

Twilight Credit Recovery Program Annual Report, 2019–2020

Twilight is a credit recovery program offered by Austin Independent School District (AISD) to struggling students to meet the varying needs of students across the district. In 2019–2020, the program was available in middle and high schools. High school students who enrolled in Twilight courses had the opportunity to recover semester credits and/or attendance. Middle school students had the opportunity to recover grades for a 6-week grading period, a grade for the full school year, and/or attendance. Twilight primarily assisted students who were at risk of dropping out by offering credit recovery through curricula aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) using online platforms and teacher-led courses.

This report includes findings regarding demographic characteristics and academic outcomes of students served; highlights emerging topics from the student, teacher, and program staff surveys; and provides general recommendations for future program implementation.

It is important to note that AISD campus closures due to COVID-19 affected implementation of educational programs across the district. Among other changes, the return to classes after spring break was delayed. This compressed the remaining time students had to complete their course work in the spring semester. After schools returned to session, instruction was implemented exclusively online. Consequently, it is possible that these changes affected students' outcomes and general perceptions of the program.

Twilight Participants

According to program records and AISD student enrollment records, 2,192 students enrolled in Twilight in 2019–2020, corresponding to 6% of the AISD middle and high school student body ($N = 37,261$). Forty-eight percent of these students ($n = 1,044$) were high school students from 16 high schools: Akins, Anderson, Austin, Austin State Hospital, Bowie, Burnet, Crockett, Eastside, Garza, LBJ, Lanier, McCallum, Phoenix Academy, Reagan, Richards, and Travis. Fifty-two percent ($n = 1,148$) were middle school students from 17 campuses: Bailey, Bedichek, Burnet, Covington, Dobie, Fulmore, Garcia, Gorzycki, Kealing, Lamar, Martin, Murchison, O. Henry, Paredes, Sadler Means, Small, and Webb. The program served a larger number of middle school students than high school students. The largest group in middle school was in 8th grade (24%), whereas the largest group in high school was in 12th grade (16%). In addition, the majority of Twilight students were Hispanic (70%), economically disadvantaged (67%), and/or categorized as being at risk of dropping out of school (77%). Lastly, 31% were English learners, and 18% received special education services (Table 1). Similar to what

was observed in the prior school year, AISD’s student body as a whole had lower percentages of economically disadvantaged (53%) and at-risk (47%) students in 2019–2020 than did the group enrolled in Twilight, indicating the program successfully targeted and served the students most in need of support.

Table 1.
A total of 2,192 middle and high school students participated in the Twilight credit recovery program.

	Overall					
	<i>n</i> count	% total	<i>n</i> count	% total	<i>n</i> count	% total
Grade 6	264	12%				
Grade 7	366	17%				
Grade 8	518	24%				
Grade 9	187	9%				
Grade 10	280	13%				
Grade 11	225	10%				
Grade 12	352	16%				
Total	2,192					
	Overall		Middle school		High school	
	<i>n</i> count	% total	<i>n</i> count	% total	<i>n</i> count	% total
Hispanic	1,542	70%	839	73%	703	67%
African American/Black	167	8%	79	7%	88	8%
Asian	38	2%	13	1%	25	2%
White	393	18%	191	17%	202	19%
Two or more races/other	52	2%	26	2%	26	2%
At risk	1,693	77%	870	76%	823	79%
Economically disadvantaged	1460	67%	866	75%	594	57%
English learners	681	31%	439	38%	242	23%
Special education	401	18%	246	21%	155	15%
Total	2,192		1,148		1,044	

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data and AISD student enrollment records

Middle School Outcomes

The Twilight program assisted many middle school students in recovering grades and attendance. In 2019-2020, students enrolled in 1,972 Twilight courses, and 96% of these were completed successfully. A total of 374 middle school students recovered attendance for 447 courses; 574 repaired a grade for at least one 6-week grading period, covering 864 courses; and 445 recovered a course grade for the year, which included 589 courses (Table 2). The majority of students (74%) who worked on repairing a grade for a 6-week grading period did so for only one 6-week period in that course, and the remaining 26% of participants ($n = 254$) repaired two or more grades for 6-week grading periods per course (Figure 1). Considering the core subject areas, the highest percentages of courses for which students recovered a 6-week grade were in math (42%) or English language arts (ELA, 26%). Similarly, the highest

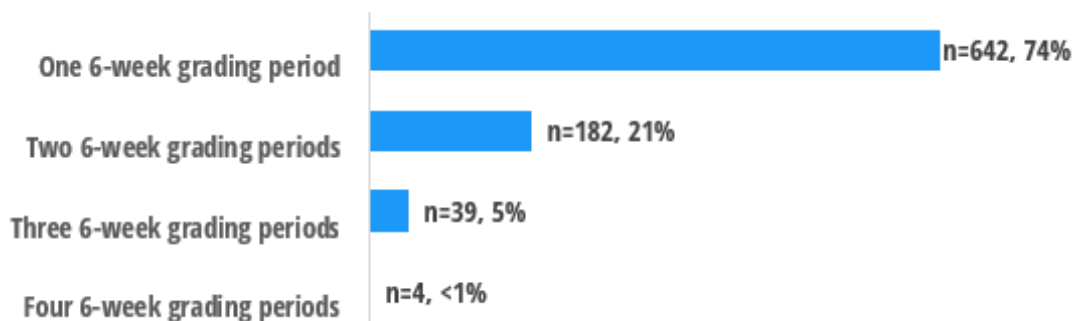
percentage of courses for which a student recovered a grade for the year were ELA (41%) and math (38%) (Table 3). In addition, courses in math and ELA had the highest percentages of students who repaired a grade for a 6-week grading period (42% and 26%, respectively) (Table 3). Lastly, students took between 8.5 and 9.5 weeks to repair 6-week grading periods and between 6.3 and 7.7 weeks to recover a year grade (Table 4).

Table 2.
A total of 1,148 middle school students participated in the Twilight credit recovery program.

Middle school outcomes	<i>n</i> students	<i>n</i> courses
6-week grade repair	574	867
Full-year grade recovery	445	591
Attendance recovery	374	447

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Figure 1.
The majority of Twilight middle school students who repaired a grade for one or two 6-week grading period did so for only one 6-week period.



Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Table 3.
The largest group of Twilight middle school students repaired a grade for a 6-week grading period or recovered a grade for the year in math courses.

Subject areas	Count of grades recovered for a 6-week grading period	Count of students who repaired a grade for a 6-week grading period	Count of students with a recovered grade for the full year
English language arts	221 (26%)	194 (26%)	237 (41%)
Math	362 (43%)	313 (42%)	224 (38%)
Science	116 (14%)	105 (14%)	73 (13%)
Social studies	133 (16%)	116 (16%)	35 (6%)
Other	15 (1%)	15 (2%)	13 (2%)
Total	847	1,272	582

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data



Table 4.

Twilight middle school students who repaired a grade for a 6-week grading period or recovered a grade for the year took longer to do so for ELA courses than for courses in any other subject.

Subject area	Average number of weeks repairing a 6-week grade	Average number of weeks repairing a grade for the year
English language arts	9.5	7.7
Math	8.5	7.1
Science	8.9	6.4
Social studies	9.3	6.3

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

High School Outcomes

The Twilight program also assisted many high school students in recovering grades and attendance. A total of 224 high school students recovered attendance for 585 courses, and 816 high school students earned credit for 1,133 courses (Table 5). This accounted for 98% of all credits attempted (Table 6). Overall, high school students earned a total of 587 credits. Students could enroll in Twilight and earn credit for more than one course in a school year; however, the majority of Twilight students (71%) who completed their courses enrolled in one course and earned a 0.5 credit (Figure 2).

High school students earned credits in all four subject areas: ELA, math, science, and social studies. Across subject areas, the highest percentages of Twilight courses taken by high school students were in math (39%) and science (30%). For all subject areas, nearly all credits attempted were earned (Table 6). In addition, students took on average between 7.5 and 9.2 weeks to complete their Twilight course, depending on the subject. Students took longer to earn credits in ELA (9.2 weeks) than in all other subjects areas (between 7.5 and 8.7 weeks, depending on the subject) (Table 7).

Table 5.

A larger number of Twilight high school students worked on credit recovery than on attendance recovery.

High school outcomes	<i>n</i> students	<i>n</i> courses
Credits recovered	816	1,133
Attendance recovered	224	585

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Table 6.

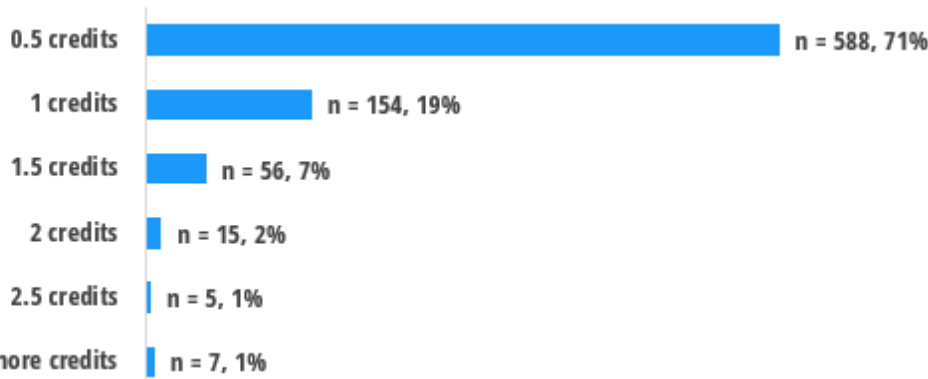
During 2019–2020, Twilight high school students earned 98% of the credits attempted.

Subject areas	Number of courses started	Number of credits started	Number of credits earned	Percentage of credits earned
ELA	157	98	94	96%
Foreign language	43	17.5	16.5	94%
Math	452	200	197	99%
Science	349	161.5	161.5	100%
Social studies	154	89.5	84.5	94%
Other	67	33.5	33.5	100%
TOTAL	1,156	600	587	98%

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Figure 2.

Of the 828 high school students in Twilight who worked toward recovering course credits, the majority (71%) worked on and earned credit for one semester.



Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Table 7.

Twilight high school students took longer to earn credits in ELA and social studies than in math or science.

Subject area	Average number of weeks to earn credit	Percentage of students enrolled in each core area
ELA	9.2	14%
Foreign language	8.7	4%
Math	8.5	39%
Science	7.8	30%
Social studies	7.5	13%

Source. 2019–2020 Twilight program data

Did Campus Closures Affect Twilight Students' Outcomes?

To assess whether campus closures due to COVID-19 affected Twilight students' outcomes, the number of courses successfully completed in 2018–2019 and in 2019–2020 were compared. Overall, students enrolled in a larger number of Twilight courses in 2019–2020 ($n = 3,299$) than in 2018–2019 ($n = 3,237$) (Table 8). When comparing course completion per semester, for both school years, the majority of courses were completed in the spring semester. However, the percentage of courses completed in the spring of 2019 (85%) was larger than the percentage completed in the spring of 2020 (64%), suggesting that campus closures may have affected Twilight student outcomes.

Table 8.

Twilight students completed a larger percentage of courses in the **spring of 2019** than in the **spring of 2020**, which may be related to school and instructional changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

School year	Courses enrolled		Courses successfully completed	
	Total	Fall	Spring	Total
2018–2019	3299	486 (15%)	2,751 (85%)	3,237
2019–2020	3,744	1,317 (36%)	2,301 (64%)	3,618

Source. 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 Twilight program database



Graduation Outcomes

Preliminary AISD graduation data for 2019–2020 indicated positive outcomes for Twilight participants. Of the 352 12th-grade students enrolled in Twilight courses, 93% ($n = 320$) graduated. The remaining 7% of students enrolled in a Texas private school or non-reportable school, had an unknown reason for leaving, or had missing data.

Students' Opinions About the Program

Students enrolled in Twilight were asked to provide feedback about the program as they exited their course. Of the 2,192 students who participated in the program, 16% ($n = 346$) filled out the survey.

Overall, Twilight participants had positive perceptions of the program. Of the Twilight students who answered the survey, 87% would tell their friends and/or classmates to enroll in the program if they needed a credit or needed to make up attendance or a grade. In addition, of the 175 high school students who answered this question, 89% believed Twilight helped them stay on track to graduate. Students also indicated that the opportunity to make up a grade, credit, and/or attendance, and the assistance they received from their teachers were the best aspects of the Twilight program.

Lastly, when asked about challenges in the Twilight classes, the majority of the students who answered this question indicated they did not encounter challenges. However, of the students who did name a challenge, the majority indicated their main issue was their own difficulties with the subject matter of the course.

"I liked working at your own pace and having a quiet place to complete work. It motivated me to complete as much work as possible while in attendance."
Twilight student

"I very much enjoyed it because it was a more efficient way to get credit. I used my twilight course to get ahead in my graduation plan and I was scared it would ruin my GPA but it didn't and it was very efficient and manageable for me."
Twilight student

Teachers' and Campus Staff 's Opinions

In Spring 2019, 209 Twilight teachers and 56 administrative staff were asked to provide feedback about Twilight. Twilight teachers included teachers who regularly taught at the school and other campus staff who served as teachers for Twilight courses. In total, 45% ($n = 94$) of the teachers and 59% ($n = 33$) of the administrators answered the survey.

In general, teachers and administrators had positive perceptions of the program. For 56% of the teachers, the 2019–2020 school year was the first time they taught a Twilight course online. Teachers provided several thoughts on how Twilight benefited students. The following are the main topics that emerged across all of their comments: the chance to get closer and more personalized

"I taught during the in person program both afterschool and on Saturdays... It helps build the student/teacher relationship and has tremendous "pay offs" for the students, teachers, families and school."
Twilight teacher

"I think Twilight is a way to find and support students who are beginning to slip academically. It allows them to be supported during their other instruction (and before the STAAR test), giving them tools to be successful in their core subjects and beyond ."
Twilight teacher

assistance from teachers and master topics they may not have understood in their original class; the opportunity to make up a credit, a grade, and/or attendance; and the opportunity to work and learn at their own pace.

Administrative staff (which included principals, assistant principals, and counselors) had similarly positive thoughts on how students benefited from enrolling in Twilight courses. In addition to recovering grades, credits, and attendance, and having closer teachers' support, administrators indicated that Twilight helped them be more alert to students who are at risk of not earning a credit.

"This year we had two seniors that had attended twilight for 2 years making up hours and credits. When I saw them in October I asked if they were going to come to twilight. They both responded that they were all caught up and learned how to be successful in class, so they did not need to attend their senior year. Twilight is a program that not only offers credit recovery but allows the teachers to build relationships with the students."

School administrator

Conclusion

Overall, Twilight student outcomes were positive. During the 2019–2020 school year, 7% of AISD's middle school students enrolled in Twilight courses. Middle school students had a 98% success rate in recovering a grade for a 6-week grading period as well as in recovering their grade for the full year; they recovered attendance for a total of 447 courses. Five percent of AISD's high school students enrolled in Twilight courses. In total, high school students earned 98% of the credits attempted and recovered attendance for 587 courses. In addition, 16% of the Twilight high school students were in 12th grade, and 93% of the 12th graders in Twilight graduated from high school. Lastly, students, teachers, and campus administrators had very positive thoughts about Twilight and indicated this program helped students recover grades and attendance so they could be promoted and stay on track to graduate.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Aline Orr, Ph.D.

Department of Research and Evaluation



4000 S IH 35 Frontage Road | Austin, TX 78704
512.414.1724 | fax: 512.414.1707
www.austinisd.org/dre | Twitter: @AISD_DRE

October 2020

Publication 19.30