



**Overview**

A survey was administered electronically in Spring 2011 to all Austin Independent School District (AISD) parent support specialists (PSSs). The survey contained questions that asked these staff to report on various activities and events for involving families at their school, including the number of events that occurred and number of family members who attended. The survey responses represent the entire school year for all PSSs, except those staff who were hired later in the school year. A total of 72 staff responded to the survey, and the data represented 70 schools (i.e., two schools each had two staff members who responded). This report provides a district-level summary of all responses provided.

**Outreach and Liaison to Families**

A number of activities reported by PSSs related to conducting outreach and being a liaison to families, one of the major duties and key performance indicators for PSS staff. The summary of data reported for these activities and family members involved are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Conducting Outreach and Being a Liaison to Families

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Total number of activities</b>	<b>Average number of activities</b>	<b>Total number of family members involved</b>	<b>Average number of family members involved</b>
Activities that establish and maintain relationships with parents (e.g., personal contacts)	28,612	409	77,028	1,100
Activities that link or refer families to service providers (e.g., school, district, community; social, health, academic)	4,864	69	33,213	474
Events with family resource centers, community groups, or associations (e.g., neighborhood associations, faith-based institutions, universities)	1,832	26	19,635	280
Home visits conducted due to IMPACT <sup>1</sup> referrals	2,705	39	2,516	37

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

**Classes or Workshops for Families or School Staff**

Other activities reported by PSSs related to a second major job duty or key performance indicator: organizing or conducting classes or workshops for families or school staff. Examples of these events included the following: workshop to demonstrate how to read a student’s report card, family academic night, parent-teacher conference, health and wellness workshop, meeting to review special education services, workshop on transitions between school levels. Table 2 summarizes these types of activities.

<sup>1</sup> IMPACT was AISD’s team approach to helping students and families solve problems students are experiencing.

Table 2. Organizing or Conducting Classes or Workshops for Families or School Staff

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Total number of activities</b>	<b>Average number of activities</b>	<b>Total number of family members involved</b>	<b>Average number of family members involved</b>
Classes or workshops organized or conducted for parents and/or families	2,500	36	41,046	586
Events or meetings in which information was provided to campus staff relating to parent involvement	453	6	9,719	139

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Developing Parent Leaders***

PSSs were asked to report on activities relating to a third major job duty: promoting the development of parent leaders in their school. Results for these data are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Activities to Promote the Development of Parent Leaders

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Total number of activities</b>	<b>Average number of activities</b>	<b>Total number of family members involved</b>	<b>Average number of family members involved</b>
Parent-Teacher Association (PTA or PTSA)	925	13	18,406	267
Adult or family literacy classes or workshops	3,224	47	6,172	92
Family members completing literacy classes			3,937	62
Family members completing literacy classes and entering the workforce			338	6

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

When asked for the sources of information used to account for family literacy classes, the most common examples of information were sign-in sheets, class registration information, PSS portfolio documentation, and personal reports from the parents attending classes. Examples of adult and family literacy classes mentioned by PSSs included classes for English as a second language (ESL); E-Promotora; Promesas; Read and Rise; General Educational Development (GED); KLRU Ready to Learn family reading; Spanish literacy; computer literacy; adult reading; and events such as school family literacy nights, parent book clubs, and library night. Many of these activities involved relationships with organizations outside AISD (e.g., Austin Community College, University of Texas, El Buen Samaritano, KLRU, Austin Learning Academy, Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Club, and Any Baby Can).

### ***District Initiatives***

AISD supports several initiatives district wide that involve the PSSs; these include ensuring successful student transitions between school levels (e.g., elementary to middle, middle to high, high to college or career); elementary college readiness toolkit; Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH);

ParentConnection (parents' online access to their student's information); Parenting with Love and Logic classes; and attendance awareness workshops. These activities were reported by PSSs and are summarized in Table 4. Note that the Parenting with Love and Logic classes were held at both district-level sites as well as at school-specific sites.

Table 4. Supporting District Initiatives

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Total number of activities</b>	<b>Average number of activities</b>	<b>Total number of family members involved</b>	<b>Average number of family members involved</b>
Transition events or activities that support or inform families of students moving from elementary to middle to high to college/career	385	5	7,405	104
Activities involving elementary college readiness toolkit	66	1	1,537	24
Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) activities	725	11	10,416	153
ParentConnection activities	320	5	2,655	39
Parenting with Love and Logic classes	328	5	1,279	18
Attendance awareness workshops	367	5	5,230	76

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Other Activities***

PSSs often had opportunities to be involved in other activities at their school. Table 5 summarizes the information reported by PSSs for 2010–2011.

Table 5. Other Activities Involving Parent Support Specialists

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
I was involved in reviewing and/or distributing our campus parent involvement policy and/or parent-school compact to parents.	59%	27%	10%	4%
I was involved in developing or reviewing my campus improvement plan (CIP).	38%	35%	21%	6%
I was involved in distributing or collecting my campus AISD district parent survey.	82%	11%	4%	3%

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Support for Parent and Family Involvement***

PSSs were asked some questions regarding whether conditions existed in their school and community that supported parent and family involvement activities. A summary of these results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Support for Parent and Family Involvement

<b>Support</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Title I schools only – I have access to Title I funds for parent/family support.	74%	17%	3%	6%
My school's staff supports family involvement activities.	70%	26%	3%	1%
Community organizations support family involvement activities.	63%	34%	0%	3%
Planning or meeting with my vertical team supports my work as a parent support specialist.	70%	26%	1%	3%
I received compensation or flex time for increased work hours involving family involvement activities.	49%	37%	6%	8%
I have access to child care / child activities staff to support family involvement activities.	41%	32%	20%	7%
There are signs posted at my school that welcome, direct, and inform families.	44%	44%	11%	3%
There is space available for private conversations between parents and staff.	52%	34%	8%	6%

*Source.* PSS Survey, 2010–2011

In addition, PSSs were asked about support received from the district's Parent Support Office staff, including the parent programs coordinator and her staff. Table 7 summarizes the PSSs' responses.

Table 7. Support from AISD's Parent Support Office Staff

<b>Support</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
The AISD Parent Support Office staff has been responsive to and supportive of my work.	59%	38%	3%	0%
The support I received from my parent support coordinator has been useful and relevant.	54%	45%	1%	0%
The staff development training sessions provided by the AISD Parent Support Office have been useful and relevant.	52%	45%	3%	0%

*Source.* PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Professional Development Needs***

To gauge the types of professional development support that PSSs need, they were asked to respond to several questions about whether they wanted professional development activities in the future on different training topics, and how soon they needed such training. Table 8 summarizes these results. In addition to those listed in the table, other professional development topics requested included similar but more specific suggestions, such as the following:

- Job-related training (e.g., how to make a successful transition to a different campus, the roles of the PSS, organizational skills, protocol for home visits, refresher trainings on topics already reviewed, technology use, budget)
- Academic and district training (e.g., academic help and support; IMPACT and ARD procedures; district initiatives, such as Love & Logic, and attendance; understanding choice sheets)
- Parent leadership, engagement, and parenting (e.g., Texas PTA office, adult leadership, communication, goal setting)

Table 8. Parent Support Specialists' Professional Development Needs

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Need immediately</b>	<b>Need within 6 months</b>	<b>Need by end of next year</b>	<b>Don't really need</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
District initiatives (e.g., Love & Logic, attendance, PTA/PTSA)	17	31	8	37	7
AISD or Title I budget supporting family involvement	20	31	6	39	4
Delivery of services (e.g., how to conduct a workshop, public speaking)	20	22	7	49	1
Technology resources and use	24	24	18	32	1
Tracking my work efforts (e.g., portfolio, reporting, organization)	17	29	7	42	4
Gaining a better understanding of my major duties and key performance indicators	17	24	14	42	3

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Family and Parent Needs***

PSSs were asked to report on topics or activities that parents and family members from their school have been requesting. Table 9 summarizes the most commonly requested activities and topics, as reported by PSSs. In addition to the topics listed in the table, other activities or topics suggested by PSSs included ESL classes; additional help for parents in communicating with school staff; reviews of district and campus programs and goals; attendance; academic topics (e.g., literacy, mathematics, course choice sheets, high school plan, college financial aid process, computer use); social issues (e.g., bullying, gang awareness, Child Protective Services (CPS)); and maintaining parent involvement beyond the elementary school level.

Table 9. Topics and Activities Requested by Families and Parents, as Reported by Parent Support Specialists

Topic or activity requested by parents or families	Percentage of responses
Better communication	71%
Better access to the school	31%
Better access to the school staff	43%
Language support (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese)	51%
Parenting classes	54%
Attendance information	40%
Special education information	51%

Source. PSS Survey, 2010–2011

### ***Other Duties Assigned***

All AISD positions have "other duties as assigned" as an understood provision in their job descriptions. Thus, PSSs were asked to list any duty (outside of their major duties) that they had been assigned on a regular basis during the school year. Some of the most common other duties reported by PSSs included the following:

- Morning duty (e.g., breakfast, cafeteria monitoring, student arrival); lunch duty (cafeteria monitoring); hall monitoring; and afternoon student dismissal
- School office assistance (e.g., answering phone, translating, making photocopies)
- Assembling students' take-home folders, grade-level information booklets, and school flyers
- Monitoring classrooms or hallways during Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) administration or providing breaks for teachers during the assessment
- Coordinating activities (e.g., those associated with Austin Partners in Education volunteers and mentors, school appreciation events, and the monitoring of clothes and the school supply closet)
- Committee membership, meeting attendance
- Supporting parents and students by attending or participating in school-related meetings (e.g., CATCH, Campus Advisory Committee or CAC, PTA, parent-teacher conference, Admission Review and Dismissal committee or ARD, IMPACT, court hearing on student attendance and truancy problems)
- Providing school tours to visitors, maintaining school marquee messages, running errands when requested, assisting with school-wide events and assemblies, coordinating student awards