

Teacher Induction Program

New Teacher Orientation Week

2019–2020

Introduction

Austin Independent School District (AISD) annually hosts a week-long orientation for teachers, instructional coaches, librarians, and elementary counselors who are new to AISD as part of the Teacher Induction Program (TIP). This orientation focuses on expanding the teachers' knowledge, acquainting teachers with specific curricula and district practices, exposing them to new ideas and strategies, and providing a context for further learning. This year, sessions included the district celebration and professional learning, cohort days, model classroom, and campus orientation. Additionally, staff had the option to attend the AISD EDU Personalized Learning Conference, which occurred concurrently with the TIP orientation week, to provide staff with more voice and choice in their professional learning.

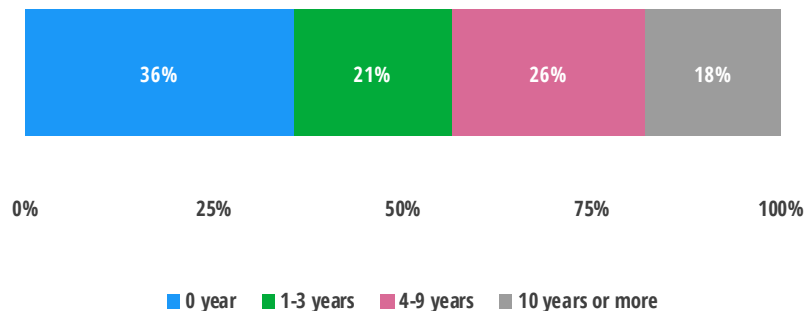
Staff who attended the TIP orientation week were asked to complete a survey regarding their experience, and results are summarized in this report. A total of 588 attended the TIP orientation week, and 75% of attendees completed the survey.

TIP Orientation Week Survey Respondents

Of survey respondents, 36% indicated the 2019–2020 academic year would be their first year of teaching, while 64% of respondents had taught previously (Figure 1). The majority of respondents indicated their assignment was at the elementary level (52%). Twenty-six percent of respondents were assigned to the middle school level, 21% were assigned at high school level, and 1% indicated all levels.

Figure 1.

The majority of survey respondents (64%) had prior experience teaching.



Source. TIP Orientation Week Survey, 2019–2020

What were staffs' perceptions of the TIP orientation week?

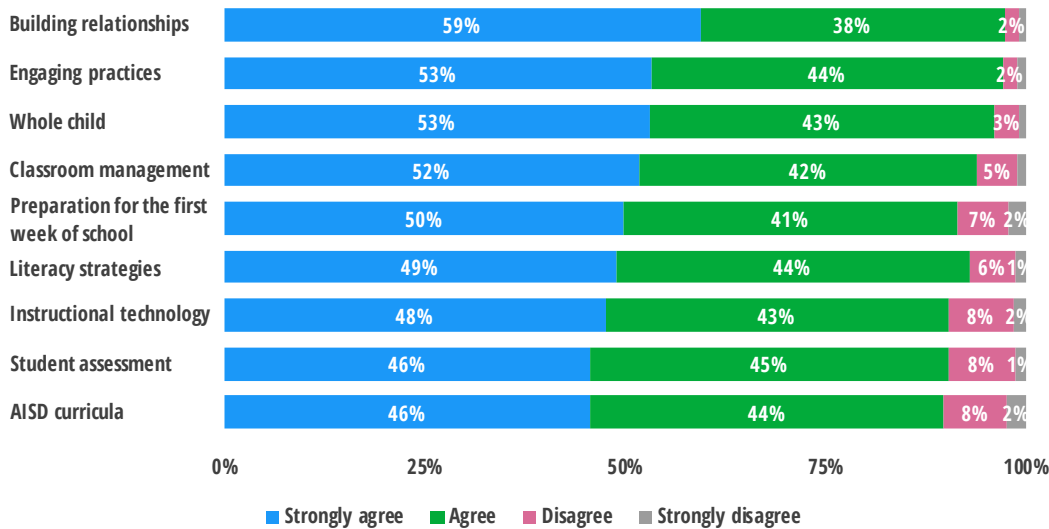
District Celebration and Professional Learning

The district celebration and professional learning day included a district welcome from the superintendent, teacher of the year, and students; an overview of district initiatives (i.e., whole child, literacy, and personalized learning); and a breakout session regarding designing a relationship-based classroom. The majority of TIP attendees who completed the survey responded positively regarding the session. For example, 97% of respondents indicated they planned to implement the strategies modeled during the overview of initiatives, and 98% indicated the breakout sessions prepared them to understand how their culture and their students' culture interacted to grow or impede relationships.

Cohort Days

On cohort days, attendees were divided into small groups relevant to their grades and/or content areas. Sessions were led by an experienced AISD teacher who facilitated the presentations and discussions. The facilitators focused on topics (e.g., curriculum and instruction, and beginning-of-the-year lesson planning) to ensure a common background with respect to information and district expectations, while modeling various strategies. The majority of respondents indicated they felt prepared to begin implementing strategies that were discussed during the cohort days in their day-to-day lessons (Figure 2). Respondents indicated greatest agreement with feeling prepared to implement strategies for building relationships and engaging practices could be used in their day-to-day lessons. Some respondents may need more assistance understanding how to incorporate instructional technology, student assessment, and AISD curricula into their day-to-day lessons.

Figure 2. Respondents indicated the greatest agreement with feeling prepared to implement strategies for building relationships and engaging practices in their day-to-day lessons.



Source. TIP Orientation Week Survey, 2019–2020



Model Classroom Sessions

TIP attendees attended optional half-day model classroom sessions prior to the campus orientation event. The model classroom sessions provided attendees the opportunity to view an effective classroom setup and engage with experienced teachers in their grade level and/or content area. Ninety-three percent of respondents who attended the model classroom sessions indicated attending was a valuable experience. Attendees appreciated the resources provided and the ability to get ideas for their own classrooms. Examples of respondent comments included:

“Excellent idea to give new teachers and returning teachers ideas for their rooms!”

“I think the model classroom session was most helpful out of the whole induction program.”

“Great Teacher, with a lot of resources she shared. Would of been better if were able to see a model for each grade level and not just one.”

“Sara was amazing. She not only had a super engaging classroom and classroom ideas, but she also shared several resources with us. My only suggestion would be regarding routines and procedures. She did not offer a lot of information regarding this because she doesn’t seem to need as much structure in her classroom as someone else may need.”

While many respondents indicated a positive experience, one respondent suggested offering different sessions for the middle and high school level because “although they are both secondary, there is a big difference between effective strategies.”

Campus Orientation Day

The campus orientation day sessions focused on ensuring new hires had an opportunity to learn about their assigned campus’s culture and climate, expectations, and initiatives. While the professional learning team provided suggestions for topics to include during the orientation day, campuses organized the events at their discretion. The majority of respondents indicated the campus orientation day was a valuable experience (93%). Comments provided about the campus orientation day included:

“I really appreciated that aside from school procedures and information, time was taken to get to know each new hire and there was space for open discussions and questions.”

“I felt welcomed and I got to meet and connect with a lot of people at my school that I probably wouldn’t have had to chance to otherwise, since it’s such a big campus.”

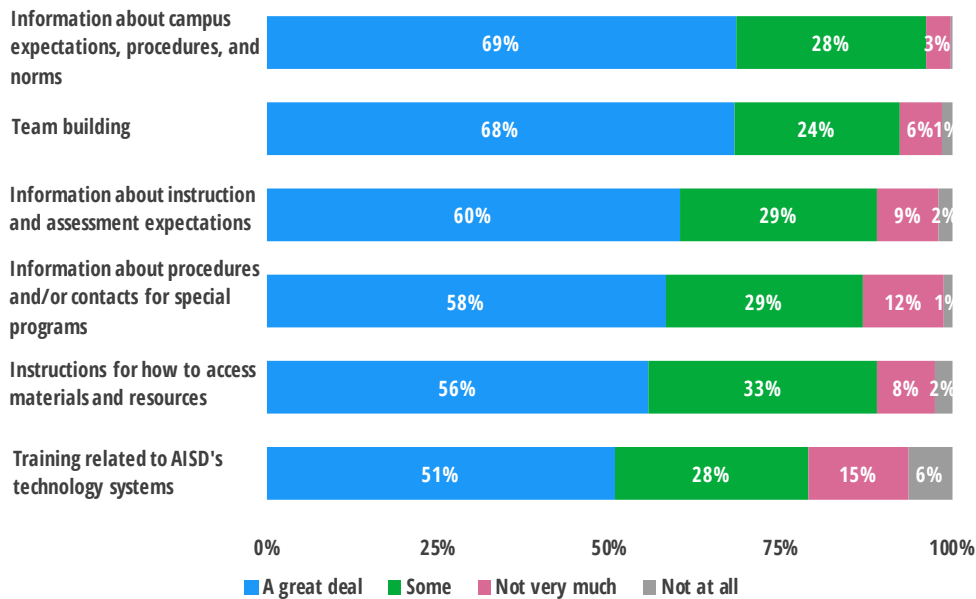
“I could not be more excited to work at my high school after attending! It was informative and I felt like I was ready the next week.”

“The Orientation Team was very well prepared. The information presented was more school specific oriented. It was informative and made transition into Pecan Springs much easier.”

Attendees were asked how much information they received during the campus orientation day (Figure 3). Results indicated staff may have wanted more information regarding training related to AISD’s technology systems and information about procedures and/or contacts for special programs.

Figure 3.

Respondents indicated they received the most information about campus expectations, procedures, and norms and team building.



Source. TIP Orientation Week Survey, 2019–2020

Personalized Learning Conference

The personalized learning conference was held concurrently with the TIP new teacher orientation week, providing staff the opportunity to attend the conference. Staff were able to select various sessions over the week, based on self-identified areas of interest and needs. When asked what was most valuable about the conference, common themes included appreciating having voice and choice in their professional learning and building relationships with other AISD staff. Excerpts from respondents included:

“I teamed up with another new LOTE teacher in my school and we shared learning and experiences.”

“Being able to meet and learn with others from other parts of the city.”

“I appreciated that I could focus on the area in which I felt I needed the most help.”

“I like that I was able to select what would be valuable to me. I am a veteran teacher and did not need to sit through some of the trainings since I have taught it before. It was nice being able to go to sessions that I wanted to know more about or explore.”

What theme emerged across the survey responses?

A number of respondents who provided comments to the survey stated that they would like a more robust training related to AISD systems (e.g., TEAMS, DEEDS, eCST) during the orientation week sessions. Although AISD systems were discussed during various sessions of the orientation week, the professional learning team noted this was a challenge to address as some AISD systems were not available until classes began; therefore, new hires were unable to have hands-on practice using the software. Excerpts from respondents included:

“I would have preferred sessions that developed my understanding of all the platforms/tech tools, as well as the nuts and bolts of the district expectations.”

“Have sessions on how to operate all of the systems: TEAMS, AESOP, BOLT, ECST, E504, HCP, etc. I had no clue how to operate these.”

“Make sure that new teachers have training on how to use the different systems in place for things like grading, attendance, and the like.”

“We had time in the afternoon to share resources with job-alike teachers at other schools. It was somewhat useful to me. That time could have been spent doing things that veteran teachers who are new to AISD need: how to use computer systems for grading and attendance, professional learning, etc. All of which we have used before and all of which are a struggle now because our former district used different systems.”

Conclusion

Overall, results suggested the orientation week activities were successful in inducting the new hires into the district. The majority of respondents indicated positive experiences across sessions. However, some respondents suggested this professional learning opportunity could be improved by including more training for AISD systems.

In addition to this induction professional learning opportunity, AISD staff continue to support new hires throughout the year. For example, the TIP mentoring program focused on supporting teachers who are new to the profession and the unique challenges of novice teachers. The AISD CONNECT program is available for new teachers and offers networking and professional learning (e.g., New Teacher Trails PL) opportunities.

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