



Aldine Independent School District

Overview of the District

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size):	73
Number of Schools:	66
Number of Students:	56,292
Number of Teachers:	3,616
Annual Budget:	\$372 million

Superintendent: Nadine Kujawa was appointed in 2001. She served as Aldine's Deputy superintendent of human resources and instruction for five years prior to appointment as superintendent.

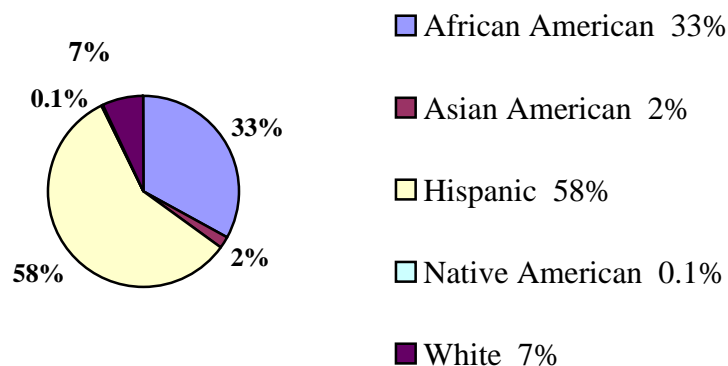
Governance: Elected Board. Seven members elected for three-year terms.

Teacher Unions: American Federation of Teachers, Texas and Texas State Teachers Association, National Education Association.

Student Characteristics

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price School Lunch:	76%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	25%
Graduation Rate (based on Manhattan Institute methodology):	61%

Student Demographics



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Meeting Federal No Child Left Behind Requirements

- ✓ In 2004, 100% of Aldine's schools met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets as identified by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires that schools meet performance targets for students in all significant subgroups (e.g. ethnicity, income, language, and disability).

Consistent High Performance in Reading and Math while Reducing Achievement Gaps across Ethnic and Income Groups

- ✓ Aldine is a consistent high performer (2001-2004) among demographically similar districts in Texas. Using The Broad Prize methodology, Aldine outperformed similar districts in Texas in six of six areas (elementary, middle and high school; reading and math). This is Aldine's second year as a Broad Prize Finalist.
- ✓ Aldine has ethnic and income achievement gaps that are smaller than the Texas average for both reading and math.
- ✓ Compared to the other four Broad Prize finalists, Aldine has the lowest external gap (the gap between the district's disadvantaged group and the state's advantaged group) for all groups in reading, as well as for low-income and Hispanic students in math.

Graduation Rates

- ✓ Aldine's current graduation rate is 61% (based on the Manhattan Institute methodology), and has improved significantly (nine percentage points) over the past four years. Aldine has also made significant gains in closing the gap in graduation rates for both African-American (nine percentage points) and Hispanic (four percentage points) students when compared to their White counterparts.

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Curriculum and Academic Goals

- ✓ District benchmarks are developed from state standards as well as national standards when available. The benchmarks clearly articulate the objectives of each standard to provide greater specificity to teachers. Benchmark assessments are developed and mandated by the district.
- ✓ District instructional calendars are created for each core academic subject and contain specific instructional sequencing that accelerates instruction and ensures uniform implementation of the curriculum. Calendars are broken into two- or three-week increments that are followed by common assessments developed by the schools.
- ✓ Aldine's curriculum (benchmarks, instructional calendars, model lessons, and assessments) is created by vertical teams of teachers led by program directors in every academic subject. These teams use data to drive curriculum development, sequencing, and revision. Regular meetings between Pre-K through 12th-grade "bridge builder" teams closely monitor grade-level transitions to ensure there are no sequential gaps between grades.

- ✓ Schools coordinate instructional timelines and activities during collaborative planning times so daily warm-ups, lesson plans, practice and review exercises, and homework are consistent across classrooms.

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

- ✓ The majority of principal positions are filled with internal candidates. The district requires all new principals and assistant principals to attend training academies. All principals receive extensive, focused professional development as well as monthly opportunities to meet and collaborate.
- ✓ Aldine retains high-performing principals by offering some of the highest salaries in Texas as well as continuous support in the form of training opportunities, mentors, and direct supervision by area superintendents. Principals also have the opportunity to meet frequently with their peers from other schools.
- ✓ Certified teachers are recruited extensively through partnerships with universities across the nation, weekend interviews targeting transfer teachers from other districts, and above-average compensation packages and stipends for hard-to-fill positions. The district attends nearly 200 job fairs where recruiters are authorized to offer jobs to strong candidates. Aldine has also begun to supplement their teacher pool with “grow-your-own programs” that target bilingual paraprofessionals and students interested in becoming teachers.
- ✓ Aldine retains teachers through above-average teacher salaries, attractive compensation packages, numerous professional development opportunities, and timely instructional support. Personnel such as mentors, instructional specialists, principals, and grade level/department chairs add another dimension of support to facilitate retention.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- ✓ While Aldine does not mandate that their schools use particular programs, the district does mandate that any programs that are used must be implemented completely. Therefore, principals and school staff have the autonomy to select programs suited to their needs as determined by student achievement scores, benchmark results, and teacher input. Consequently, Aldine has adopted the philosophy that, “results, not programs, are mandated.”
- ✓ Program directors review program implementation at schools and provide feedback to the district on the progress of each program. When they see a weakness, they provide schools with extra funding and/or support for programs or other initiatives (i.e. professional development, extended time for instruction or planning, etc.) to support improvement.
- ✓ Classroom instruction is continually monitored by district and school administrators looking for evidence of high quality teaching and learning. Principals review lesson plans regularly to determine if standards are being appropriately addressed and follow up their reviews with frequent classroom observations.

- ✓ Teachers receive support through instructional specialists housed onsite at the school. Teachers also receive support from their peers through shared planning times with grade-level and vertical teams (same subject across grade levels). The district and the schools have made a concerted effort to maintain the sanctity of collaborative planning times to ensure the alignment of the curriculum and the sharing of best practices.

Use of Data

- ✓ The district uses a custom-designed TRIAND data system for administrators and teachers to review and disaggregate data. Principals and teachers can access all results from state assessments, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and non-assessment data for their students. To maximize effectiveness, every teacher is required to upload his or her classroom data into this system.
- ✓ District-mandated and district-developed benchmark assessments are given every nine weeks in all core areas. In addition to district level assessments, schools have developed common assessments in all grades and subjects that are given as frequently as every two to three weeks.
- ✓ Data from TRIAND and other sources is monitored quarterly through balanced scorecards to ensure that goals are being met within the district, vertical teams, schools, and in some instances classrooms. Scorecards for every school are reviewed by area superintendents and collapsed into a vertical cluster scorecard for the superintendent's review.
- ✓ Teachers are taught how to analyze and use data to plan instruction for individual students. Teams of teachers meet frequently to identify and discuss specific instructional strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ In addition to monitoring data, Aldine frequently monitors classroom activities through observations and walk-throughs. Teachers are routinely observed by principals, department chairs, and their peers. Area superintendents and program chairs also spend time monitoring instruction in schools and classrooms.

Interventions and Adjustments

- ✓ District initiatives and interventions are selected through a systematic "Root Cause" analysis using Larry Lezotte's work from Assembly Required. Stakeholders from all levels of the system are involved in this process and work together by backward mapping through the data to pinpoint deficiencies. Some recent initiatives include extending mandated reading time across the district and moving the disbursement of class size reduction grants from second- to fifth-grade.

- ✓ The district sends an intervention team of program directors to low-performing schools to help build and implement specific improvement plans. The interventions may include additional staff development and planning time, extended day programs for students, additional instructional materials or programs, and/or specialists in specific subjects or skills. Because of the district's vertical team structure, low-performing schools also have the benefit of working with an area superintendent who provides assistance and support to the principals.
- ✓ Individual plans are created for struggling students based on specific needs or objectives missed on assessments. Interventions include extended-day, week, or year instruction; night and virtual schools; tutoring; double-block scheduling; remediation courses; learning labs; and assistance by skills specialists.

Stability of Leadership

- ✓ Nadine Kujawa is currently in her fifth year as superintendent of Aldine Independent School District (AISD) after previously serving for five years in the position of Deputy Superintendent of Human Resources and Instruction. A graduate of Aldine High School, Mrs. Kujawa has spent all 40 years of her career in Aldine.

Other Factors

- ✓ By making its state-of-the-art athletics and performing arts center available for extracurricular activities, the district has fostered relationships with many different groups in the community to gain financial and leadership support for district improvements. The district has also forged significant partnerships with the community to positively impact the quality of life of their students. For example, Aldine participated in the Greater Greenspoint Redevelopment Authority's effort to eliminate 455 dangerous and dilapidated apartment units, which cleared the way for a much needed elementary school. Aldine also has established a partnership with North Harris Community College to make college more accessible for students.
- ✓ The district and the schools reach out to keep parents actively involved by maintaining an open door policy and recruiting parents to serve on many district and school decision-making committees. Aldine also works to establish strong communication lines through newsletters (printed in different languages), emails, open meetings, and a special website that allows parents to access their child's data and homework assignments. In addition to these activities, Aldine makes resources available to parents in order for them to advance their own skills.