



HISPANIC/LATINO QUALITY OF LIFE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20250722-005

Support for Academia Cuauhtli Programming and Expansion

Date: July 22, 2025

Subject: FY26 Budget Recommendations

Motioned By: Commissioner Perales

Seconded By: Commissioner Silva

Recommendation

The City of Austin needs to ensure equitable funding regarding youth recreational and educational programs. Residents have expressed continued concerns regarding the lack of culturally and linguistically research-based services for children and youth. We need to continue to sustain and expand cultural and multilingual programming for Austin students.

Description of Recommendation to Council

- Allocate \$106,000 for Academia Cuauhtli's culturally and linguistically diverse arts programs; and
- Allocate \$80,000 to create a full-time Culture and Arts Education Supervisor.

Rationale

There is a lack of places where youth can go to connect with their culture and heritage while simultaneously being provided academic support and life skills. Academia Cuauhtli is a free culture and language revitalization academy for school children and their parents. They use a curriculum focused on Indigeneity, social justice, Tejano history, traditional arts, and *danza Mexica*. The program serves working class, mostly Mexican, immigrant communities whose children attend schools within Austin Independent School District (AISD). The program embraces Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center's (ESB- MACC) mission of collaborative engagement in service to our communities. Academia Cuauhtli also fulfills its mission through teacher preparation and mentorship by creating teacher support networks, hosting professional training workshops and conferences.

The Bilingual Cultural Revitalization Saturday Academy offers ethnic studies and *Danza Mexica* instruction to AISD third- to fifth-graders at no cost, including breakfast and transportation. They serve an average of 200 students, 70 public school teachers, and 10 graduate students per year.

The Saturday school runs from September through May. Academia Cuauhtli also has a summer STREAM Program in June and July. The interdisciplinary summer program integrates science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math with cultural learning. Additionally, a collaborative team conducts qualitative and quantitative research to document their programs' impacts and to inform their practices.

Teacher professional development is ongoing and led by university faculty, and it is tailored for Latinx and Indigenous educators. The professional development program runs from September through August. Academia Cuauhtli also has a transnational teacher preparation initiative (La Colaborativa) that bridges educators in Mexico and the U.S., and focuses on bilingual and culturally responsive pedagogy. Nuestro Grupo is a community-based collective of teachers, parents, and scholars that meet weekly to coordinate year-round programming. They meet from September through May. Academia Cuauhtli seeks a Culture and Arts Education Supervisor to direct, provide strategic leadership, organizational development, and oversight of all aspects of the program. The supervisor will play a pivotal role in ensuring sustainability, growth, and program excellence. The supervisor will serve as the public face of Nuestro Grupo.

Overall, Academia Cuauhtli has supported over 800 students, trained over 250 teachers, and generated more than 18 original curricular units. They have also helped parents access resources during the pandemic and created leadership opportunities for youth. This has also become a pathway to master's and doctoral degrees in educational careers and the University of Texas at Austin with whom they are partnered. Academia Cuauhtli is in an excellent position to continue to help Latino/a/x students, parents, and educators in our community.

Vote: 8-0

For: Chair Afifi, Commissioners Castañeda, Galvan, Moya Fábregas, Peña, Perales, Ruiz, and Silva.

Against: N/A

Abstain: N/A

Absent: Vice Chair Ramos and Commissioner Jackson

Attest:

Christi Vitela
Staff Liaison