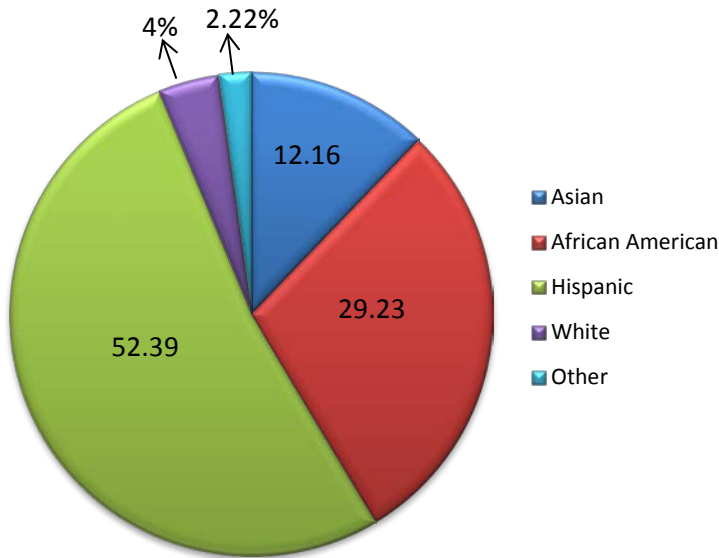


Alief ISD: Overcoming the Challenges of Poverty One Student at a Time

Alief ISD Ethnicity Mix



Alief ISD District Demographic Statistics

Focus Area	# of Students	Percent
Special Education	3488	7.38%
English Language Learner	American Indian/Alaskan	220
	Asian	2982
	Black/African American	891
	Hispanic/Latino	4808
	White	530
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	27
	Two or more	26
		9484
Economically Disadvantaged	38004	80.41%
Homeless	924	1.95%
Mobility	47132	23.13%

Alief’s Approach to Combatting the Achievement Barriers Associated with Students from Poverty

Our district follows a comprehensive approach to maximizing student potential predicated on a unique combination of the following factors: 1) Staffing/Professional Development; 2) Quality First-line Instruction; 3) Individualized Campus Supports and Interventions; 4) Parent and Family Engagement and 5) Effective Agency Partnerships to Address Social-Emotional Needs.

Staffing/Professional Development

Alief works to hire effective instructional staff at all of our campuses. Interview processes are centered on questioning practices that help us to select the best staff to meet the needs of our student population. Given the high percentage of limited English proficient (LEP) students in our district, all new teachers are expected to have an ESL certification or obtain one within the first two years of being hired. All new teachers attend the Alief University, which is an academy for teachers new to Alief. They are trained in 3 strands: Meaningful Work, Meaningful Relationships and Technology. This ensures that they understand how to support the district’s vision and mission regarding educating the whole child and learning strategies to support struggling students. Professional development is offered year round by all departments, with sessions tailored to support staff in meeting student needs. All staff is required to obtain a specified number of professional development hours each year.

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Quality First Line Instruction and Program Supports

Alief provides an array of campus support staff to support the additional performance challenges that campuses face in educating economically disadvantaged youth. We employ a system of checks and balances to assist campuses in examining the outcomes of the instructional practices, interventions and curriculum alignment in hopes of ensuring that high standards are set for all students. All instructional decisions are centered on the individualized needs of the students we service. We offer a variety of instructional programs to support our Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and our special education students. To enhance instruction for our students, we:

- Utilize Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which focuses on vocabulary rich visual and experiential learning activities based on concepts linked to the student's background knowledge and scaffolding techniques. All elementary and intermediate teachers are trained in SIOP. Training for ESL certification is provided in the district to support general education teachers with obtaining their ESL certification.
- Utilize a variety of on-line resources, i.e., Imagine Learning, ESL Reading Smart, I-Station, Read 180, I-Ready Math, Think-Through Math, and Unique Learning, to support first-line instruction.
- Maximize special education student access to the general curriculum by fostering an inclusive model. By following this practice, we are able to neutralize disabilities so that our student can make gains in areas where they have deficits.
- Incorporate AVID strategies for instruction of students in grades 5 through 12 across the district.

Individualized Campus Support and Interventions

One of the factors that set Alief apart from other districts is the level of supports and interventions that we put in place to assist campuses with meeting the needs of students. We provide a continuum of differentiated instructional supports for students. The instruction department has developed an accountability process which requires that campuses assess student performance by demographic sub-populations to ensure that all students are achieving at the same level academically. The process is founded on the concept of continuous improvement, prioritizing to provide additional supports in critical low-performing areas. We utilize Inova to tailor our interventions to meet the specific individual needs of students in an effort to be proactive and not waste time and resources promoting strategies that may not meet a student's needs.

Support personnel are crucial in providing the necessary support to campus staff. All campuses have instructional specialists in core content areas and instructional coordinators at the district level to oversee the efficiency, progress and effectiveness of the program. We follow the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model to share and evaluate student work, assess student performance by department, and develop plans of action to increase student achievement.

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We also employ School Improvement Specialists to work as interventionists and analyze the data on an on-going basis in order to provide real-time feedback on performance. They develop instructional materials and provide training and instructional support to campuses to ensure that improvement plans are implemented with fidelity. For students who face challenges with meeting instructional performance goals, we use various forms of remediation; such as, focus group instruction, tutorials, re-teaching, mentors and various on-line resources for both home and school to support student growth.

We begin developing the school-to future connection early for our students so that they know about the opportunities that are available to foster a sense of hope for success. For our students who desire to go directly into the workforce after graduation, we consistently work to increase our career and technical offerings to make it easier for students to graduate with a certification or license that will lead to increased opportunities for higher wage job opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. We also offer early college high school opportunities, providing students with an opportunity to obtain an associate's degree upon graduating from high school, at no cost to the student or family. Dual credit is an additional opportunity to obtain college credit from the partnering community college at no cost to the student or family. These programs keep students engaged and moving towards accomplishing their goals.

Parent and Family Engagement

Including families in the educational process is a process that is embraced across our district. We have created Parent Liaison positions in conjunction with the development of parent centers on each of the campuses. During the 2016-2017 school year, Alief staff and families celebrated the following Family and Community Engagement (FACE) accomplishments:

- 70% of the Alief student population had at least one family member engage with their campus.
- 462 family events occurred throughout the district
- 2,520 family and community members volunteered in our Alief schools
- 1,701 family events occurred throughout the district
- 34,265 family members visited our campuses
- 1,787 families attended Family Center Grand Openings
- 9,857 families attended Open House, including 943 families of high school students
- 712 families, staff, volunteers and children attended Alief Family University

Alief Family Centers are open four days a week at each campus and offer classes which equip our families and enrich the academic success of our students. Classes include but are not limited to: family health & wellness, Pre-K Jumpstart Program, ESL & GED assistance, academic homework connections and parenting courses. One of the most important aspects offered through family engagement is the parent development sessions, which help our parents better understand what is necessary to raise happy, healthy, and productive children. Family Liaisons work to facilitate the bridge between parents and the community. Alief as a district builds a strong bridge with its community through community outreach events including Alief Proud Day, Alief's Annual Family U Conference, and campus community

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walks throughout the year. Over 100 families and community members serve on campus Families Actively and Meaningfully Engaged (FAME) Committees, Alief's School Health Advisory Committee, Alief's District of Innovation Committee, Alief's Homeless Coalition, and other district-wide committees.

Effective Agency Partnerships to Address Social-Emotional Needs

One of the most important factors leading to the success of impoverished students in school is providing a robust physical, social, and emotional, health-oriented support system to address the needs of our students. To combat the concerns related to school readiness, we offer Pre-K instruction at all of our elementary campuses as a form of early intervention and bridging the achievement gap, from which many children have difficulty recovering. We have also begun partnering with community daycares to include them in weekend staff development sessions to enhance their knowledge of student learning strategies. We partner with the Memorial Herman Health Care System who has built a facility in a centralized site near our largest campuses, to provide free health care opportunities for students. This diminishes concerns with absences due to lack of funds and transportation to see a doctor, and increases the percentage of time that students are exposed to direct instruction. We provide dental services and eye care services for students on our elementary campuses. We have equipped our physical education programs with equipment to enhance the quality of physical activity for students. Although discontinued by the state, we have continued to offer health courses to expose them to the necessary information to understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle, as well as understand the effects of engaging in at-risk behavior.

We offer numerous trainings in the area of social-emotional well-being to both staff and parents, to build capacity and promote a proactive approach to mental health. Although we have counselors on all of our campuses, to ensure that we provide exceptional service to our students, we partner with numerous agencies on a full-time, part-time, and intermittent basis, who work directly with students and families to meet their social and emotional needs. Some of our partners include:

- Communities in Schools: Housed on most of the campuses in Alief, CIS identifies and mobilizes existing community resources and fosters cooperative partnerships for the benefit of students and families
- Community Youth Services: 3 CYS Representatives (one for each of the district-area regions), provides social services and casework services to connect students to necessary and immediate outside resources
- MHMRA: Provides long-term counseling services for high risk students at the high school level
- Harris County Hospital District: Provides a Mental Health Liaison to service two of our most at-risk campuses

We also have social workers to support our homeless students and families with transitioning into the school system and getting the needed resources to live and overcome the challenges that impact their ability to be successful in school.

In Alief, we know the challenges that our students and families face, and we know that if we do not provide for the deficit areas in their lives, student learning will not occur at the rate that is necessary for our students to succeed. We face these barriers on a daily basis, and act as partners with the families we service to ensure successful outcomes for

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our students. We continually examine the systems that we have in place to enhance or refine our programs, practices, and services. Our ultimate goal is to take a comprehensive approach to “Preparing our students for tomorrow, while caring for them today.”