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Announcements

AISD: Our Changing Demographics and the Impact on Enrollment

September 27, 2013

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Dear AISD Partners,

Thank you for your continued support of public education. As we start the school year, I would like to provide you with an update regarding student enrollment and retention at Austin Independent School District.



Enrollment and Affordable Housing

For a number of years, the central Texas region has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country. According to the U.S. Census, between 2000 and 2011, the population has increased 42.7 percent. Since 2002, the region has grown by nearly 450,000 residents. While the Austin area tops many lists as one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family, it also has been noted that the cost of living in Austin has increased dramatically.

In an article on March 23, 2012, the *Austin Chronicle* reported that Austin is the most expensive city in Texas for residents making minimum wage or close to it, and stated that "families are practically becoming an endangered species in Austin's central neighborhoods," leaving some schools under-enrolled.

We have been seeing this in our enrollment numbers. For example, this year's enrollment in AISD on the whole is not likely to increase as rapidly as population growth in the region. In fact, it appears that this year's total student count may be lower than last year, even though in some areas, such as parts of southwest and north central Austin, enrollment continues to increase. As individual school communities know, we have several schools that are over-enrolled, such as Doss, Cook and Perez elementary schools and Burnet and Murchison middle schools.

The fluctuation in enrollment is the result of many factors, and the decrease is particularly notable at the elementary school level, including pre-K. In particular, in central Austin the increased turnover of lower income neighborhoods to developments with fewer families with children, combined with rising housing costs and increased "empty nester" families, has had a significant impact on enrollment in our central and east Austin schools.

While Austin is growing, a lack of affordable housing in the district is likely putting AISD out of reach for many young families, who are instead moving to surrounding districts that offer more affordable options.

Families' Choices and AISD's Portfolio of Programs

At the same time, the environment of public education is changing, and families have more choices than ever. More charter schools are serving students at the elementary level. And in certain areas of Austin, private school options have increased as well. Students who previously would have attended local public schools choose to attend charter and private schools instead.

The district has stepped up efforts to attract and retain families by offering a more rich portfolio of programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

At the high school and middle school levels, enrollment is steady at current levels. The district offers quality instruction bolstered with many options including, but not limited to, the LASA magnet program, McCallum fine arts program, Anderson IB program, the global studies program at Austin, the alternative high school program at Garza, the early college prep programs at Reagan and LBJ, the Premier charter programs at Lanier and Travis, additional

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social and health services for the vertical team at Crockett, magnet programs at Fulmore and Kealing, the fine arts programs at Lamar and Covington, the green tech program at Small, the in-school social services program at Mendez and the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders.

Elementary schools offer signature programming to support the articulation to high school, such as fine arts and STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math), and other programming such as social and emotional learning and two-way dual language programs.

Enrollment Projections and Analysis

To project each year's enrollment, we use a "cohort survival model" as the basis and adjust for other variables. These include, but are not limited to, changes in boundaries, changes in neighborhood demography, economic conditions, changes in programming and/or services at the school. The external demographer's report also is used to validate grade level, school level and district enrollment.

The district regularly examines enrollment trends and conducts an annual demographic analysis to determine future growth patterns. As we planned for the bond in May 2013, we enhanced our approach to enrollment analysis as we designed the bond propositions.

For example, last school year, we began researching Texas Education Agency data to locate elementary and middle school students who were enrolled at the end of school year 2011-12 who were not enrolled in AISD at the start of school year 2012-13. Of those students found, approximately 20 percent were found to be in charter schools, while approximately 52 percent are enrolled in nearby and other districts. We assume the remaining students not found are enrolled in private schools or have left the state. We will repeat this review in October and in future years until we have sufficient trend data to better respond to changes in our demographics in real time.

This coming year, as we develop a Facility Master Plan, we must continue to be mindful of the implications of current enrollment trends and the city's changing demographics as we consider facilities planning for future years.

Today, I know you have more options in education. AISD continues to be the first choice for families with school-aged children, and I thank you for choosing AISD for your family.

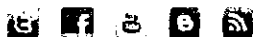
Sincerely,

Meria Carstarphen

Superintendent

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