

Student Teaching Program

Student Teacher and Cooperating Teacher Survey Results

Spring 2020

Introduction

Austin Independent School District's (AISD) Student Teaching Program partners with various universities, colleges, and alternative certification programs to provide students preparing to enter the teaching profession with experience in a classroom environment. Student teachers have the opportunity to gain valuable experience working in and making professional connections in an urban school district. For cooperating teachers who host a student teacher in their classroom, the student teaching experience provides an opportunity to develop their mentoring capacity. Additionally, the Student Teaching Program can serve as a teacher pipeline for the district.

This report describes the results from the Student Teacher Survey and the Cooperating Teacher Survey. The purpose of the surveys was to gather information regarding the student teacher's experience in the program that can be used for program improvement, and regarding the quality of student teachers as potential future teachers for AISD, respectively.

The Student Teacher Survey had a 60% response rate, and the Cooperating Teacher Survey had an 80% response rate.

Student Teacher Survey Results

The majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that their student teaching experience was positive (96%) and would recommend their cooperating teacher for placement in the future (95%). Many respondents who recommended their cooperating teacher for placement in the future indicated that their cooperating teacher was supportive, offered guidance and took a mentorship role, provided constructive feedback, and encouraged student teachers to try new things in the classrooms. Examples of respondent comments include:

“Well, I had three cooperating teachers. But I would recommend all of them. They encouraged questions at any time, supported me in trying new things, and applauded me for finding my own teacher identity outside of theirs.”

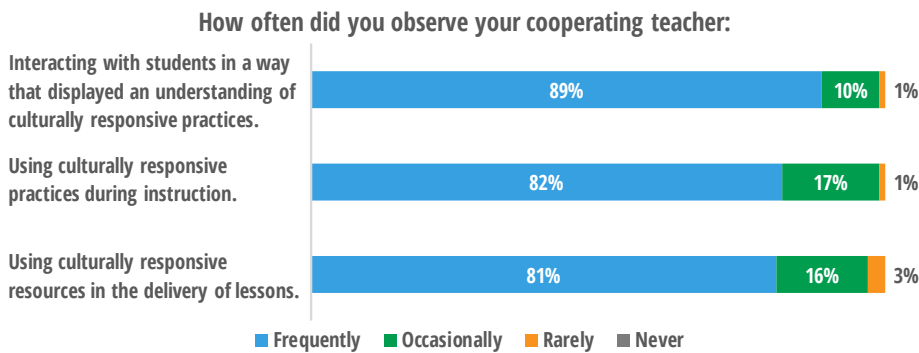
“She was fantastic in every regard. She always pushed me to improve, provided a lot of feedback, and every step of the way felt like I was a teacher rather than a student. Working with her has greatly improved my ability and my confidence in teaching.”

“My cooperating teacher was supportive and encouraged me to see myself in OUR classroom and not just HER classroom. She made me feel inclusive and felt like a co-teacher with her.”

One AISD value includes using culturally responsive practices with students. The majority of student teachers (89%) indicated they frequently observed their cooperating teacher interacting with students in a way that displayed an understanding of culturally responsive practices (Figure 1). Additionally, 82% of respondents indicated they frequently observed their respective cooperating teachers using culturally responsive practices during instruction, and 81% of respondents indicated they frequently observed their respective cooperating teachers using culturally responsive resources in the delivery of lessons.

Figure 1.

The majority of student teachers (89%) indicated that they frequently observed their cooperating teacher interacting with students in a way that displayed an understanding of culturally responsive practices.



Source. Student Teacher Survey, Spring 2020.

Finally, 73% of respondents indicated they were interested in employment in AISD. When asked why they were interested in working with AISD, many said they felt a strong alignment to AISD values, positive experience with their placement campus, and wanted to remain and grow in the AISD community. Among those who indicated they were not interested in employment in AISD, many said that they planned to move back to their home city.

Cooperating Teacher Survey Results

The majority (93%) of cooperating teachers strongly agreed/agreed that their student teacher was prepared for his or her first day of providing instruction. When asked about the student teacher’s ability to incorporate culturally responsive practices into instruction, 86% of cooperating teachers reported they frequently observed their student teacher interacting with students in a way that displayed an understanding of culturally responsive practices (Figure 2). Additionally, 79% of respondents frequently observed their student teacher using culturally responsive practices during instruction, and 73% frequently their observed student teacher using culturally responsive resources in the delivery of lessons.

AISD’s Student Teaching Program

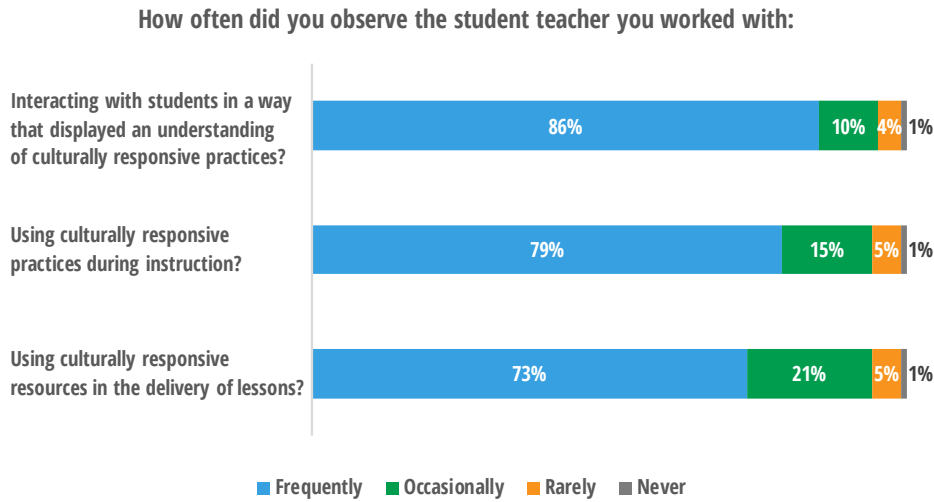
AISD’s Student Teaching Program coordinates placements for student teachers in the fall and spring semesters annually. The student teacher’s educational institution typically determines the logistics of the placements.

The program operates by first recruiting AISD teachers as cooperating teachers (i.e., teachers who are interested in opening their classroom to host a student teacher). The district ensures that interested cooperating teachers meet various requirements, such as having a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience, an *effective* rating or higher on AISD’s Professional Pathway for Teachers (PPfT) teacher appraisal system, and the campus principal’s approval.

Partnering universities, colleges, and alternative certification programs typically reach out to AISD with students who are interested in participating in AISD’s Student Teaching Program. Potential student teachers must pass a criminal history check before they are matched and placed with a cooperating teacher. Student teacher placements are typically based on factors such as grade level and subject area. Additionally, the district tries to ensure that student teachers are represented on Title I campuses. Additional recruitment is sometimes

Figure 2.

The majority of cooperating teachers (86%) indicated that they frequently observed their student teacher interacting with students in a way that displayed an understanding of culturally responsive practices.



Source. Cooperating Teacher Survey, Spring 2020.

Cooperating teachers were also asked what area(s) of strength the student teacher displayed, as well as what feedback they had for the student teacher. Overall themes regarding area(s) of strengths displayed included the ability to develop rapport with students, take initiative (e.g., try new things, ask questions), and differentiate instruction. Excerpts include:

“Knowledge, understanding of student needs, rapport with students, implementing suggestions from me and Uteach observer, and quick learner.”

“SEL: The student teacher always remains calm and develops strong relationships with all stakeholders. Planning and delivering instruction: The student teacher was always fully planned and prepared prior to delivering instruction; she incorporated technology effectively and differentiated instruction and activities to meet learning needs and styles of all learners.”

“She was organized, planned thoughtfully, was on time, and worked well in a team setting. She reflected and made changes in her lessons as things came up. She was flexible with scheduling changes. She used the standards to drive instruction and write plans with a focus on student outcome. She had wonderful classroom management and made all the students feel respected and cared for.”

“Relationship building and willingness to provide instruction outside of her comfort zone. Would not hesitate to ask questions.”

AISD’s Student Teaching Program

(continued)

conducted if the current pool of cooperating teachers does not match the subject area or grade level of a student teacher, in an effort to place all student teachers for the semester.

Prior to entering the classroom, student teachers attend orientation sessions held by AISD. The orientation sessions provide an overview of initiatives, programs, and district expectations. Student teachers are also provided access to AISD’s Human Capital Platform, for which they complete a required BLEND course, and have access to other district professional learning resources as well. Finally, various events are hosted near the end of the semester to encourage professional networking.

Many suggestions for improvements were aligned with challenges many teachers new to the profession face; in this case, student teachers are able to develop strategies to this prior to instructing their own classroom. Overall themes related to feedback for the student teacher included honing classroom management skills, time management skills, differentiation skills, and increasing confidence level. Examples of cooperating teachers' comments include:

“Lack of experience but equipped to get the job done.”

“The areas in which she can improve are areas which will improve through classroom experience and practice. Lesson pacing and more flexibility to change a lesson mid-way (for example) come with experience.”

“She is wonderful but like all new teachers is learning boundaries with classroom management. She struggles with being afraid to be “too mean” but is learning that being firm helps students with boundaries.”

“Taking ownership of the class, and having confidence in herself.”

In total, 91% of cooperating teachers indicated they would recommend the student teacher for employment to their principals.

Many cooperating teachers (90%) indicated they would like to be a cooperating teacher again. Reasons cited include liking being in a mentoring role, learning from the student teachers themselves, as well as feeling an obligation to the teaching industry to mentor the students (e.g., “... I see this as part of my job/calling to prepare future teachers to teach the students of the future where they are at”).

Conclusion

Overall, the majority of student teachers indicated a positive experience in the Student Teaching Program, and results suggest that the Student Teaching Program can be an effective pipeline for teacher recruitment. Not only would the majority of cooperating teachers recommend the student teacher for employment to their principals, but the majority of student teacher respondents indicated interest in employment with AISD as well. Additionally, student teachers will enter AISD with previous knowledge and experience with AISD systems, practices, and values.

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