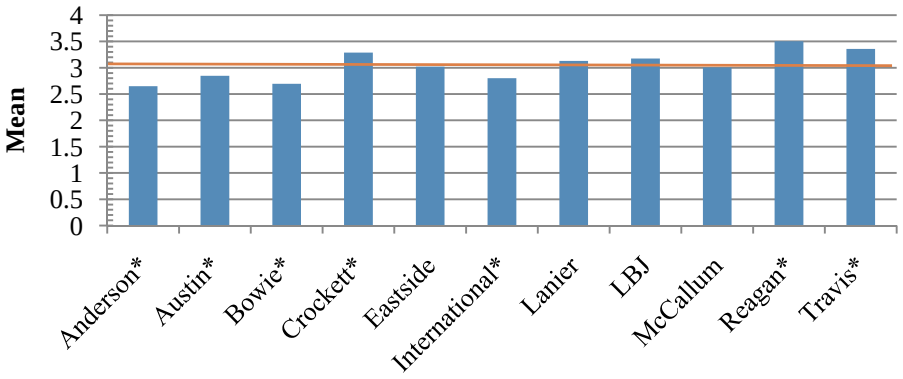


7. My advisory group teaches me about colleges and careers.

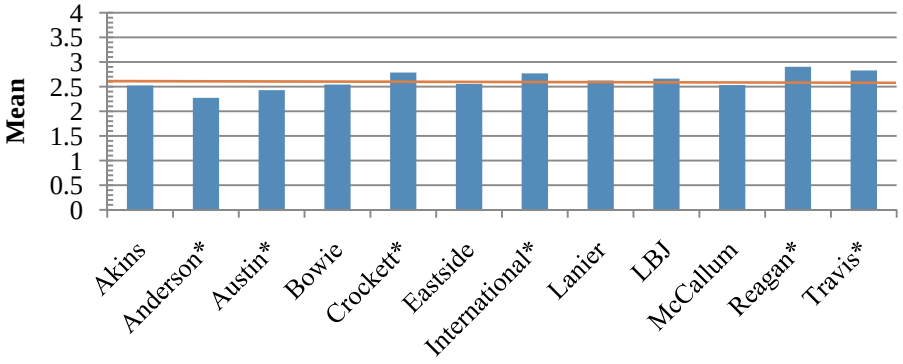


Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. District mean indicated by red line.
* p <.05

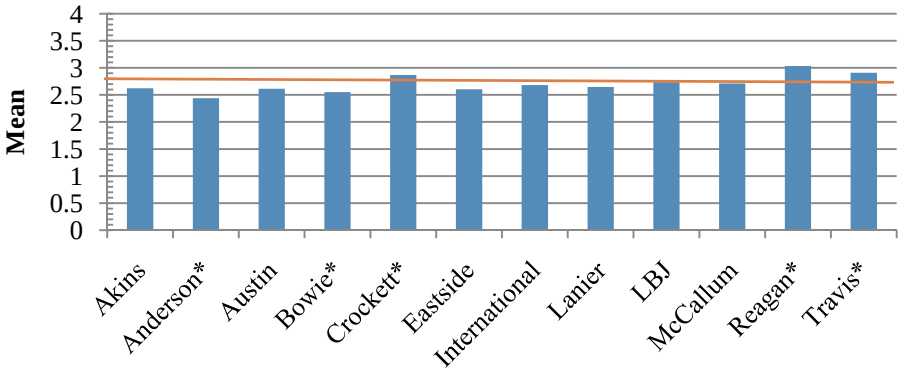
8. My advisory teacher talks with me about grades, attendance and what I need to do to graduate.



9. I feel comfortable sharing problems or challenges with my advisory teacher.

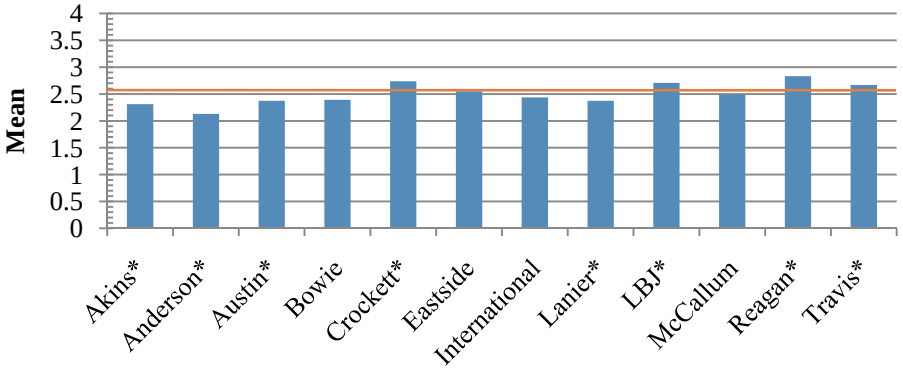


10. My advisory teacher would notice if I were having a problem or in a slump.

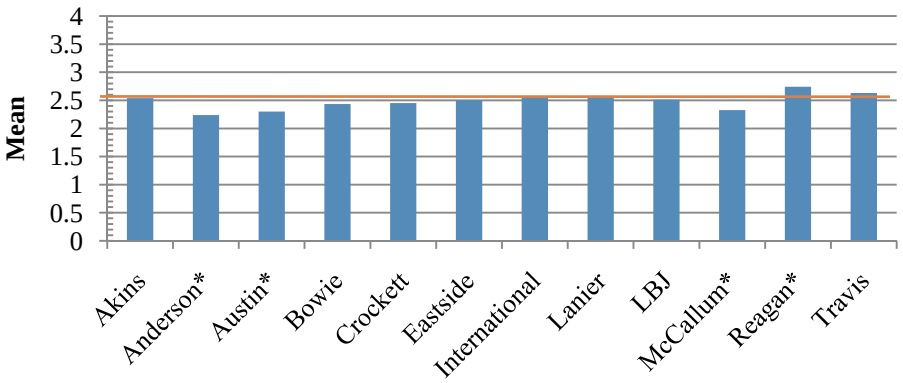


Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. District mean indicated by red line.
* p <.05

11. My advisory teacher is interested in hearing my family's point of view.



12. My advisory group has changed or supported my plans for attending college.



Source. District Student Advisory Survey, Spring 2009
Note. District mean indicated by red line. * p <.05

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