



SAN ANTONIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

514 W. Quincy St.
San Antonio, TX 78212
www.saisd.net
210.554.2200

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Dear Families:

As we embark on this new school year, I am filled with pride in the smooth opening across San Antonio ISD, even as we navigated challenges like air conditioning issues. These early successes set a strong foundation for an important year ahead, where our primary focus remains on improving student achievement—a mission that is at the heart of everything we do.

This letter provides an overview of last year's state assessment (STAAR) results and outlines the strategies we are implementing this school year to improve student outcomes. In June, we presented the district's state assessment results to our Board of Trustees during a public meeting. You can [view the slides](#) or [watch the recording](#) (click on 2A under the video) on our Board's web page. For individual campus results, please visit your child's school website and look under the Announcements tab.

We are excited to share the following major academic achievements with you, which are based on the latest year we have finalized data. These highlights demonstrate the effective strategies we have in place to support our students:

- **College-bound culture**: Our college enrollment rate increased from 49% to 56% for the 2021 to 2022 graduates.
- **Bucking national trends in supporting college aspirations**: Despite national declines in college enrollment for graduates in high-minority schools and high-poverty schools in 2022, we experienced an 8% increase in enrollment in the fall immediately after high school graduation.
- **Practical skills for future careers**: Among 2022 graduates, 42% earned industry-based certifications, doubling the regional average.
- **Associate degrees and dual credit opportunities**: We've seen a significant increase in students graduating with associate degrees (5.2%) and dual credits (36%), outpacing both regional and state averages.

Our STAAR and End-of-Course assessments indicate general progress at the high school level and in certain grades and subjects. However, many of our campuses did not do as well as anticipated and significant challenges remain in meeting the expectations for academic excellence set by our families and Board Goals. [See a detailed flyer on our district's results.](#)

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STAAR End-of-Course assessments

SAISD's performance on the End-of-Course exams surpassed the state's growth at most performance levels, highlighting the district's progress in closing the achievement gaps with state averages. Additionally, the district's report noted the following key improvements among SAISD students taking End-of-Course assessments compared to their performance in the previous year:

- *Increase in number of students passing:* There were increases from 2 to 5 points in the number of students passing Algebra I, Biology, English II and/or U.S. History.
- *Growth at the "Meets" level:* There was growth of 1 to 8 points among students performing at the "Meets" level in Algebra I, English I, English II, and/or U.S. History.
- *Growth at the "Masters" level:* There was growth of 1 to 2 points among students performing at the "Masters" level in Algebra I, English I and/or English II.

STAAR Grades 3-8

Despite the improvements at the high school level, we noted a significant drop in student performance in grades 3 to 8. There were, however, some bright spots in these grades:

- *Grade 4 Reading Language Arts:* A 4-point increase in students passing and a 3-point increase at the meets level.
- *Grade 6 Reading Language Arts:* A 5-point increase in students at the "Meets" level and a 4-point increase at the "Masters" level.
- *Grade 8 Math:* A 3-point increase at the "Meets" level and a 2-point increase at the "Masters" level in Math.

Improvement strategies

To accelerate growth this school year, we have identified the content areas where students show the greatest need and determined the specific question types that caused students to struggle. Using this analysis, we are providing evidence-based instruction in reading, writing, and math, with a focus on delivering instruction in formats represented in the state assessments. We will implement short-interval testing across tested grades to more accurately monitor progress throughout the year and provide differentiated resources that support targeted intervention and individualized instruction.

We believe students may have struggled more with the testing format rather than the content itself. To address this, our instruction this year will:

- Transition from paper to online assessments, exposing students to technology-enhanced question types.
 - Ensure every student in Grades 2 and up have a laptop and develop basic keyboarding skills.
 - Incorporate response-time management and various question formats (such as graphing, drag and drop, and inline choice) in daily instruction.
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Beyond state test results

State achievement results are not merely reflections of our past efforts; they serve as blueprints for our future success. We view these results as opportunities to embrace challenges, innovate, collaborate, and lead with purpose. While state test results are important, it's crucial to recognize that they do not fully capture the overall performance of a school. Below are examples of other successes of our schools and students that extend beyond test scores.

Academic achievements

- *Graduation rate*: Increased by 16% in two years for students experiencing homelessness.
- *College Board National Recognition*: 258 students qualified for 440 recognitions across various programs, reflecting the achievements of both students and schools.
- *Gifted and Talented Education (GATE Showcase)*: More than 800 individuals attended the SAISD GATE Showcase, where students presented year-long projects.
- *UTSA Knowledge for Freedom Program*: SAISD was the first district to partner with this program, with 15 students completing a live-in experience and college seminar focused on democracy. Students earned credit for two college classes and will receive mentoring.

Student engagement and development

- *State of the District*: For the first time, students led this high-profile community event, highlighting how the district meets their needs.
- *Senior Job Fair*: More than 300 seniors explored employment, internships, and apprenticeships with community organizations and businesses.

Social-emotional and behavioral support

- *Classroom peace-area kits*: 100% of PK-5 classrooms received kits to support social-emotional-behavioral needs and increase instructional time and sense of belonging.

Community support and services

- *International Welcome Center*: 1,147 immigrant families accessed identification testing and wrap-around services, more than double the previous year.
- *Adult education programs*: Supported more than 900 adults in certifications, college preparation, ESL, and GED courses; tested and enrolled over 500 adults in the Ready to Work program; and helped more than 200 adults become citizens.

Health and wellness

- *Campus health clinics*: 119 nursing staff provided TLC and high-quality care to 450,000 students.
- *Meal services*: Served 11.1 million meals at no cost to students during the 2023-24 school year. Recognized with the Turnip the Beet Gold Award for the summer meal program.

Arts and extracurriculars

- *Fine arts*: Participation increased to 86% among K-12 students in the 2023-24 school year.
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- *Mariachi programs:* Six out of seven high school mariachi programs advanced to the state UIL competition for the second year in a row.
- *Marching bands and spirit groups:* Participated in multiple Fiesta events.
- *Awards and recognitions:*
 - Named a “Best Community for Music Education” by the NAMM Foundation for the 6th consecutive year.
 - Recognized as a District of Distinction by the Texas Art Education Association for the first time.

Aiming for growth

At SAISD, we are deeply committed to fostering a positive culture rooted in a growth mindset, where every challenge is seen as an opportunity for growth and every setback is a stepping stone to success. Our aim is not just to teach but to inspire and empower our students to reach beyond their current limits and realize their fullest potential.

We believe that the key to unlocking student success lies in our commitment to continuous improvement. By utilizing all available assessment data, we will refine our curriculum, teaching methods, and leadership practices to better serve our students. This data-driven approach is not just about numbers—it's about understanding each student's journey, identifying areas for growth, and providing the targeted support they need to thrive.

Our focus extends beyond academic achievement; we are dedicated to providing a well-rounded education that equips our students with the skills, knowledge, and resilience they need to pursue their dreams with confidence. We strive to cultivate an environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to explore their passions, overcome obstacles, and achieve their personal and academic goals.

Together, we will rise to meet the challenges before us, using every tool and resource at our disposal to bridge gaps in learning and create pathways to success. At SAISD, we are not just preparing students for tests—we are preparing them for life, nurturing their potential, and helping them to shape their own futures with courage and conviction. Let's continue to inspire greatness in every student, every day.

In service,
Jaime R. Aquino, Ph.D.
Superintendent
