

# FEEDBACK

Austin Independent School District

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## SCHOOL-TO-CAREER PROGRAM

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### INTRODUCTION

School-to-Career describes a system of integrated school-based and work-based learning that integrates academic and occupational learning. Students are trained through a series of organized educational programs designed to prepare students for careers and postsecondary education and training. School-to-Career (STC) or Career and Technology Education (CATE) students are grouped into the following categories according to level of participation:

- CATE Elective - indicates a student completed an “incidental” (not part of a coherent sequence) CATE course;
- CATE Coherent - reflects completion of a coherent sequence of course work which is focused on developing occupational knowledge and skills within a career pathway; and
- Tech Prep - reflects completion of a coherent sequence of course work within a pathway that includes state-approved articulation agreement (college credit) courses.

The purpose of this report is to document and present demographic and evaluative STC data for the 1998-99 school year. This report also is designed to suggest areas for expanded STC reporting in future years.

Demographic data were drawn from AISD’s School-to-Career file in May 1999. Spring 1998 TAAS results were utilized to examine academic outcomes, and dropout data were used to examine retention of CATE students. Also, postsecondary institution enrollment and employment data for the 1996-97 school year senior cohort were presented to examine aggregated college enrollment and employment outcomes for former CATE students. In addition, course failures and suspensions were used to evaluate the newly-implemented Grade 9 *Connections* course, which integrates career exploration and high school transition skills curriculum.

### DISCUSSION

The District received \$4,219,474 in CATE funding for the 1998-99 school year. This funding was based on 1,200.276 full-time equivalents (FTEs). The FTEs represent the number of CATE student contact hours, where 1 FTE receives a 1.37 funding weight. More specifically, one student in a 3 hour class for 180 days equals .5 FTE, a 2 hour class for 180 days equals .333 FTE, and a 1 hour class for 180 days equals .167 FTE.

The \$4,219,474 that AISD received in 1998-99 compares to an amount of \$5,335,212 received in 1997-98, which was based on 1,517.660 FTEs. School-To-Career program personnel have stated that the decrease in FTEs might indicate a PEIMS reporting system error because CATE course enrollment in 1998-99 was, in fact, greater than that of the previous school year.

Also, although the CATE program generates these amounts, the actual budget for the program is determined by the District. The CATE program budget allotments for 1997-98 and 1998-99 were \$2.6 million and \$1.4 million, respectively.

### School-to-Career Student Demographics

Between August 1998 and May 1999, 18,261 students were enrolled in CATE courses. The majority (n=11,766 or 64.4%) of these students were enrolled in high school. Further, 64.8% of AISD's 18,167 high school students were enrolled in CATE courses. This enrollment percentage includes students who were enrolled in a coherent sequence of CATE courses, as well as students enrolled in a CATE elective or incidental course.

Table 1 shows CATE student enrollment by high school. Bowie has the greatest number of students enrolled in CATE courses (n=1,641). Anderson is next, with 1,447 students enrolled in CATE courses. Anderson has the largest percentage (82.6%) of students enrolled. Also, at least 70% of the students at Johnston, L.B.J., McCallum, and Reagan are enrolled in CATE courses.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of AISD Students Enrolled in CATE Courses by High School in April 1999

School	# of Students	# of CATE Students	% of CATE Students	% of District CATE Students at School.
Anderson	1,751	1,447	82.6	12.3

courses requires merging current and historical course enrollment data. A request for this data has been made and Application Programming personnel are in the initial stages of developing programs and procedures to produce these data.

Further, in April 1999 STC data from the PEIMS file indicated that there were no *Tech Prep* students for the 1998-99 school year, although this is not accurate. The source of this data error is being investigated and corrected. The aforementioned data questions are representative of the types of data issues that need to be resolved before more in-depth reporting can be done for the STC program.

It is recommended that AISD personnel resolve questionable issues regarding the CATE database and CATE PEIMS data and ensure that these sources contain relevant and

Figure 1: AISD Percent Passing for Students Taking the Spring 1998 Exit-Level TAAS Mathematics by CATE Participation and Grade

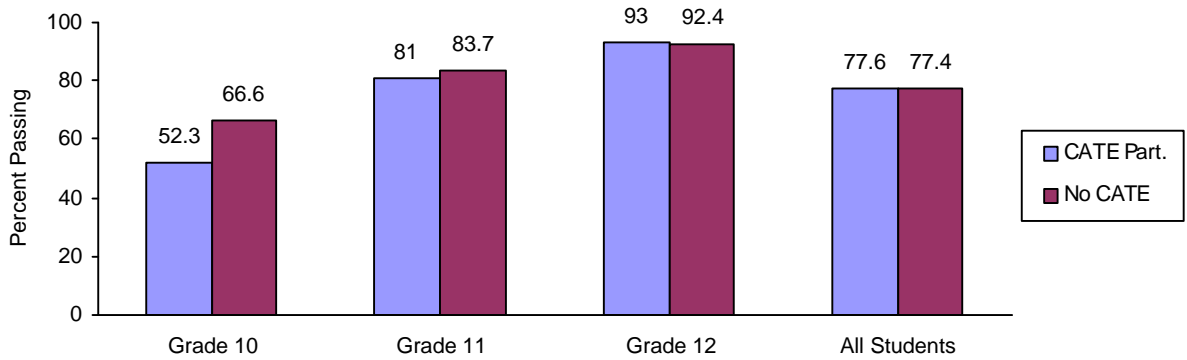


Figure 2: AISD Percent Passing for Students Taking the Spring 1998 Exit-Level TAAS Reading by CATE Participation and Grade

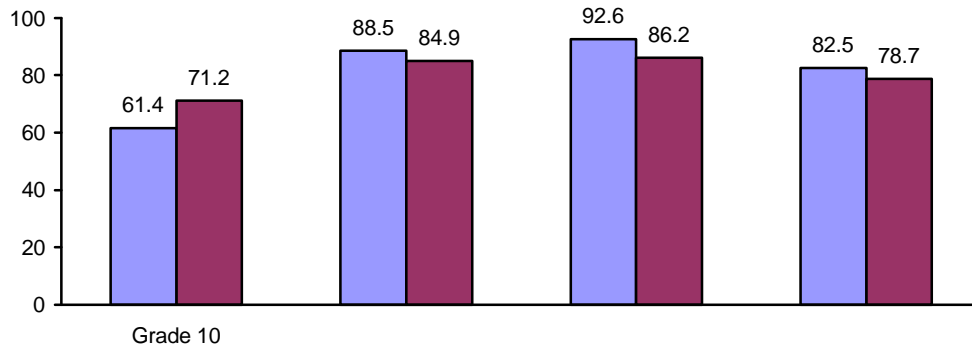


Figure 3: AISD Percent Passing for Students Taking the Spring 1998 Exit-Level TAAS Writing by CATE Participation and Grade

**Dropout Data**

Table 2 shows dropout rates by CATE participation and grade. The dropout and CATE indicator data are from AISD’s 1996-97 PEIMS submissions and are the most recent dropout data available. Also, note that these data do not include adjustments that may have been made during the Texas Education Agency’s recovery process.

Overall, *Tech Prep* students have the lowest dropout rate (1.8%) and *CATE Coherent* students have the highest dropout rate (5.4%). Of particular interest in Table 2 is the *Tech Prep* and *CATE Elective* dropout rates at grade 12, where the dropout rates are 0.8% and 0.9%, respectively. These rates compare to a 2.4% dropout rate for *No CATE* students in grade 12. As mentioned previously in the TAAS Outcomes section of this report, it might be expected that the CATE program does not produce its full effect on academic achievement and student retention until the latter stages of program involvement when students are enrolled in intermediate, advanced, and work-based CATE courses.

Table 2: AISD 1996-97 Cohort Dropout Numbers and Percentages by CATE Participation and Grade

Grade	No CATE			CATE Elective			CATE Coherent			Tech Prep		
	#*	# Drop out	% Drop out	#	# Drop out	% Drop out	#	# Drop out	% Drop out	#	# Drop out	% Drop out

97.23, for a more detailed description of the Automated Student and Adult Learner process, as well as a more detailed description of the data’s limitations.)

Table 3 categorizes AISD and Texas postsecondary enrollment by CATE participation. The state-level data were derived from the *Report Card on Texas Public Education, 1996-1997 Exit Cohort*. The AISD and state-reported percentages of located individuals enrolled in public postsecondary institutions in Texas represent a minimum percentage because employed students who are enrolled in private postsecondary institutions in Texas are categorized as *working only*. For example, a student enrolled at Baylor University who is also employed would be located through unemployment insurance wage records but would not be located through the THECB records and would, therefore, be listed as *working only* in the TSOICC data.

As can be seen in Table 3, AISD’s *Tech Prep* (56.4%) and *CATE Elective* students (55.8%) have the highest percentages of postsecondary enrollment, while *CATE Coherent* students have the lowest percentage (37.2%). Both *Tech Prep* (56.4%) and *CATE Elective* (55.8%) percentages are above the district’s 52.9% overall postsecondary enrollment.

Comparing AISD and state data, Table 3 shows that AISD’s *Primary Academic*, *CATE Coherent*, and *Tech Prep* postsecondary enrollments are lower than the state’s postsecondary enrollments for each of the groups. This might be expected since AISD’s overall postsecondary enrollment is lower than the state’s overall postsecondary enrollment. However, the difference between AISD and state percentages for *Tech Prep* students is only 1.1%, which is lower than the differences between AISD and state percentages for both *Primary Academic* and *CATE Coherent* students.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of 1996-97 AISD and Texas Senior Cohort Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution and Working Only by CATE Indicator

CATE INDICATOR	Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution		Working Only	
	AISD	Texas	AISD	Texas

**Connections**

*Connections* is a newly-implemented, one-semester ninth grade course that is coordinated through the STC department. The course was rewritten and renamed from the previous *Career Connections* course. The *Connections* curriculum, which was developed by a

Table 5: AISD 1998-99 First-Semester Discipline Numbers and Percentages and Grade 9 Students Enrolled in Connections to Grade 9 Students Not Enrolled in Connections at Reagan, McCallum, and Crockett High Schools

School	Grade 9 Students Enrolled in Connections First Semester 1998-99			Grade 9 Students Not Enrolled in Connections First Semester 1998-99		
	# of Students	# of Students Disciplined	% Disciplined	# of Students	# of Students Disciplined	% Disciplined
Reagan	340	49	14.1	258	47	18.2
McCallum	196	9	4.6	360	34	9.4
Crockett	237	13	5.5	650	35	5.4
Total	773	71	9.2	1268	116	9.1

As Table 4 shows, the overall fall 1998 course failure rate for grade 9 students who took *Connections* is 25%, compared to a 32.5% failure rate for grade 9 students who did not take *Connections*. Also, all three schools individually have significantly lower course failure



the course was implemented at schools where the course is now mandatory would be helpful in determining the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, qualitative data such as student and teacher interviews would provide a more complete look at the program and its effectiveness.

### Focus Group Results

A Career Counseling focus group was conducted in May 1999 to gather evaluative, qualitative, student-perspective data about the career counseling program. (See AISD *Student Advisory Committee Career Counseling Focus Group*, Office of Program Evaluation publication number 98.07, for a detailed description of the participants, methodology, and discussion.) Students responded to questions about their individual postsecondary education plans, as well as to questions about their knowledge of career options and career planning strategies. Students also discussed district and school-level programs and resources related to college, career planning, and financial aid.

More research is needed to supplement and support the focus group findings. However, salient issues brought forward in the focus group include:

- the extent to which focus group participants were knowledgeable about how interests, abilities, and work-related values relate to career options;
- Austin High School students' appreciation of the Career Day/Site Visits event;
- the students' request for more career information during their freshman year;
- the students' request for more individualized scholarship counseling; and
- focus group participants' lack of understanding of graduation plan options.

It is recommended that AISD consider Career Day/Site Visits for high schools that do not have this program. It is also recommended that students receive more information on how graduation plan options relate to postsecondary education goals rather than just the knowledge that there are three graduation plans. Further, it is recommended that more qualitative and quantitative research be conducted to adequately address the evaluation of the Career Counseling program.

### SUMMARY

Review of the data in this report shows the following key programmatic findings:

- Between August 1998 and May 1999, 18,261 students (grades 7-12) were enrolled in CATE courses.
- Sixty-five percent of AISD's 18,167 high school students are enrolled in CATE courses.
- Bowie has the greatest number of students enrolled in CATE courses (N=1,641).
- Anderson has the largest percentage (82.6%) of students enrolled in CATE courses.
- In grades 11 and 12, students who participated in CATE have a higher TAAS reading and writing passing rate than non-CATE participants do.
- *Tech Prep* students have the lowest dropout rate (1.8%) and *CATE Coherent* students have the highest rate (5.4%) for the AISD 1996-97 cohort.

- *Tech Prep* students have the highest postsecondary enrollment (56.4%) for the AISD 1996-97 cohort.
- The fall 1998 course failure rate for grade 9 students at Reagan, McCallum, and Crockett high schools who took *Connections* was 25%, compared to a 32.5% failure rate for grade 9 students who did not take *Connections* at these schools.
- The fall 1998 course failure rate for grade 9 students at Reagan who took *Connections* was 27.5%, compared to a 40.3% failure rate for students at Reagan who did not take *Connections* that semester.

Several recommendations were made to improve the evaluative process of the School-To-Career program. First, problems with the STC data such as the issue of April 1999 PEIMS data showing no *Tech Prep* students need to be resolved. Also, quality assurance measures need to be put in place to ensure the accuracy of the data and to ensure that CATE files can support local and state-level data reporting requirements.

Further, more in-depth examinations of the STC program are recommended in several areas, such as achievement outcomes, evaluation of the *Connections* course, and evaluation of the Career Counseling program. Data are also needed on enrollment by cluster and pathway and enrollment in intermediate, advanced, work-based, and articulated credit courses. A future report containing these data would provide information that supports continuous program improvement, enabling STC personnel to pinpoint relevant trends and patterns in enrollment, achievement results, and effectiveness of program services.

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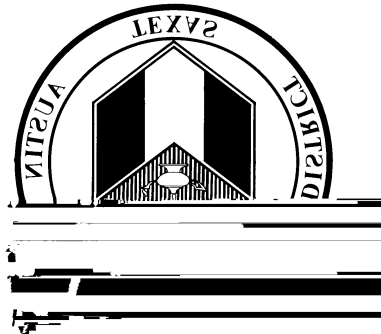
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