



Summer Accelerated Instruction Programs in Texas

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Administrators review results from the first administration of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to identify possible accelerated instruction program (AIP) participants. Contacts at **District A, District B, District C,** and **District E** explain that administrators use the first STAAR scores to create a preliminary list of students to attend AIPs. While many students will pass the second test administration and will not need to attend summer remediation programs, administrators benefit from the additional time to recruit teachers, plan curriculum, and communicate with parents and students.

Administrators at District C recruit instructional coaches to teach AIPs and offer pay increases to all participating staff members. Administrators at all profiled districts recognize that they must staff AIP classrooms with strong teachers due to students' increased support needs. Administrators at **District C** ask instructional coaches to teach AIP classes. These staff members are tenured educators excited to return to the classroom over the summer. Furthermore, all teachers and staff who lead AIP classrooms receive additional compensation for participation. These strategies allow administrators to incentivize their top teachers to lead AIP classes.

District and school leadership call students' homes to speak with impacted students and parents about AIP participation. Administrators at all profiled districts send written communications to parents of targeted students explaining the value of AIPs. However, contacts recognize that parents often require additional explanation and multiple reminders to ensure their children attend a program. As a result, contacts at **District B, District D,** and **District E** ask district staff, school principals, and teachers to call the homes of students who fail the STAAR. Once AIPs begin, staff at profiled districts call home whenever students miss a day to emphasize the importance of AIPs and encourage them to return the next day.

At District A and District C, administrations extend AIPs to run through the third STAAR administration. Administrators at **District A** and **District C** start AIPs soon after the end of the academic year and continue programming through the third STAAR administration date. In contrast AIPs at **District D** run for only five to seven days. Contacts at District A explain that district leaders extended AIPs after feedback from principals that students would attend the AIP but not the third exam administration. The schedule structure maximizes students' preparation time and makes it easy for them to complete the test.

2) Student and Staff Selection

Student Identification

Accelerated Instruction Programs Target Students Who Fail Texas State Assessments

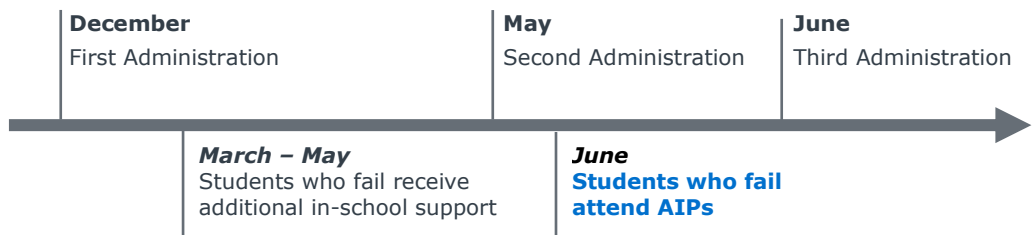
Texas students in grades three through twelve must take State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to measure progress towards state readiness standards.¹ Middle school students in fifth and eighth grade must pass grade-level reading and mathematics exams to progress into the next grade. High school students must pass STAARs in English, mathematics, science, and social studies to graduate.

Students have three opportunities to pass their exams. Students continue to the second or third iterations of the exam if they failed the previous administration. The first two STAAR administrations occur during the academic year, while the third occurs over the summer.

Students who fail the second STAAR administration must attend a summer accelerated instruction program (AIP) to prepare for the third administration of the exam. School districts offer middle school summer remediation programs and high school end of course (EOC) programs for students who fail the second administration. EOC and middle school remediation program teachers provide students with targeted training to pass the summer STAAR administration. Although AIPs are technically mandatory for all students who do not pass the second STAAR administration, district administrators lack attendance enforcement, making it difficult for districts to achieve high attendance rates.

Texas school districts include both EOC programs and middle school remediation programs under the umbrella of AIPs. For the purposes of this report, we will use "AIP" to refer to both EOC programs and middle school remediation programs.

Approximate STAAR Administration Timeline²



Administrators Use Results from First STAAR Administration to Identify Possible AIP Participants

Administrators at **District A**, **District C**, and **District E** review the first STAAR results to create an initial list of possible AIP participants. Students who fail the first administration receive additional interventions during the school year, and many pass the second administration. However, because the second STAAR administration occurs in May, administrators lack sufficient time to notify parents or hire AIP staff based on data from the second exam administration. Therefore, administrators use the first test results to create early projections for student participation and staff needs.

Contacts at District C review historical AIP enrollment and first administration test results to develop initial student enrollment projections and staffing needs for the

1) "STAAR Resources." Texas Education Agency. https://tea.texas.gov/student_assessment/staar/. Accessed 26 November 2018.
2) "Testing Calendars". Texas Education Agency https://tea.texas.gov/student_assessment/calendars/. Accessed 26 November 2018.

summer. Administrators then ask teachers to apply for summer school positions and contact parents of students who may need to attend AIPs.

At **District B** and District C, district level staff send a list of potential participants to school counselors. Individual school counselors then review students' exam results to identify and manage the communication and registration processes. Administrators at **District D** also ask teachers and school specialists to review individual student results. When teachers review scores, they can provide additional commentary and context for a student's performance.

***District E* Administrators Invite Select Seventh Grade Students to Middle School Remediation Programs**

While eighth grade students who fail the STAAR must attend remediation programs, administrators at **District E** also invite a group of seventh grade students to attend their summer AIP. Administrators review seventh grade STAAR results and invite students who struggled on the exam to attend a summer AIP for additional test preparation. By inviting seventh grade students, administrators proactively provide struggling students with STAAR preparation and support. When those students take the first eighth grade STAAR, they are more prepared to succeed.

Teacher Recruitment

Consider Emphasizing the AIP Mission to Recruit Teachers for Summer School

At all profiled school districts, teachers apply for summer school positions. School principals or district-level staff email teachers to solicit applications for summer programs. Given the variety of summer programs at many school districts (e.g., credit recovery programs, acceleration programs for top students) teachers often express less enthusiasm to teach AIPs. In comparison to other summer school programs, AIPs are shorter and focus on test preparation. AIP teachers therefore earn less pay than other summer school staff and work with especially challenging students.

That said, in order to support struggling students, district administrators at **District B**, **District C**, and **District D** emphasize that top teachers should staff AIPs.

- Administrators at District C work with school principals to identify top-performing teachers and recruit them for AIPs. Contacts at District D explain that administrators convince teachers to staff AIPs by highlighting the mission to support those students who need the most assistance.

In 2015 administrators at **District C** also began to offer increased pay for teachers and instructional coaches who staff AIPs. District administrators found the additional compensation to be an effective tool to attract top teachers to staff AIPs.

Instructional Coaches at *District C* and *District D* Teach AIP Classes

At **District C**, former top teachers move into instructional coach positions. These individuals are tenured educators but no longer work directly with students. Administrators approach these instructional coaches to teach AIPs and frame it as a chance to get back into the classroom. Instructional coaches feel excited to return to classroom teaching. Furthermore, these individuals possess deep content knowledge and teaching expertise, serving as a valuable staffing resource.

Similarly, at **District D**, administrators recruit content specialists to staff summer AIPs. They recruit content specialists first and then solicit additional high-performing teachers to fill their staffing requirements.

New Teachers May Benefit from AIP Teaching Positions

When administrators at **District E** need to recruit additional teachers for AIPs, they approach less tenured teachers within the district. Contacts explain that new teachers tend to be enthusiastic, dedicated to their students, and open to trying innovative teaching strategies. Furthermore, these individuals feel motivated to improve their teaching. As a result, administrators frame AIPs as additional skill-building opportunities.

3) AIP Preparation

Notification

District Administrators Use Multiple Channels to Communicate Both with Students Who Fail the STAAR and their Parents

District administrators rely on email and physical mail to initially notify students and parents about STAAR performance and AIP attendance. District administrators create form letters and emails for school administrator use.

Elements of a Successful AIP Form letter



Explain the purpose of the AIP. Include specific information about the individual students' STAAR results if available.



Provide detailed information about AIP dates and **address basic logistical questions** (i.e. transportation, meals, third administration test dates).



Customize the letter to **include school-specific information** and include contact information for parents to follow up with questions.

Contacts at **District A** explain that most school communication, especially at the middle school level, occurs through traditional mail. Therefore, administrators communicate STAAR results and encourage AIP participation through mail. However, District A and **District D** administrators use email in addition to physical mail to send communication for high school AIP programs.

Benefits of Email and Mail Communications



Physical Mail

- Parents expect physical mail for school communications.
- Physical mail serves as a formal and official method of communication.



Email

- Administrators can easily send parents multiple reminders.
- Administrators can include links to online registration.

Personalized Phone Calls Ensure Parents and Students Understand Program Details

Administrators at all profiled districts recognize that written communications fail to reach many students eligible to attend AIPs. As a result, district and school administrators dedicate significant time to personal follow-up with parents and students about AIPs and their options for success.

At **District E**, district administrators divide lists of targeted students between district administrators, principals, and other administrators and call each student's home. District administrators approach all phone calls with a positive attitude and faith in the individual student. Administrators frame AIPs as a tool to ensure that students will pass third administration of the exam, rather than presenting AIPs as a punishment.

Contacts at **District B** explain that parents of AIP students often do not understand the program. Administrators dedicate time to communicate individually with parents to explain the details regarding AIPs. When **District D** administrators contact students and parents, they ask parents to verbally commit to specific AIP sessions. If a student knows in advance of scheduling conflicts, administrators will note the conflicts upon registration. Teachers then plan around a student’s absence. Administrators emphasize that they work around a family’s schedule in order to give a student as much preparation as possible before the third STAAR administration.



Automated Phone Calls at District D Scale Contact to Impacted Families

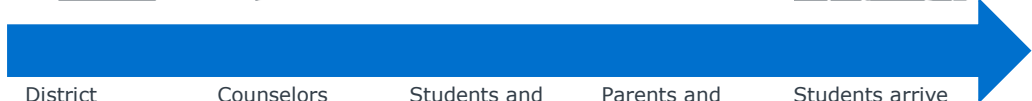
After district Leaders at **District D** send mail communications, administrators send mass calls to impacted students and parents. District administrators create a template and share it across all schools. Principals then use the template to record a customized call with information specific to their school. An automated system then calls all impacted students’ homes.

Registration

Administrators at District C and District E Delegate AIP Registration to School-Level Staff

At **District C**, central district administrators provide training and guidance to principals and counselors, but school counselors manage the AIP registration process. Each counselor works with a group of students throughout the year. Of those students, a small subset requires summer remediation. Due to the small size of this group of students, counselors can dedicate the time to contact all impacted students and families.

AIP Registration process at District C



Counselors also determine if they want to offer a student additional summer enrichment programs (e.g. credit recovery).

District administrators train counselors.

Counselors identify students for AIP participation.

Students and parents receive written communication about AIPs.

Parents and counselors attend a student success conference and register for an AIP.

Students arrive for their AIP and receive their specific schedule.

Contacts at **District E** explain that the Grade Placement Committee (GPC) manages AIP identification and registration for eighth grade students.³ The GPC Chair organizes a preliminary parent meeting with students who do not pass the first STAAR administration.

The GPC meeting serves as the optimal time to register students because the parent meets with a team of school staff to discuss their student’s progress. Administrators explain AIP details and confirm with parents that their child will attend. While students in other grades must go through a separate registration process, GPCs allow administrators to ensure registration and attendance for eighth graders specifically.

GPC Composition



Parent



Grade Placement Committee Chair



Math and/or Reading General Education Teacher



Special Education Teachers

Online Registration Eliminates Paperwork for Administrative Staff

Parents of students at **District B** and **District D** register for high school AIPs online. Parents receive an email notifying them about the programs which includes a link to register for the appropriate AIP. **District A** administrators use a similar online registration process for high school AIPs. Administrators use electronic survey programs (e.g., Google Forms, SignUpGenius) where parents can select the sessions their child will attend.

Contacts explain that administrators prefer online registration because it decreases the volume of paperwork district staff must process. However, administrators at **District A** explain that they opt for paper registration for middle school parents because most important school communications occur through mail. While online registration may be the preferable process for school and district staff, administrators nonetheless recognize they must plan for additional follow up communication to ensure students attend AIPs.

Teacher Preparation

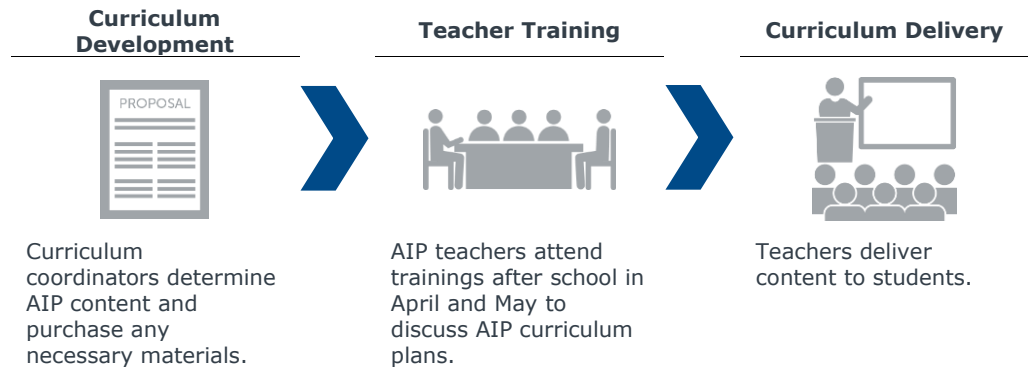
Content Specialists Craft AIP Curricula to Align with STAAR Preparation Needs

Content specialists at **District B** and **District A** lead AIP curriculum development. At **District C**, teaching and learning specialists develop summer acceleration guides during the academic year. The guides include state learning standards, lesson plans, and recommended teaching strategies for AIP instructors. Because AIPs focus on STAAR preparation, teaching and learning specialists provide more prescriptive recommendations to teachers than they do during the academic year.

Curriculum coordinators at District B take a similar approach to AIP preparation. The district summer school coordinator meets with curriculum coordinators in January to begin summer program content development.

³) Grade Placement Committees determine progression from middle school and high school as mandated by the Texas Education Agency. More information can be found at <https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/ssi/>.

AIP Curriculum Planning at *District B*



Consider Offering AIP Teachers Dedicated Professional Development and Preparation Time

AIPs at **District A** begin on the Tuesday after school ends and administrators schedule a teacher professional development day for the day prior.

Teachers spend the first half of the day with content coordinators and grade-level colleagues to plan the content they will cover during the AIP. Teachers attend a schoolwide faculty meeting and prepare individually for their AIP classes during the second half of the day.

Contacts believe the professional development day helps teachers relax and regroup after the end of the school year. The planning time allows them to feel organized and energized before their AIP students to arrive later in the week.

Teachers at *District D* Review Individual STAAR Scores Prior to AIPs

Administrators at **District D** share STAAR results with AIP instructors before the start of the program. Administrators ask teachers to review the individual scores of the students in their classes and identify any specific areas of weakness. Contacts explain that reviewing results allows teachers to customize lesson plans and prioritize topics where students need the most support.



Administrators Customize Schedules Based on Individual District Preferences

Contacts at all profiled districts explain that dates for the third STAAR administration dictate when they offer summer AIPs.

AIP Schedules at Profiled Districts

School District	Schedule Summary
District A	AIPs run from the first Tuesday after the end of school through the end of the third STAAR administration.
District B	AIPs run for 15 days from 7:30am to 1:45pm. Programming runs all day regardless of individual student performance.
District C	AIPs run for three weeks from 9:00am to 1:00pm through the end of the third STAAR administration.
District D	AIP length varies by school. Programming runs for five to seven days. Students attend for either half or full day sessions depending on their individual remediation needs and scheduling conflicts.
District E	AIPs run for 13 days from 8:00am to 3:15pm for high school students. High schoolers in credit recovery also attend AIP courses. Middle school AIPs run from 8:00am to 12:00pm.

AIP programs at **District A** and **District C** run through the third STAAR administration. Contacts at District A explain that previously, their AIP ended before the third STAAR administration. Administrators observed that some students would attend the AIP but not return to school to take the test. As a result, administrators extended the AIP schedule to run through the end of the third testing period. This schedule maximizes a students’ preparation hours and makes it simple for them to take the test.

Administrators at *District E* and *District B* Maximize Classroom Instructional Time for Students During AIPs

At **District B**, administrators always schedule students for a full day of AIP courses. If a student already passed one or more STAAR subjects, administrators use the full day to focus on the subject where the student failed. For example, a middle school student who passes reading but not math receives a full day of math remediation during the AIP. Teachers use the entire school day to provide even more instruction and support for those students. Students then complete additional online trainings or practice to develop thorough comprehension of content. Simultaneously, when every student comes for a full day, it simplifies scheduling and transportation logistics.

Administrators at **District E** also provide credit recovery options for students enrolled in a high school EOC remediation program. If a student fails the STAAR and the high school course, a student can recover credit through participation in the EOC program. If a student participates in all AIP classes and completes all required assignments, he/she may earn a 70 percent as a grade in the high school course. This policy encourages students to participate in the AIP and provides an option for them to progress to the next grade level for the following academic year.

***District D* Administrators Create Flexible AIP Attendance Policies**

Recognizing students and parents often face schedule conflicts over the summer, administrators at **District D** strive to make the AIP schedule and STAAR preparation as flexible as possible.

Prior to student registration, administrators create detailed schedules of the content teachers will cover at each grade level. Also, administrators often will ask teachers to repeat content covered in the morning later in the afternoon. Students then sign up for time slots based on the specific lessons where they need support and their personal schedules.

In addition, administrators share the lesson materials with students unable to attend the AIP or certain sessions. If a student wishes to prepare for the third administration independently, teachers and administrators provide worksheets and other class materials used in AIP classes.

4) Implementation and Assessment

Attendance

Ensure Students Recognize Teachers and Staff at AIP Campuses to Ease Transition into Programming

Because only select middle school and high school campuses host middle school and EOC remediation at **District C**, students may attend AIPs at an unfamiliar campus. To mitigate administrative issues and to increase student comfort in new environments, administrators from all campuses attend the first day of AIPs.

When students arrive at a different high school or middle school, they will recognize their own principal and/or counselors. Those familiar school administrators help to determine a student's schedule and troubleshoot individual issues that arise.

Administrators Call Home When a Student Misses a Day of AIP

Contacts at all profiled districts report low attendance rates at AIPs. At **District A**, contacts estimate that approximately 70 percent of middle school students and 50 percent of high school students who should attend AIPs attend the summer program. At **District C**, approximately 40 percent of targeted high school students attend, and at **District D** 25 percent of targeted high school students attend. Contacts report slightly higher rates of attendance at middle school programs. They attribute lower high school AIP attendance rates to students' additional obligations over the summer.

After a student registers and indicates that he/she plans to attend an AIP, teachers and administrators take a proactive approach to ensure he/she arrives. For example, at **District B**, administrators send automated phone calls home every day the week before AIPs. Continuous outreach ensures families cannot forget their students' obligations.

Once the AIP begins, administrators work to ensure that students attend every day of programming. At District A and **District E**, administrators record attendance. Any student who misses a day receives a call from an administrator asking to explain their absence and to confirm that they will return for the next scheduled session. For high school students at District A, administrators ask the subject area teachers to call their students in the event that students are absent. Individual teacher communication serves as a personal and compelling way to bring students back into the classroom.

Course Content

Small Class Sizes Allow Teachers to Personalize Instruction

Across all profiled districts, administrators keep AIP class sizes small to provide students personalized training and support. Teachers and administrators at **District D** emphasize small group work during AIP sessions. Small groups within a small class allow students to engage with the material and help each other to master content.

At **District E**, teachers emphasize face-to-face instructional time over online coursework. Contacts believe that time with a certified teacher serves as one of the greatest benefits of AIPs. Therefore, contacts at District E believe that students should engage with their teachers rather than complete online exam preparation while in class.

Similarly, administrators at **District C** consider each student’s individual learning style when they determine the amount of online programming given to a student over the summer. Teachers recognize that online coursework only works for some students. Administrator prioritize the most personalized instructional methods to maximize student learning and engagement throughout the AIP.

Classroom Observations at *District B* provide AIP Instructors with Coaching and Feedback

In 2016, administrators at **District B** began to conduct classroom observations during AIPs. Contacts explain that teachers participate in observation and coaching during the academic year, so they extend the observational model to summer programs as well. Furthermore, given the condensed timeline of AIPs and the pressure for students to succeed, teachers must be effective as possible during these programs. This high-pressure context underscores the importance of effective teacher feedback.

Components of Teacher Observation and Feedback Process at *District B*



Administrator Observation

Summer school principals and other campus level administrators observe classroom teachers during AIP school days.



Teacher Feedback

Students leave AIPs at 2:40pm while teachers stay until 3:00pm. Administrators use the end of the day to meet with individual teachers to provide coaching and feedback.



Implementation

AIP teachers adjust their lessons using administrator feedback.

Program Assessment

AIPs Lead to Moderate Improvements in STAAR Performance

District-level administrators at all profiled districts recognize the limitations of AIPs. Most importantly, administrators must work around the third test administration dates, thus limiting the time available for students to prepare for the exam. That said, some students do demonstrate improvements after the additional instruction time before the third STAAR administration. Contacts at **District A** and **District C** note that STAAR results improve as a result of AIP attendance. Administrators at District A compare AIP attendance rates to STAAR results. At the high-school level, administrators find that performance on the third STAAR administration increases with increased AIP attendance.

In comparison, anecdotally, contacts at **District E** have not seen noticeable improvements in exam performance due to AIP attendance. Contacts at **District D** believe that the small student sample sizes and changing instructors year after year make it very challenging to measure the benefits of these programs.

Debriefing Sessions at *District A* Allow Administrators to Improve Elements of AIPs

Administrators at **District A** host debriefing meetings at the end of the summer to discuss AIPs. District administrators hold one-hour meetings with groups of principals by school level (i.e., separate meetings for high school principals, middle school principals, and elementary school principals) to discuss what aspects of the program went well and to solicit ideas for changes. Contacts highlight that administrators adjusted the AIP schedule to run through the third STAAR administration as a direct result of principal feedback. Principals appreciate the opportunity to share the challenging elements of AIPs and give suggestions for changes.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do contact districts schedule AIPs?
 - How many days are AIPs at contact districts?
 - What times do students meet for AIPs at contact districts?
- How do administrators at contact districts staff AIPs?
- How do contact districts identify students to participate in AIPs?
- How do contact districts communicate AIP participation requirements to students and parents?
- What percentage of required students attend AIPs?
 - What strategies do contact districts use to increase initial student attendance at AIPs?
 - What strategies do contact districts use to maintain student attendance during AIPs?
 - What methods do contact districts use to deliver instructional content to students in AIPs?
- How do contact districts differentiate programming to students of grade levels and needs?
 - What specific content, teaching strategies, or activities, do program administrators use to prepare students for the summer Texas state assessment?
 - What metrics do contact districts use to measure the success of AIPs?
- Have administrators seen an increase in the number of students who pass the summer administration of the state assessment after attending AIPs?
- What major challenges do contact districts face in the implementation of AIPs?
- What strategies do contact districts use to maintain the ongoing effectiveness of AIPs each year?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB’s internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Texas Education Agency (TEA) (tea.texas.gov)

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed Directors of Assessment and Summer School.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Approximate District Enrollment
District A	Texas	21,000
District B	Texas	63,000
District C	Texas	159,000
District D	Texas	51,000
District E	Texas	39,000

