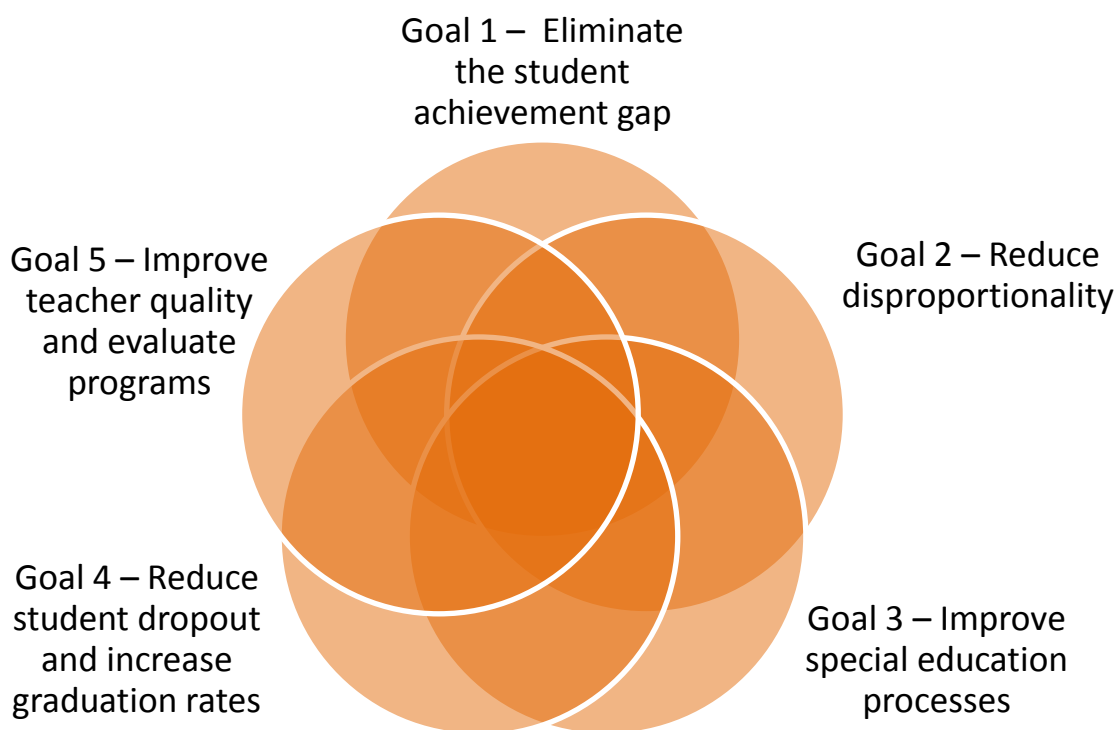Austin Independent School District
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

ARRA IDEA EVALUATION
2009–2011

Goal 1 – Eliminate the student achievement gap

Goal 5 – Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs

Goal 2 – Reduce disproportionality

Goal 4 – Reduce student dropout and increase graduation rates

Goal 3 – Improve special education processes

Austin Independent School District
Department of Special Education

Vision

AISD will be nationally recognized for providing all students who receive special education services with a high quality educational experience that promotes their independence and individual success.

Mission

The Department of Special Education exists to design and deliver quality supports to students, educators, families, and the community, for the success of students with disabilities.

Core Values

The core values of the Department of Special Education guide us as we take the opportunity to do meaningful work for children, which encourages hope, support, joy, passion, and lifelong learning.

KIDS
RELATIONSHIPS
RESPONSE TO A CALLING
GRATIFICATION
HELPING
JOY IN WORK
COMMUNICATION
COURAGE

The work of the Department of Special Education is conducted with care, integrity, fairness, patience, and respect for everyone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Austin Independent School District (AISD) received $17.3 million for initiatives from 2009 through 2011 under the federal grant American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA). AISD invited community partners, school staff, parents, and representatives from nonprofit organizations in central Texas to participate in ARRA IDEA planning during Spring 2009. This input, along with a data review and the guidance of AISD's board of trustees, superintendent, and leadership staff, directed the district's use of these funds. Approximately $16.4 million[1] was reserved to support approximately 25 projects that targeted one or more of the following goals:

1. Eliminate the student achievement gap
2. Reduce disproportional representation of special education students, especially minority students
3. Improve special education processes
4. Reduce student dropout and increase graduation rates
5. Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs

From Fall 2009 through Fall 2011, the grant activities benefited a duplicated count of more than 36,919 students, 10,373 staff, and 23,931 family members.[2] Throughout the grant, the grant leadership team used project management strategies to ensure that all projects were monitored regularly on a rotating basis, providing transparency, accountability, and timely updates on project successes and challenges. Project leadership meetings allowed project staff to share updates across project teams and to make requests for guidance or support, when needed. Monthly financial reports were provided to project leaders. An all-grant meeting for project team leaders occurred twice per school year. Grant evaluation summary reports for all projects were published twice annually to provide grant updates to AISD and other interested stakeholders. In addition, a community forum was held in December 2010 to provide a grant overview.

Sustainability efforts for all project teams were planned in the second year of the grant. The ARRA IDEA grant was meant to be a one-time stimulus for school districts to use in improving education for students served in special education. Thus, every project team developed a sustainability plan that described how its project's activities would extend beyond the end of the grant funding period to benefit AISD students, staff, and families. This report documents the legacy of what the ARRA IDEA grant provided to the AISD community

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[1] Remaining ARRA IDEA funds were designated specifically for special education pre-school services.
[2] It is possible that students, staff, and family members could have benefited from more than one project.

by summarizing outcomes for each of the projects funded through the grant, including successes, challenges, and sustainability efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Austin Independent School District (AISD) received more than $17 million for initiatives from 2009–2010 through 2010–2011 under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA).[3] The guiding principles for ARRA IDEA are as follows:

- Spend funds quickly to save and create jobs
- Improve student achievement through school improvement and reform
- Ensure transparency, reporting, and accountability
- Invest one-time ARRA funds thoughtfully to minimize the "funding cliff"

AISD invited community partners, school staff, parents, and representatives from nonprofit organizations in central Texas to participate in ARRA IDEA planning during Spring 2009. This input, along with a data review and the guidance of the district's board of trustees, the superintendent, and AISD leadership staff, directed the district's use of $17.3 million in ARRA IDEA funds. Approximately $16.4 million was used for approximately 25 projects that targeted one or more of the following five goals, which align with ARRA IDEA's guiding principles.

For goal 1 (eliminate the student achievement gap), several projects helped to reduce and eliminate the achievement gap for AISD's special education students. Examples of these activities included the following:

- Providing critical training and classroom instruction modeling of best practices to teachers
- Ensuring students with autism or significant cognitive disabilities are fully supported in the classroom through curriculum alignment and improved instructional practices
- Providing teacher training, instructional materials, and intensive instructional interventions to students

Overview of AISD ARRA IDEA

In 2009, AISD received more than $17 million in federal stimulus funds to support the education of special education students over a 2-year period through the ARRA IDEA grant. All grant projects were grouped according to the following goals:

Goal 1
Eliminate the student achievement gap

Goal 2
Reduce disproportionality

Goal 3
Improve special education processes

Goal 4
Reduce student dropout and increase graduation rates

Goal 5
Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs

Over the course of 2 years, many students, staff, and family members benefitted from activities, services, and materials funded through ARRA IDEA. Appendix A provides a brief listing of all projects and the numbers of people who benefitted from each.

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[3] For more information, go to http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/idea.html

who are struggling in reading and mathematics (math)

- Increasing vocational opportunities for students with disabilities
- Providing pre-literacy in-home family training for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Ensuring students with disabilities receive specialized services at or close to their home campus

For goal 2 (reduce disproportionality; i.e., of special education students, especially minority students):

- One project focused on reducing the numbers of students who were referred to special education (e.g., early intervention services [EIS]), and
- One project focused on reducing the overrepresentation of certain student groups (e.g., minorities) in special education and in discipline referrals (e.g., expansion of the district's positive student behavior support efforts).

For goal 3 (improve special education processes), six projects focused on improving AISD's special education systems, procedures, and processes. Examples of these projects included the following:

- Providing schools with an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) facilitation team
- Providing school staff with a useful and streamlined electronic special education student information data system
- Enhancing outreach to Spanish-speaking families by training parents about the district's special education processes (e.g., ARD)
- Providing schools with special education parent liaisons and individual education plan (IEP) facilitators
- Ensuring the district provides timely evaluation of children ages 3 through 5 years for possible eligibility for special education services
- Improving district and campus compliance with federal and state special education regulations

For goal 4 (reduce dropout and increase graduation rates), two district projects funded by ARRA IDEA provided services to special education students that focused on the following:

- Supporting course credit recovery at specific high-needs schools for high school students who dropped out of school and returned
- Providing prescriptive skill-based instruction through the use of computer technology to help special education students who were struggling in a core subject area (e.g., reading or math)

For goal 5 (improve teacher quality and evaluating programs), five projects provided the following services:

- Increasing school staff's capacity to support special education students' access to the general curriculum

- Creating a web-based IEP monitoring system for teachers and administrators
- Supporting staff to obtain dual certification and improve Spanish-language proficiency for speech language pathologists (SLPs)
- Providing program evaluation for all ARRA IDEA projects to ensure accountability through data gathering and reporting on measurable outcomes
- Providing professional development opportunities for effective practices (this project was incorporated into other existing ARRA IDEA projects)

FISCAL OUTCOMES

ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENDITURES

AISD received $17.3 million in ARRA IDEA funds for the 2-year period July 2009 through September 2011, and of this amount, $16.4 million was set aside for 25 ARRA IDEA projects. Of the total allocation (see Figure 1), more than $16 million had been expended by November 1, 2011 on these projects. Approximately $1.1 million was used to replace salary costs for some positions from the district's state special education funds and cover some costs of materials and services, thus allowing for a future savings in roll-forward dollars for the next school year. The majority of project expenditures (71%) supported payroll, with 13% for materials and supplies, 8% for professional and contracted services, 3% for other operating costs, 2% for capital outlay, and 3% for indirect costs. Total grant expenditures will be available from Texas Education Agency (TEA) after the grant ends, when all financial transactions have been finalized. A summary of the data from the required quarterly reports submitted by AISD to TEA during the grant can be found in Appendix B. If calculating cost per person served by the total grant over the 2-year period, and using the duplicated counts across the 25 projects (as summarized in Appendix A), the average cost per person served is estimated to be $208.

Figure 1. ARRA IDEA Estimated Expenditures, by Category, 2009 Through 2011
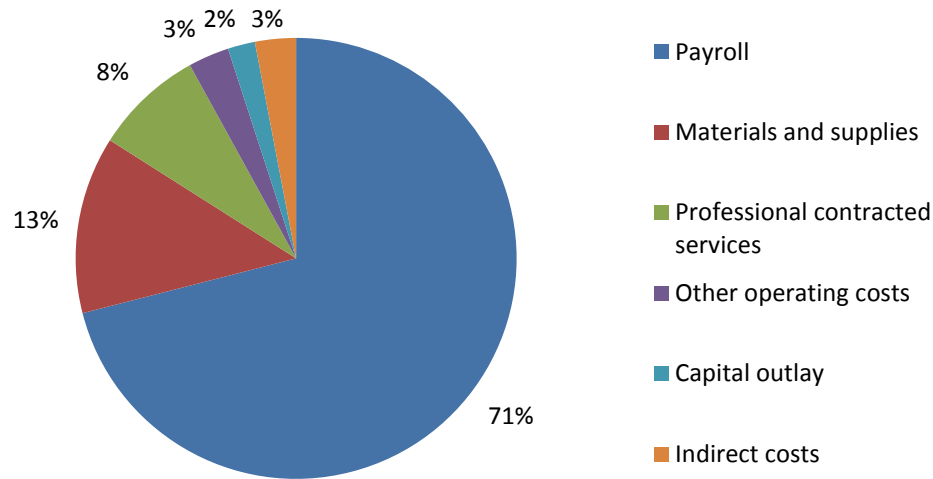
Source. AISD financial records as of November 1, 2011

Examining expenditures by function, the majority of expenses on the projects were for direct instruction in schools (68%), with other expenditures going toward curriculum and instruction staff development (12%), instructional and school leadership (3%), student support services (10%), data processing services (2%), parent and community services (2%), and indirect costs (3%).

Each project had an original allocation beginning July 2009. During the first fiscal year of the grant, some projects changed their targeted activities, and one project's funds were absorbed into other related projects. During the 2 years of the grant, monthly financial summary reports were provided to project teams for review of current allocations and expenditures. In year 2 of the grant, the Department of Special Education management team asked each project team leader to define precisely his or her project's projected financial needs for the remaining grant period. This enabled some reallocation of available funds to those projects that may not have had enough in their original allocation. Also toward the middle of the second year of the grant, TEA approved AISD's reallocation of some remaining ARRA IDEA funds to cover a portion of some locally or state-funded special education staff salaries and other special education planned expenditures so all ARRA IDEA funds could be used. This also allowed AISD to roll forward some federal special education funds to the next school year, when ARRA funds would no longer be available. A summary of original allocations and estimated final expenditures (as of November 1, 2011), by project, can be found in Appendix A.

JOBS SAVED AND CREATED

One of the main goals of the ARRA IDEA grant was to provide a one-time stimulus for jobs being saved or created to help promote special education students' educational growth.

Quarterly, each Texas school district that received ARRA IDEA funds was required to report to TEA about the numbers of jobs saved and created. At the beginning of the 2-year grant, steady growth was reported in the number of these jobs, starting at 45 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and increasing to 100 FTEs by the end of June 2010. However, due to some challenges in hiring or in project changes, the maximum number of jobs saved or created did not occur until the grant's second year (see Appendix B). The maximum number of FTEs saved or created by the grant totaled 298.8, and the average number of FTEs saved or created during the 2-year grant was 102. Because some positions were partially funded by the grant, the number of staff (*n* = 363) whose salaries were supported by the grant exceeded the number of FTEs during the entire grant period. Also contributing to this total, TEA allowed AISD to increase the numbers of jobs saved and created toward the end of the grant's second year by allowing the replacement of other state funds designated for special education salaries with ARRA IDEA funds, thereby saving the district money that could be rolled forward to meet budget needs for the coming school year.

GRANT PROCESSES

AISD staff had several processes in place throughout the ARRA IDEA grant to support effective project management, transparency, and accountability for project outcomes. From the beginning, the Department of Special Education grant leadership team and the grant's program evaluator collaborated in designing a project-based logic model that could be used in guiding the management and accountability for all grant project activities. The basic logic model approach used for each project identified goals and objectives; inputs and resources (e.g., funds, project team members); activities and targeted populations (e.g., people, schools, processes); and measurable outcomes (i.e., short term and long term). Each project had a team of people, whose membership comprised district and campus staff and community representatives, who guided decisions about the project; carried out project activities; and had the responsibility for gathering data, monitoring, and reporting project results on a regular basis. Each team used project tracking documents for recording team meeting minutes, project staffing and budgeting plans, and updates about project activity timelines and outcomes.

To encourage active and effective project management, sharing of information, and accountability, each team had its own regularly scheduled meetings. In addition, each team leader was responsible for reporting to the Department of Special Education's grant leadership team once every 6 to 8 weeks to provide progress updates about project activities as well as bring any concerns or requests for assistance, if needed. The progress update meetings also provided an opportunity for all team leaders to share their successes and challenges with each other. Another effort to encourage sharing of information and accountability for grant

activities was made possible through an electronic shared network server on which all team documents could be stored, viewed, and shared at meetings.

Twice annually, the grant's program evaluation staff gathered data from each project manager about project implementation status; numbers of people served (e.g., students, staff, and families); campuses where the project was being implemented; activities completed; project accomplishments; and challenges. In year 2 of the grant, each project also had to report on its project's sustainability plan for after the grant funds ended. In some cases, the program evaluation staff helped the project teams gather and summarize their data (e.g., creating, administering, and analyzing survey results; querying and analyzing district students' or staff's records; and writing reports). Information from these periodic data collections was summarized in written reports and shared with grant staff and posted to the district's website for public view (e.g., the ARRA IDEA grant has its own district web page[4]). The district's Finance Department and Department of Special Education staffs collaborated in preparing and submitting required quarterly reports to TEA about expenditures and jobs saved and created.

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[4] See the AISD ARRA IDEA web page at http://www.austinisd.org/inside/accountability/arra/sped-idea.phtml

RESULTS BY PROJECT

This section of the report presents each grant project and describes its goals and objectives, activities, numbers served, products created (if relevant), other results relevant to the project, successes and challenges, and sustainability plans. The projects are presented according to one of the five major grant goals; however, many projects addressed more than one goal. Most results are summarized for the 2010–2011 school year, but in some cases, relevant information is included from the 2009–2010 school year. Appendix A contains a summary of all projects' allocations, expenditures, and numbers of people served for the grant period July 2009 to September 2011.

Goal 1. Eliminate the Student Achievement Gap

PROJECT: MODEL INCLUSION

The goal of this project involved support and training provided to staff from AISD campuses regarding classroom instructional inclusion supports as a means of improving inclusion opportunities for every student with disabilities. Additionally, this project aimed to improve teacher practices so every student with disabilities could meaningfully participate in the curriculum for the grade in which he or she was enrolled. Thus, this project was related to goal 1 (eliminate the achievement gap) and goal 5 (improve teacher quality) of the grant. This project's original 2-year allocation was $730,000, and this funding was used for the salaries of two inclusion specialists and an inclusion facilitator, as well as for contracted services, and substitute pay for teachers.

The project's successes included support and training provided by inclusion specialists to approximately 600 teaching staff from a total of 25 to 30 campuses. The challenges for the project included planning for how to maintain training and support opportunities without inclusion specialists (hired by the grant) and how to extend training benefits beyond the campus team members who attended the Model Inclusion Us+ events (see goal 5 project about access to the general curriculum).

Sustainability for this project's activities includes ongoing professional development activities completed online by staff in the following areas: differentiation, the role of the paraprofessional, accommodations and modifications, adequate yearly progress (AYP), collaborative teaching, culturally responsive instruction, models of support, and multi-level instruction. In addition, staff from the Department of Special Education monitor campus data to identify campuses that have staff who may need specific inclusion training related to least restrictive environment, over-representation of students with special needs being placed in

discipline settings, responsible scheduling, significant numbers of special education students taking modified state assessments, and students struggling with grade-level curriculum.

MULTIPLE PROJECTS: STUDENT READING AND MATH INTERVENTIONS

Several projects focused directly on improving students' reading and math performance through intensive instruction and intervention, including elimination of the achievement gap through use of innovative intervention practices and extended learning opportunities, Tier 3 reading instruction, and Garcia Middle School's response to intervention (RtI) computer-based program. These projects' original allocations were as follows: elimination of the achievement gap through campus-based interventions ($500,000) and extended learning opportunities ($750,000), Tier 3 reading instruction ($1,365,653), and Garcia Middle School's computer-based RtI ($201,000).

Elimination of the Achievement Gap and Extended Learning Opportunities

With a primary focus on improving special education students' academic achievement in reading and math (and thereby reducing the achievement gap between students in general education and those in special education), the efforts of these aligned projects were to support campuses with funding for student tutoring; purchases of materials, supplies, software, and computer-related equipment; and provision of professional development opportunities to campus staff for improving instruction. The expected outcomes from the project were to provide reading instruction professional development opportunities to teachers, and to see increased Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading and math participation and passing rates for special education students.

Based on campus reports during 2010–2011, approximately 1,294 students received some intervention, with 1,033 receiving reading tutoring, and 1,136 receiving math tutoring. In 2009–2010, a total of 749 students received some intervention, with 634 receiving reading tutoring, and 505 receiving math tutoring. Academic performance of special education students who received grant-funded tutoring was examined using TAKS reading and math passing rates. Figures 2 and 3 show results for TAKS subject areas and test versions over 2 years. It is highly likely that students receiving tutoring interventions may differ from one year to the next year. Results show higher percentages of tutored students passing TAKS in 2010–2011 than of similarly tutored students passing in 2009–2010, with one exception in TAKS reading version K.[5] In addition, higher percentages of tutored students than of all other special

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[5] TAKS 2010–2011 data included in this analysis were of several versions: accommodated (A), regular (K), and modified (M).

education students passed TAKS, with the exception of version K for each subject test (see Appendix C for more details).

Figure 2. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Percentages for Reading/English Language Arts (ELA), by Test Version, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, Among Eliminate the Gap (ETG) Tutored Special Education (SpEd) Students and All Other Tested Special Education Students
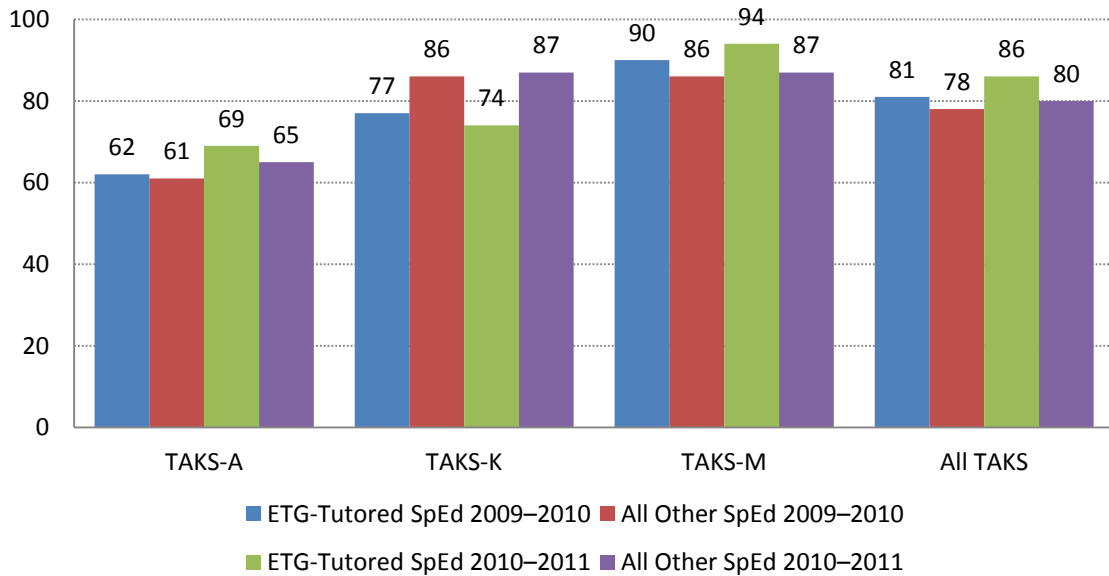
Source. AISD TAKS records

Figure 3. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Percentages for Math, by Test Version, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, Among Eliminate the Gap (ETG) Tutored Special Education (SpEd) Students and All Other Tested Special Education Students
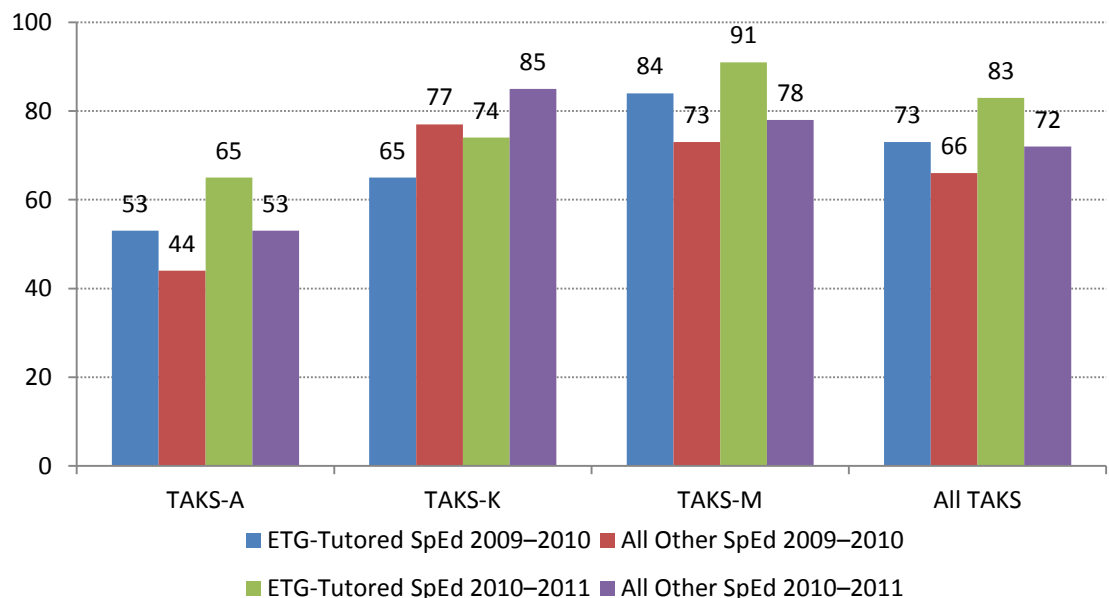
Source. AISD TAKS records

In August 2010, selected staff from AISD schools were invited to participate in a special education best practices survey or interview based on their special education students' TAKS 2009–2010 performance in reading/English language arts (ELA) and/or math, using the criteria of high numbers of students taking and passing the tests, and high numbers of students switching from the TAKS-M in 2008–2009 to another version of the test and passing it in 2009–2010. Survey and interview results showed that staff used some common best practices and resources to help students succeed. These results were summarized and shared with more than 100 staff from all campuses at a district-wide best practices session in September 2010. A summary report for the survey and interview results can be found at the AISD website.[6]

Challenges with this project involved provision of guidance for campuses, each dealing with unique students and instructional realities. Although some guidance was provided through the best practices summary report, which listed those materials and instructional practices associated with atypical assessment results, more support was needed. The report provided some foundational commonalities that were of clear value to campus staff, but how to use the report to determine the perfect blend of instructional materials and interventions for students was less than obvious and required campuses to make careful choices with their funds. An additional challenge involved the use of funds available to each campus. Some campuses reported they would have purchased particular instructional materials, but needed instead to support their ongoing after-hours review and re-teach efforts with students needing academic support.

In terms of sustainability, some campuses received resources and materials that can be used to support special education students who are struggling in reading and math. Currently, Department of Special Education staff work closely with district grant staff to create similar supplemental intervention opportunities to help eliminate the achievement gap for special education students in core academic areas.

Tier 3 Reading Instruction

This project's funds supported extra-duty pay and substitute pay for teachers, contracted services, supplies, and reading materials. The goal of this project was to identify and deliver research-based reading materials and programs most appropriate to meeting the needs of special education students who are struggling in reading and/or are taking TAKS M reading or ELA. Activities in this project included providing training to teachers in prescriptive reading strategies, and purchasing and distributing reading materials and programs to campuses to support appropriate reading instruction.

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[6] See the full report at http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_10-06_Special_Education_Successful_Practices_Survey_Results.pdf

Reading materials were distributed to 84 schools, and 82 teachers at 76 schools received specific training modules on improving students' reading and spelling skills (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, LETRS). Other teacher training was provided to 171 teachers for implementation and follow-up support for a series of reading improvement programs established at participating schools (e.g., Passport, Pasaporté, and Language!). These programs served 1,141 students who were struggling in reading during 2010–2011. Project staff received positive feedback from teachers about the program and materials being used. By the end of the 2010–2011 school year, participating students had shown improvements since the beginning of the year in several reading skill measures of accuracy and speed (e.g., phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and reading within connected text).

Available TAKS 2010 and 2011 reading and ELA results were examined for special education students with low reading skills who participated in Tier 3 reading interventions in 2010–2011 to see if their performance improved. As shown in Table 1, increases in percentages of students passing TAKS occurred from 2010 to 2011 for those students who participated in the Passport and Pasaporté programs, but a 3 percentage point drop occurred for those in the Language program.

Table 1. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) 2010 and 2011 Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) Performance for 2010–2011 Tier 3 Reading Intervention Participants

Intervention	Percentage passed 2010	Percentage passed 2011	Percentage point change
Language	81	78	- 3
Passport	75	89	14
Pasaporté	37	62	25

Source. AISD student records

Some students in Tier 3 interventions took reading or ELA TAKS version M in 2010 and switched to TAKS version A or K in 2011. Of those students, some were successful in passing 2011 TAKS version A or K; these included 23% of Language intervention students and 66% of Passport students (no Pasaporté students switched from version M in 2010 to versions A or K in 2011).

Table 2 provides a summary of average scale score growth on TAKS reading and ELA, comparing 2010 results with 2011 results for each intervention group. Gains in average scale score occurred for all groups, with the exception of the Pasaporté students who took TAKS version M.

Table 2. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) 2010 and 2011 Reading/ English Language Arts (ELA) Average Scale Scores for 2010–2011 Tier 3 Reading Intervention Participants

Intervention	Test version	Average scale score 2010	Average scale score 2011	Difference
Language	A or K	802	1059	257
Language	M	2188	2214	26
Passport	A or K	559	629	69
Passport	M	2216	2247	31
Pasaporté	A or K	517	540	24
Pasaporté	M	2089	2038	- 51

Source. AISD student TAKS records, ARRA IDEA project records
Note. If students took different test versions from 2010 to 2011, no comparison of scale score was possible because the scores were on different scales of measurement.

Project staff identified several challenges as well as possible solutions to those challenges. One challenge was a change in staff providing instruction from one year to the next. An attempt to address this issue was the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities about the materials and program strategies. In the future, professional development support will continue and electronic webinars will be used to provide ongoing support that is more convenient for teachers to access. Another challenge was inconsistent use of the electronic student progress monitoring system across all participating schools, thus making it difficult to gauge staffs' use, the fidelity of program implementation, and students' academic progress throughout the school year. One way to address this issue in the future is to inform campus leadership about the academic gains students can make when using the program and about the importance of using the electronic progress monitoring system.

For sustainability, all purchased reading materials are reusable, and additional materials that are consumable can be reordered, based on a campus needs assessment. Professional development opportunities will be available for schools that want to add the programs in the future, and refresher training sessions and ongoing support sessions will be provided for schools in which staffs implement the program.

Garcia RtI

Funds for this project supported the salary of a special education teacher and the partial salary of a teaching assistant, as well as supplies, computer-related equipment, and software. The goal of the ARRA IDEA RtI project at Garcia Middle School was focused on implementation of computer-based prescriptive instruction in math for students most at risk of failure (i.e., students who were up to two grade levels behind in math). The specific

outcomes targeted for the project were (a) to show students' gains in TAKS and district-developed benchmark assessments over a 2-year period and (b) to ensure no more than 8% of participating students would be admitted to special education services within the learning disability category. A computer lab, led by campus staff, was the setting in which 187 students were able to use specific technology software on computers to practice and improve math skills and knowledge. A flyer explaining the Garcia RtI program was created by staff. A core team of Garcia staff created a website that organizes online educational activities for students that was aligned with the state's Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Successes for this project included increases in the percentages of participating students passing TAKS math from 2009–2010 to 2010–2011. As shown in Figure 4, at the end of 2009–2010, the passing rates for participating students were 45% of 6th graders, 44% of 7th graders, and 52% of 8th graders. However, at the end of 2010–2011, 76% of 6th graders, 62% of 7th graders, and 81% of 8th graders passed TAKS math. Another positive outcome of this project was that no referrals to special education for learning disability were made for Garcia students in 2010–2011.

Figure 4. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Percentages for Mathematics, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, Among At-risk Garcia Middle School Students
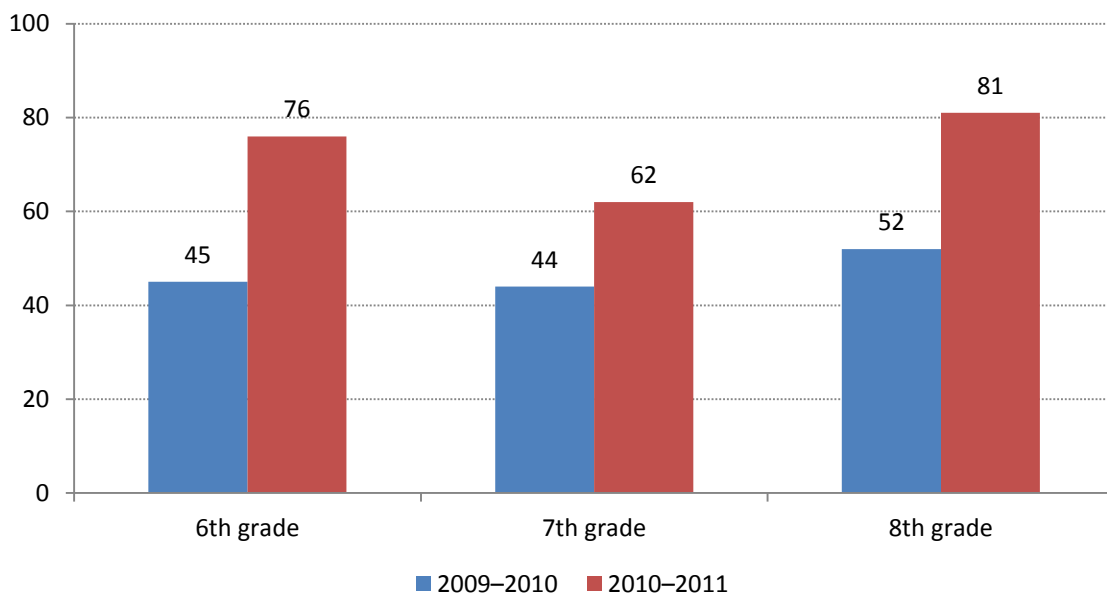
Source. AISD TAKS records

Challenges faced by the project included
- finding the appropriate technology software to use for math improvement that also would keep students interested in using the software, and

- planning and managing computer lab schedules in sync with the campus-wide calendar of activities (e.g., coordinating with TAKS preparation activities).

Sustainability for this project will be supported by the Garcia principal and staff because they coordinate computer lab activities with their school's master scheduling practices, and knowing the detailed academic needs of their students, thereby building in time for struggling students to spend on improving skills and knowledge.

PROJECT: SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

The goal of this project was to build the district's capacity to support students with autism spectrum disorders through several efforts: provision of professional development opportunities and a library of materials for use by staff and families; development of four campus-based Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) applied behavior analysis (ABA) training sites; and provision of in-home parent training for parents of students with autism. This project's original 2-year allocation was $752,000, and this funding was used for salaries and substitute pay for staff, as well as supplies, reading materials, and testing materials. Funding helped support the provision of professional development sessions to school staffs who work with students with autism. Funding also helped support the hiring of an expert in social skills development who provided training and support for campus-based Social Communication Resources and Services (SCORES) teachers.

More than 26 trainings were provided to AISD staff from 48 campuses during 2010–2011 on a variety of topics to support students with autism, including social skills instruction, ABA, behavior support, autism and the law, video modeling, reading strategies, technology use, trauma-centered intervention, and successful inclusion strategies. A scope and sequence of instructional materials for effective social skills instruction was developed and made available to teachers. A student behavior news blog was developed by district staff to inform teachers about available resources and training, provide free online training, and support teachers through collaboration and sharing of effective strategies. A library of more than 100 autism resource materials was created for use by AISD staff and parents, and is housed at Allan Elementary School.

At the beginning of the grant, students with autism were enrolled on 72 campuses that did not have additional staff trained in autism (e.g., SCORES teachers) and these students had to be transferred to a campus with trained staff to receive autism support services. Through the grant, these campus staff received materials and training about how to support students with autism by increasing students' social skills and self-regulation. This support enabled staff at these campuses to work successfully with their students with autism. In fact, by the end of the grant period, the percentage of students with autism who had to be transferred to other campuses to receive autism support services was reduced from 29% to 11%.

The four PPCD ABA training sites helped staff at those campuses with implementing early intervention strategies (e.g., helping students follow school routines, improve their receptive and expressive communication skills, and play appropriately with their peers). The PPCD teachers received ABA training so they could work more effectively with their students. Over time, the PPCD ABA pilot sites saw most of their PPCD students spending less time in one-on-one or small group instruction and more time (i.e., more than 90%) in regular inclusive classroom instruction with all students. Teachers reported an average increase of 80% in PPCD students' expressive language skills.

In-home parent training opportunities were provided by 76 trainers to 355 families of students with autism (from 84 campuses) to support consistency in students' skills from school to home. A database was created to track in-home training cases. District staff received training about how to conduct in-home training four times during the school year. Parents reported positive feedback about the trainings received (e.g., training met the needs of the family, trainers were well prepared). About half of the families had completed the training series by the end of the grant period, with a 90% success rate.

One challenge noted by the project manager was the limited time that staff were able to be away from their campuses to receive professional development opportunities. To address this challenge, the project helped pay for substitute teachers to cover the teachers' classes while they were in training, training was offered during the summer, the online blog was created for free resources that can be accessed at any time by staff, and the resource library at Allan Elementary School was established.

To sustain project efforts, online training modules were developed and made available through the behavior news blog and more than 100 materials were provided at the Allan Elementary resource library. In addition, the four pilot PPCD ABA campuses will continue to develop tools to support students with autism in the classroom and to provide model classrooms that can be visited by other PPCD teachers in the district. In-home parent training will be sustained through timely requests by the district's special education coordinators, who have identified families in need of this support.

PROJECT: STUDENT VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

This project's goals were two-fold: increase special education students' participation in career and technology education (CTE) programming (prior to the grant, no special education students participated in CTE), and increase special education students' participation in community-based vocational instruction (CBVI) internship activities. This project's original 2-year allocation was $369,000, and this funding was used for the salaries of a teacher and teacher assistants.

Over the 2-year grant period, both project goals were met successfully. For 2010–2011, 10 campuses participated, with 112 students and 15 staff served. Four staff trainings occurred, with 12 sessions, focusing on employment topics such as keys to gaining employment, transportation issues, and keeping a job. Project staff created a database of local business contact information that included businesses with which AISD had placed high school CBVI students for vocational experiences. This database can be used by AISD staff for future high school students' vocational placements. By the end of 2010–2011, CBVI students had participated in internships at 20 business sites, and two students had been offered employment as a result of having participated in an internship. In the academic CTE programming, nine students took CTE business information management (BIM) courses, and three high school students successfully completed a total of 15 office proficiency and assessment certifications.

Challenges faced by this project included gaining teacher buy-in at the campus level, helping teachers identify students who met internship readiness criteria, developing specific tasks at each internship site, scheduling student transportation for the CBVI activities, and increasing student and teacher participation in vocational and CTE programs.

Plans for sustainability of project efforts include the following: students may continue CTE programming at the district's Clifton Career Development School; AISD staff in the supported employment department will maintain contact with community businesses that have provided internship opportunities in the past (e.g., those in the database); and they will consult with teachers at the beginning of the school year to explore students' placement opportunities.

PROJECT: PRE-LITERACY IN-HOME TRAINING

AISD implemented a pre-literacy in-home training project with parents of selected students receiving services in the district's PPCD (i.e., for children ages 3 to 5 years). The project's goal, based on a collaborative model for empowering parents to be involved in the education of their children, was to provide parents with learning strategies to support their child's language development in natural environments (e.g., the home, neighborhood, and school). The project also provided materials for parents and their children to use at home, including books. The program was delivered by AISD reading specialists and some PPCD teachers, who provided weekly in-home trainings to parents. This project's original 2-year allocation was $636,000, and this funding was used for the salaries of special education reading specialists as well as for supplies and reproduction costs associated with providing training to families. In 2009–2010, as the program was being developed, the project was piloted at two schools and served 12 students and their families.

During 2010–2011, the project was implemented at nine elementary schools in 18 classrooms, providing services to 68 families, thereby benefitting the pre-literacy skills of 70 students. A total of 1,178 in-home training sessions (431 sessions with English-speaking families, 747 sessions with Spanish-speaking families) were completed during 2010–2011. The project specialists ensured collaboration with parents and teachers on students' goals for improvement during the year. In some situations, parents were connected with public services (e.g., the public library, to ensure access to books) or other social or academic support services (e.g., Easter Seals, YMCA, Coats for Kids, Blue Santa, Pan American Recreation Center, Any Baby Can, and Feria Para Aprender). In other cases, parents were connected with AISD services (e.g., Parenting with Love and Logic training, family and school support team [FASST] services, parent training about Satori alternatives to managing aggression [SAMA], school libraries, school counselors, campus parent support specialists, English as a second language classes).

> **Parent Comment About PPCD Pre-Literacy Project**:
>
> "I have learned several day-to-day ideas to work with my child on language skills. I appreciate that the ideas can be quickly incorporated into everyday life, so they are easy to do…. The one-on-one time has been so helpful to teach [my child] not only what concepts to learn but how to respond to

According to program staff, the most significant gain for students and parents was the use of dialogic reading, a style of reading that promotes language and emergent literacy skills in very young children. In this style, parents or other adults use questions and feedback to provide a dialogue between them and the child. At the end of the school year, when students' PPCD teachers were surveyed about the program's impact, 64% said they had observed students making language and literacy progress after receiving in-home training. Furthermore, almost half of teachers (48%) reported they had seen changes in parents' attitudes and beliefs about child development, and improved parent-teacher collaboration (43%) related to their children's progress and goals. However, about half of teachers also indicated they had not seen increased parent involvement in the classroom following participation in this program. One teacher spoke positively of the program: "[The student] is more interested in writing activities… repeats spelling of words and recognizes some letters! [The student] continues to enjoy books and sits for [reading] books longer." Another teacher reported that at the end of the school year, one student was going to be dismissed from PPCD services due to the significant growth the student made in both expressive and receptive language skills. Participating parents offered positive statements about the program, such as the examples presented in the text box below.

When parents were surveyed about the program, they reported increases in certain targeted behaviors promoting pre-literacy skills in families, as shown in Table 3. In addition, three-fourths of parents responding to the end-of-year survey felt the program had been very

helpful in supporting their child's pre-literacy skill development. Participating parents offered positive statements about the program (see examples in the text box on the following page).

Table 3. Parents' Responses About Pre-literacy Activities With Their Children, 2010–2011

Question		Beginning of year	End of year	Change
How often (never, rarely, sometimes, often) does your child like to be read to?				
	Often	40%	67%	+27
How often (never, rarely, sometimes, often) does your child look at books by himself/herself?				
	Often	37%	75%	+ 38
How often (never, rarely, sometimes, often) do you ask questions/discuss picture while reading to your child?				
	Often	49%	75%	+ 26
Approximately how many (0, 1–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16 or more) children's books do you have at home?				
	16 or more	36%	78%	+ 42
Approximately how many (0, 1–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16 or more) minutes do you spend reading with your child?				
	16 or more	29%	43%	+ 14
How many times a week (0, 1–2, 3–4, 5 or more) do you play with your child?				
	5 or more	51%	60%	+ 9
On a weekly basis, how often (0, 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10) do you do the following with your child?				
Sing songs or play rhyming words (9–10)		13%	18%	+ 5
Provide language opportunities in simple everyday activities (9–10)		12%	28%	+ 16
Utilize household materials already on hand for writing/playing activities (9–10)		7%	15%	+ 8
Provide writing/drawing supplies (9–10)		17%	37%	+ 20
Ask your child open-ended questions (9–10)		13%	40%	+ 27
Encourage your child to answer own questions (9–10)		20%	37%	+ 17
Do you read with your child (9–10)		19%	25%	+ 6

Source. AISD PPCD parent survey results

Examples of Parents' Comments About PPCD Pre-literacy Project

"Before this program, my child was always screaming and crying when [needing] something. In this program, the reading specialist showed my child and I how to make a communication book. This helps me and my child to communicate better."

"With all the strategies you gave I taught my [child] many things…. I learned how to work with [my child] and help [my child] understand; help [my child] enjoy reading, drawings, and numbers. Thank you for all the help you gave us."

The pre-literacy project produced highly individualized materials and activities to link students' goals, students' needs and interests, and parents' preferences to thematic units being taught at school. These activities were developed to support lesson plans for each in-home training session, and materials were left in the homes to extend ongoing learning for families. To support sustainability, these activities have been compiled into a set of in-home activity lessons for use by teachers and parents in the future.

PROJECT: DECENTRALIZATION

The decentralization project focused efforts on ensuring students with disabilities received services at the school they attended or at a school within their vertical team of schools, rather than have to travel to another school to receive specialized services.[7] Having students remain on their own campus increased the school's capacity to provide more inclusive instruction to students, with a full spectrum of special education service options, supported by the benefits of skilled personnel, materials, and training resources. As part of the project, training opportunities were provided to support specific students' skills development, additional staffs were provided to enable students to remain on their own campus, substitute staff funding was available so teachers could attend professional development sessions, and specialized services were clustered within vertical teams.

This project's original 2-year allocation was $1,800,000, and most of this funding was used for supporting campus staff salaries for a variety of job positions that support students needing special education services (e.g., special education staff [teachers and teaching assistants] for specialized services [life skills, PPCD, autism, behavior]; an educational diagnostician; a licensed school psychologist; a counselor; a behavior specialist; an autism specialist; an educational interpreter; and temporary classified staff).

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[7] Student placements for specialized services are made based on student information indicating a need for such services, as defined by the student's IEP.

The project's successes from 2009–2010 through 2010–2011 included a more equitable and full distribution of staff to support specialized services to students across vertical teams of schools than had been possible in previous years. Currently, in three vertical teams of schools (i.e., Crockett, Johnson, and Travis), all specialized education services are available to all students with disabilities, so no students have to travel away from their home school or vertical team to receive services. In several other vertical teams (i.e., Akins, Eastside, and Lanier), all but one type of specialized services are available within the team of schools. From May 2009 to November 2011, the number of students assigned off their home campus decreased from 14% to 8.7%. As shown in Table 4, this decrease occurred even as the number of students needing special education services increased.

Table 4. AISD Special Education Services Provided to Students Assigned Off Their Home Campus, May 2009 Through November 2011

School year	Number of special education students receiving services	Number of special education students assigned off home campus	Percentage of special education students assigned off home campus
2008–2009	8,173	1,148	14.0%
2009–2010	8,590	1,093	12.7%
2010–2011	8,832	924	10.4%
August to November 2011	8,640	760	8.7%

Source. AISD special education student records

Other project successes included intensive professional development sessions provided to AISD special education specialists, based on a coaching model provided by Education Service Center (ESC) Region 13 staff. The coaching model's focus is to provide proactive, intensive support to staff on a bimonthly basis.

The challenges of the project occurred in several areas and varied during the 2-year grant period:
- increasing the comfort level of some administrative and other staff who work with supporting students with significant cognitive disabilities;
- building schools' capacity to offer services, when faced with multiple demands on staff time;
- finding adequate space for specialized services in already overcrowded vertical team schools;
- maintaining a balance of students across schools with specialized services when the district experienced a high growth rate in its student body across the north central Austin area;

- supporting the reassignment of students to new schools when they and their parents were used to another school, even if it was farther away than the home school; and
- dealing with unforeseen local, state, and national budget shortages.

Sustainability for this project's activities is part of the culture of inclusion that has grown as staff's capacity to support students with disabilities has increased through skills and knowledge received through professional development opportunities. The culture of inclusion is especially effective when a school's leadership has embraced practices that support students with significant disabilities. In addition, special education itinerant staffs who have been trained in the coaching model continue to provide bimonthly support to staff at each school as well as provide interactive intensive support to some identified students.

Due to the current budget shortages at local, state, and national levels, the number of staff dedicated to this project could not be sustained. For the 2011–2012 school year, both the number of teaching assistants assigned to schools and the number of schools with specialized services were reduced. Nevertheless, an overall increase of 42 specialized services across vertical teams of schools occurred from the 2009–2010 to 2011–2012 school years (see Table 5).

Table 5. Changes in AISD Specialized Special Education Services Provided, 2009–2010 Through 2011–2012

School year	Specialized special education services added	Specialized special education services relocated	Specialized special education services discontinued
2009–2010	38	5	0
2011–2012	17	2	4
2011–2012	6.5	5	11.5
Total	61.5	12	15.5

Source. AISD Department of Special Education service records

PROJECT: TEKS ALIGNMENT TO THE CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

This project focused on the development, delivery, and implementation of a comprehensive TEKS-aligned, content-focused curriculum for AISD students with significant cognitive disabilities. This included creating staff teams who design curriculum and classroom activities, incorporating web-based video training, using instructional specialists to lead teachers in implementation, and providing professional development sessions to create elementary and secondary school cohorts of literacy teacher leaders. This project's original 2-year allocation was $400,000, and this funding was used for the salary of 1.5 FTE life skills

specialists, substitute pay for staff, supplies, software, Spanish materials, contracted services, reading and instructional materials, and reproduction costs.

Project successes included strong connections built between district curriculum staff and special education staff, and the development of a strong literacy leaders training model, based on the collaborative work of staff at the ESC Region 13 (located in Austin, Texas) and a professor from the University of North Carolina's Center for Literacy and Disability Studies. Teachers at 45 campuses received training about how to use this model--based on four components of literacy (i.e., guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words)--in the classroom to engage students in literacy instruction. District staff who conducted classroom observations reported an increased number of teachers using effective literacy instructional practices. As a result, teachers in these life skills classrooms reported increased student engagement and demonstrated positive literacy writing behaviors. In a May 2011 teacher survey, a majority of teachers working with students with significant cognitive disabilities reported using effective instructional practices in the key literacy areas of guided reading, writing, word work, and self-selected reading, and they reported accessing and using a wide variety of tools and strategies to support literacy learning with their students.

In addition, students' academic gains were observed. Table 6 summarizes TAKS-Alt results for AISD special education students from 2009 through 2011, and shows an upward trend in percentages of students passing in each subject area.

Table 6. Percentages of AISD Students Passing Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Alternate Version, by Subject, 2009, 2010, and 2011

Subject area	2009	2010	2011	Difference
Reading/English language arts	82%	94%	98%	+ 16
Math	85%	93%	98%	+ 13
Writing	85%	92%	100%	+ 15
Science	86%	92%	98%	+ 12
Social studies	86%	97%	100%	+ 14

Source. AISD student TAKS records

Project challenges reported by the project manager related to staffing and budget. Initially, the project manager indicated that finding and hiring qualified staff to carry out project activities was difficult, and this was coupled with the district's hiring freeze, which occurred during the grant's first year. Although one project staff person left during the 2010–2011 school year to pursue another job, this position could not be filled, and a portion of the project's funds were reallocated to other critical priority areas in the district due to the district's budget crisis. Yet, the project manager showed that much was accomplished through

curriculum alignment, increased teacher knowledge and skills, and improvements in students' academic performance.

Project sustainability includes continuing to develop access to the curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. In fact, the AISD Curriculum Department hired a life skills specialist and three special education staff to incorporate the needs of all learners into the curriculum team's work. Additionally, the following sustainable activities have been accomplished: a life skills curriculum alignment website was created for use by teachers; online subscription licenses to several instructional resources were funded for 100 AISD teachers; and new teachers' instructional materials kits were provided, with training to support the effective use of these materials along with existing district resources.

PROJECT: IMPROVE IEP GOAL DEVELOPMENT AND MODIFIED BENCHMARK TESTING

This project had two main activities:

- Providing campus staff with professional development opportunities in which they could improve their capacity to develop and write meaningful, measurable, and appropriate student achievement and behavioral goals for special education students' IEPs
- Creating and administering mid-year modified academic benchmark assessments for special education students (whose IEPs specified a modified assessment), and then analyzing and using results from the assessments to gauge students' progress in the core academic subject areas and to plan for students' academic interventions, when needed

This project's original 2-year allocation was $126,000, and this funding was used for staff extra duty pay, part-time hourly pay for staff, and other operating expenses.

Improving IEP Goal Writing

For the project activities supporting staffs' training to improve their IEP goal writing, successes included 843 campus and district staff who enrolled in online training provided by ESC Region 13. The online course's seven modules, which were developed during the 2009–2010 school year, covered a variety of topics related to creating high-quality, measurable IEP goals for special education students. The first round of training was completed by the summer of 2011. As of August 2011, 651 AISD staff had completed all seven modules, and the remaining campus staffs are continuing to participate during the 2011–2012 school year to complete the course. Staff hours spent on the online course as of August 2011 totaled more than 4,531, with an average of 5 hours per person. Feedback received from online training participants who completed the course was very positive, as shown in Table 7, and 94% of participants indicated they would recommend the course to their colleagues.

Table 7. AISD Staff Participant Feedback From Training Sessions on Improving Individual Education Plan (IEP) Goal Writing, 2010–2011

Statement	Strongly agree or agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree or disagree
The learning event was well designed and content/materials were appropriate.	93%	4%	2%
The objectives/outcomes for the workshop were clearly stated at the beginning of this event.	96%	3%	< 1%
The design of the course (pacing, amount of material, group interaction, and time for questions and reflection) was appropriate for my learning style.	86%	8%	5%

Source. Education Service Center Region 13 staff development session report, August 2011

Examples of Positive Staff Comments About Improving IEP Goal Writing Training Sessions

"Thank you for this refresher; this course is a must for all special educators."

"This training helped me to understand how to appropriately serve my students and guide my peers when discussing IEPs."

"This is by far some of the best training I've received about how to best serve my students. This should be a requirement for first-year teachers who need this training to properly write goals and objectives."

"It was very beneficial going through all of the modules at my own pace. Appreciated being able to refer back to the information presented at any time. Thank you."

"I think this was an awesome way to train us in this subject and also a well-needed training. Now there is more clarity as to what the expectations are for each section of the IEP. I find writing goals in a more measurable way a lot easier to keep data on and to monitor progress made in those areas."

Some staff who took the online training suggested improvements in the following areas: add opportunities to meet and discuss certain topics in the training modules (the online format did not allow for two-way communication when participants had questions not answered within the modules) and improve the timing, pacing, and availability of the modules to allow more flexibility for those accessing the training online. The suggestion for improving timing and availability was related to one challenge for this project in that the online course was not available sooner in the school year, and some training modules were delayed in being immediately available. Thus, staff could not complete all training modules in a short period of time, and those who did complete training did not have the opportunity to begin changing

students' IEP goals during 2010–2011. Rather, an effort to see the benefits of this training is being monitored during the 2011–2012 school year.

Thus, this project activity's sustainability and enhancements appear in several distinct efforts. First, the online course modules will remain available to staff for the next 10 years, thus allowing new teachers as well as those who have already taken the course to access the professional development opportunities for continuous improvement in IEP goal writing. AISD special education curriculum staff will provide ongoing professional development support through online video tutorials that are available to staff through the district's special education electronic data system (SEEDS). In this system, model examples of well-written, measurable student IEP goals will be available to campus staff as they update or create student goals during the year. Campus staff will be sent reminders about where and how to access these resources. In addition, monthly webinar professional development opportunities will be provided to campus staff to reinforce and provide refresher training about creating meaningful student IEP goals.

Second, to establish a baseline for measuring improvement in IEP goal writing, AISD special education coordinators and supervisors gathered a random sample of school year 2010–2011 special education students' IEPs from all AISD schools at the beginning of school year 2011–2012. In these documents, the students' written present levels of academic achievement and function (PLAAF) were rated for quality in six areas: strengths, areas of need, impact on general curriculum, progress past year, current baseline including student expectation standards (if applicable), and accommodations for success. In addition, the students' goals were rated for quality in terms of timeframe, performance, criterion, and condition. An updated sample of IEP documents will be reviewed again at least twice during 2011–2012, using these same criteria, to gauge improvements made in students' IEP PLAAF and goal statements that may have resulted from staff participating in the course module training and applying what was learned to forming improved IEP PLAAF and goal statements.

Modified Benchmark Assessments

For the project activities supporting the creation and administration of modified academic benchmark assessments for special education students, AISD special education inclusion staff and intervention specialists used the general education versions of the district's academic benchmark assessments (provided by the AISD Curriculum Department staff) to create modified mid-year academic benchmark assessments in the five core curriculum areas. These assessments were created for those students in grades 2 through 11 whose IEPs indicated they should have modified assessments. Modified assessments, using TEA guidelines matched to curriculum and assessment criteria, could have characteristics such as fewer test items, simpler language, and grouping or "chunking" of information. Having modified benchmark assessments allowed staff to adequately gauge students' progress on enrolled

grade-level curriculum and determine those students (who perform poorly on the benchmarks) who should be provided additional academic support during the year. After the modified benchmark assessments were created, the assessments and instructional guides were made available to campus staff. The assessments were administered to students, and results were aggregated by subject area and grade level and analyzed at both campus and district levels. At the campus level, test results were used to identify students who performed poorly on the benchmarks and provide them with additional academic intervention and support.

One challenge faced in this part of the project included the special education team's lack of previous experience in writing benchmark test items. Quality control of test items had to be monitored to ensure the items reflected the integrity of TEKS-based student expectations and also provided appropriate modifications. The special education team also faced the challenge of writing the modified benchmarks alone, without guidance from the district's curriculum staff (who had their own workload and deadlines for the year that conflicted with this effort).

Sustainability for the modified benchmark assessments was not viable for the 2011–2012 school year because members of district leadership decided not to have these assessments offered due to the new state assessments (STAAR). Instead, sample test items from STAAR were made available by the state for use by schools during Fall 2011, and modified test items were available through resources from ESC Region 20. Teachers can administer teacher-made tests with these practice items to those students whose IEPs indicate modified tests are appropriate. Modified benchmark assessments may be created during the 2012–2013 school year, after a full year of the STAAR tests have been completed.

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Goal 2. Reduce Disproportionality

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PROJECT: EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

The goal of the EIS project was to provide accelerated reading intervention to eligible students in kindergarten through second grade to improve their reading skills, and thereby reduce the number of students referred to special education services. The project focused on students in selected elementary schools within the L.B. Johnson, Reagan, and Eastside Memorial High Schools' vertical teams. Students were eligible for program services if they scored in the lowest 20% of students at their grade level on early literacy assessments. This project's original 2-year allocation was $2,267,000, and this funding was used for the salaries of a special education intervention specialist and several instructional curriculum specialists, and for part-time hourly salaries, software, supplies, reading materials, and reproduction costs. Funds supported salaries of reading intervention teachers who provided services to students and worked with students' classroom teachers.

Results for 2010–2011 included the following: 488 students at 21 campuses were served from August to December 2010, and 568 students at 19 campuses were served from January to May 2011. There were 18 EIS teachers in the program. Completed professional development opportunities for the project during 2010–2011 included three staff trainings, for which the training content varied (e.g., reading readiness, dyslexia, and Read Naturally program). Resources and materials were provided to campuses. EIS program staff created a PowerPoint presentation to share with campuses' kindergarten through grade-2 teachers. Other activities included:

- Annual planning and preparation
- EIS updates
- Reviewing EIS assessment process
- Reviewing assessment results (from middle and end of year) and EIS exit criteria
- Trainer of trainers

Positive feedback from school staff was reported to program staff about the benefits of EIS to students. One classroom teacher reported,

> The children you worked with really benefitted from your program's intervention and we appreciate all the help and support that you have provided to us. Thank you so much for your very excellent instruction of our struggling readers. Your service has been consistent and dependable. I appreciate the time and effort you give kids and I

value the extra instruction of our team on ways to better support our kids who need
early intervention. Once again, a heartfelt thank you.

A principal offered the following response: "Thank you so much for meeting with our kinder-
2nd-grade students; your program has been a huge success!"

Academic gains for EIS students were demonstrated by comparing students'
performance on the TPRI/Tejas LEE at different points during the school year (i.e., beginning of
year compared with end of year). As shown in Table 8, a reduction occurred by the end of the
year at kindergarten and grade 2 with respect to the percentages of EIS students who were
identified as needing intervention, while a slight increase occurred in the percentage of
students at grade 1 who were identified as needing intervention.

Table 8. Percentages of AISD EIS Students Needing Intervention, 2010–2011

Grade level	Beginning of year	End of year	Change
Kindergarten	67%	57%	- 10
First	78%	79%	+ 1
Second	86%	82%	- 4

Source. AISD TPRI and Tejas LEE student records

More importantly, an examination of EIS student referrals to special education showed
that only 3% (*n* = 20) of all EIS-served students were referred for special education evaluation,
and of these, 80% (*n* = 16) were found eligible and placed in special education. Thus, EIS
program services, in combination with other instructional support services provided by school
staff, may have enabled these students to make reading gains and reduced the possibility of
these students being referred to special education.

Challenges facing the EIS program during 2010–2011 included the following:

- Two staff changes in EIS project facilitator
- Several staff changes in EIS teachers
- Two EIS campuses did not hire EIS teachers

These staffing issues made it difficult to maintain a high level of consistency and professional
development opportunities for incoming staff.

Sustainability for EIS efforts has taken the form of professional development
opportunities and resources. For instance, EIS staff created a PowerPoint presentation to
provide to classroom teachers about the sustainability of services; these teachers in turn
provide this training to other campus teachers. The grant project also provided resources (e.g.,
Reading Readiness books, the Responsive Reading book, and copies of student materials from
the Florida Center for Reading Research) to campus staff. Finally, EIS teachers were able to

provide campus classroom teachers with ideas for small group instructional strategies they can use in students' academic interventions to supplement regular classroom instruction.

PROJECT: PARENT TRAINING TO SUPPORT POSITIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The overall goal of the project was to provide a proactive means of reducing referral rates of minority students to special education due to behavior issues. This project was implemented through the Parenting with Love and Logic training provided to staff and parents. The workshop series included seven training sessions that created a positive emotional climate for parents to learn together through trust, respect, clear communication lines, and honesty. The intent of the project was to build capacity by training AISD staff to provide the training to parents at selected schools. School staffs from the following schools' vertical teams were targeted for support and training: Dobie, Fulmore, Garcia, Kealing, Martin, Mendez, Pearce, and Webb.

This project's original 2-year allocation was $860,000, and this funding was used for the salary of a parent training coach and for supplies and reading materials used in the training sessions. The parent training coach was hired and supervised by the parent program coordinator in the AISD Parent Support Office within AISD's Department of School, Family, and Community Education.

During the 2 years of the grant, more than 80 AISD staff received training so they could offer the Parenting with Love and Logic classes, and 1,181 families from 48 schools received the class series. In addition, training and orientation opportunities were made with personnel from a number of community agencies: Communities in Schools, The Austin Project, Austin Voices, Boys and Girls Club, Travis County Integral Care, and several Travis County precinct judges. By providing an understanding of the program curriculum, referral paths were created so these agencies could refer families to the trainings being offered.

To gauge parents' opinions about the perceived impact of the Parenting with Love and Logic training, a survey was administered to a sample of parents who participated in training during 2010–2011. A pre-survey was given prior to the start of training, and a post-survey was given at the end of training. Some school training sites were not able to administer the surveys to training participants. Approximately 160 parents responded to the pre-survey and 111 parents responded to the post-survey.

Key findings from the surveys indicated that most parents reported improvements in their child's behavior and their own behavior after completing the Parenting with Love and Logic training. For example, prior to training, 40% of parents said their child argued or talked back, but after training only 22% reported such behavior. Prior to training, 54% of parents reported they were having fun being a parent, and after training 78% reported having fun. The greatest improvement from before to after training was in the frequency with which parents

reported that they let their child solve his or her own problems (pre-survey 28%, post-survey 63%). A summary of the survey responses before and after training are provided in Table 9.

Table 9. AISD Parents' Opinions About Their Child's Behavior Before and After Parenting With Love and Logic Training, 2010–2011

Statement	Before training	After training	Change
My child argues or talks back.	40%	22%	- 18
My child completes chores without reminders and without pay.	33%	48%	+ 15
My child dawdles and makes it hard for me when we're getting ready to go somewhere.	45%	23%	- 22
My child throws tantrums or "fits" (at home or in public).	37%	20%	- 17
My child makes good decisions and behaves responsibly.	38%	60%	+ 22
My child acts poorly during meals.	29%	18%	- 11
With my child (or children) I find myself having fun being a parent.	54%	78%	+ 24
With my child (or children) I find myself feeling really stressed out.	43%	27%	- 16
With my child (or children) I find myself staying calm when I have to discipline.	29%	61%	+ 32
With my child (or children) I find myself letting my kids solve their own problems.	28%	63%	+ 35

Source. AISD Parenting with Love and Logic training parent surveys

Consistent with this positively reported impact on parents and students, the program coordinator reported receiving a phone call from a precinct judge who said a parent had come to court and shared with the judge that the Parenting with Love and Logic training was the best training the parent had ever attended and that it helped improve the parent's relationship with the child. Program staff also reported that the classes gave parents a chance to examine their own actions and responses to their child's behaviors and modify these reactions to create better parent-child experiences.

Challenges reported by the project staff included finding a balance between offering the training to parents who had special education students already identified and trying to be proactive to include parents of general education students whose behaviors might cause the child to be at risk of being referred for special education services. Another challenge for the project came at the end of the school year when the district eliminated numerous staff positions, including some of those who had been trained in Parenting with Love and Logic. This limited the project's sustainability plan for providing continued training to parents in the future.

However, to meet this challenge, district staff may try to coordinate those staff trainers who are still in the district to provide parent training. The class materials will be available for checkout from the district's Parent Support office so they are accessible for staff and parents. In addition, the project coordinator reported that staff at the district's Family Resource Centers (i.e., at Dobie, Pearce, Webb, and Reagan) were trained to provide the Parenting with

Love and Logic classes, and may provide them at a district-wide level. In addition, project staff indicated they would try to maintain a connection with the county courts to create ways to have families referred to the district for Parenting with Love and Logic training when appropriate for those families.

Goal 3. Improve Special Educational Processes

PROJECT: ARD FACILITATION TEAM

The goals of this project focused on improving the ARD process for parents and school staff to benefit academic decisions about special education students. Project objectives were as follows:

- Provide training to campus staff to develop skills needed for increasing productive communication before, during, and after the ARD meeting, thereby reducing the possibility of potential conflicts or misunderstandings between staff and parents
- Develop products to support staffs' facilitation skills and build future campus staff capacity to lead ARD meetings effectively
- Provide student-specific IEP facilitation support when requested by campus staff or parents
- Improve district IEP compliance and decrease parent complaints (including due process hearing requests)

> **Staff comments after completing ARD facilitation training**:
>
> "The strategies we learned are great and beneficial to all district staff."
>
> "Great workshop – I wish I had this training as a first - year teacher. Thanks."
>
> "I absolutely recommend that our entire department attend this training."

This project's original 2-year allocation was $1,330,000, and this funding supported the salaries of several ARD facilitators (six during 2009–2010 and four during 2010–2011), and funding for staff to attend professional development sessions, some substitute pay for teachers to attend training, and IEP facilitation and conflict resolution resource materials.

During 2010–2011, the project's successes included serving 470 students, 994 staff, and 418 parents. The project's facilitators attended and supported 371 campus-based ARD meetings. In addition, the facilitators provided staff professional development sessions to 94 staff from 46 schools during 2010–2011. School staff and parents offered positive comments from the facilitators' participation in ARD meetings, such as:

- "Thanks for making a positive difference in our meeting. Your expertise really helped." (principal)
- "I appreciate your help. This was the best ARD meeting we've had in a long time." (parent)
- "I feel better equipped to handle my own difficult meetings now. I don't know why, but I never considered setting ground rules or developing an agenda before." (teacher)

Some challenges faced by the project's facilitators included providing awareness, training, and use of ARD facilitation consistently across all campuses. Plans for project facilitator staffing had originally been 10, but the project began with six and decreased to two by Spring 2011. Facilitators reported that gaining buy-in from campus staff for the benefits of using ARD facilitation skills was difficult when staff had no direct knowledge or observation of the facilitation process. Facilitators also noted the training and use of ARD facilitation skills was not mandated by the district for all campuses.

Yet, the project's sustainability plan centered on remedying the staff training that did occur and creating a cohort of administrators, counselors, and teachers at 46 schools who have ARD facilitation skills to use in future meetings. In addition, facilitation mini-lessons were provided to members of the district's special education advisory council. Finally, online training modules about ARD facilitation skills were created for use by staff in the future, thereby sustaining ongoing professional development opportunities of this kind.

PROJECT: IEP DATA SYSTEM

The primary goal of this project was to enhance AISD's existing electronic IEP data system in the following ways:

- Migrate paper-based student evaluation reports to electronic documents
- Add the capability of printing IEP documents in Spanish
- Add the capability of electronic signing by people attending IEP team meetings
- Add the capability of recording IEP team meetings and saving these recordings as digital audio files within the system
- Developing a parent training and in-home training database within the electronic IEP data system

This project's original 2-year allocation was $450,000, and this funding was used for contracted services of a programmer to upgrade the IEP data system's functionality.

The project's successes included serving the district's special education students (more than 10,000) at all campuses by providing staff (n = 1,843) and parents (n > 8,500) with critical information from the IEP data system for educational planning, IEP team meetings, and IEP documentation. Specifically, the IEP data system's evaluation plan report was piloted in Fall 2010, was put into production in Spring 2011, and is being used by all special education evaluation staff. Electronic signature capability also was put into production in Spring 2011. Spanish IEP forms were developed and piloted in late Spring 2011, and these forms are in production for translators to use during 2011–2012. Staff drafted a plan for incorporating audio recordings within the IEP data system, and teachers' laptops with built-in microphones were found to work successfully for recording IEP team meetings. Staff are in the process of

developing a parent training and in-home training database within the electronic IEP data system.

The challenges were hiring and training the programmer to do the IEP data system enhancement. The programmer position experienced a great deal of turnover. Three programmers were hired and then resigned or were on leave during the project. This instability slowed the progress of the project, and some tasks will need to be done after the grant is over. For example, the system's evaluation plan report needs to be modified for related service providers, the full evaluation report was not developed, and training materials for the Spanish IEP need to be developed. In addition, electronic signature capabilities are currently limited to the evaluation plan report and not available for other forms in the system. Electronic signatures must be obtained in different formats, depending on whether the meeting attendees are AISD employees (i.e., who can get an electronic signature through a network system log in and password) or non-district individuals (e.g., parents, who must obtain an electronic signature by scanning a document with their signature). File formats to be used for digital records have yet to be determined due to other systems being initiated by the district in 2011–2012, including an electronic document management system.

Sustainability for this project's activities relies on the district's management information system staff programmers, who have supported developed products in the system and will continue developing features of the system that could not be completed during the grant period.

PROJECT: OUTREACH TO SPANISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES

The original project goal of NOBLE (i.e., nurturing others by learning empowerment) was to build a core group of parent leaders at identified schools who would be informed and empowered to advocate for their child to receive services and supports from AISD and other community service providers. These parents would in turn train and support other parents on their campus to do the same. The project targeted Spanish-speaking parents of students with special needs at selected schools within the following high schools' vertical teams: Eastside, Johnson, Lanier, Reagan, and Travis.

The project's original 2-year allocation was $387,000, and this funding was used for the salary of a social services specialist and for supplies used in the training sessions. A full-time bilingual family and school support specialist collaborated with key personnel on each campus to identify, recruit, and train parents. The support specialist included external partners (e.g., Family Connections, City of Austin Housing Authority, Any Baby Can, Carousel Clinics, Child Inc., Communities in Schools, and El Buen Samaritano) to inform parents of available community resources for individuals with special needs.

By the beginning of year 2 of the grant, due to the district's budget and staffing constraints, the NOBLE program's goal was redirected toward providing Pláticas (chats), a forum in which Spanish-speaking parents of students with special needs could discuss and receive information about special education issues. Parent trainings were developed for various topics, including an introduction to the district's parent handbook for special education processes, the ARD meeting, developing an IEP, participating in the ARD meeting, and questions parents should ask during the ARD meeting. All trainings were geared to inform parents and empower them to be educational advocates for their child and participate in critical activities related to their child's education (e.g., attend ARD meetings).

During 2010–2011, this project's activities were implemented at 27 elementary schools, four middle schools, five high schools, and with three special project sites. Information was provided about the project's activities to 52 AISD staff, and 67 families (approximately 183 parents) were served by the NOBLE project. The support specialist provided the Pláticas, provided information through phone calls to parents, and also participated in different family-oriented events at schools and in the community to reach Spanish-speaking parents of students with special needs from other non-target schools. Some of these events included the following: AISD's back to school bash; principals' coffees; back to school night; Hispanic families' focus group at Texas Parent to Parent event; parent organizations' conference, sponsored by the TEA; the district's Feria Para Aprender; and several school fairs (e.g., community resources awareness fair, and school resource fairs).

Successes from the project included reports of improved parent attendance at ARD meetings and positive feedback from parents who attended the Pláticas. Parents indicated they found the Pláticas information about special education processes to be useful. Examples of parents' comments are presented in the text box.

Parent Comments About NOBLE Pláticas

"Me gustó muchísimo la Plática. Creo que me ayudará mucho." (I really liked the Plática. I think it will be helpful.)

"Me gustó la manera en que explicó el tema la presentadora. Para mí fue muy importante." (I liked the way the presenter explained the topic. It is important to me.)

"He recibido materiales con información muy clara. He podido resolver dudas." (I have received handouts with clear information. I have been able to resolve some doubts.)

Some challenges reported by project staff included that often parents attending Pláticas wanted to discuss issues other than the topic of training being presented. As a result, the meetings were restructured to provide time for the scheduled training topic as well as

time for addressing parents' concerns and questions. Another strategy implemented was to field parents' questions prior to the Pláticas meetings so these issues could be included in the meeting schedule. Another challenge reported by the project staff was inconsistent or waning parent attendance at some Pláticas as the school year passed. Yet another challenge was that some attendees at Pláticas were not parents of special education students, necessitating that the trainer provide examples of how certain training topics could apply to general education.

Project sustainability includes materials produced for the parent training sessions that will remain available to district family support staff to use with families who have students needing special education services.

PROJECT: PARENT LIAISON AND IEP FACILITATION

With an original 2-year allocation of $336,000, this project initially provided funding to support the salary of two district parent and family facilitators; however, one of the facilitators resigned, so the project continued with one facilitator. The goals of this project centered on having the AISD liaison staff person (from the AISD middle school superintendent's office team) provide positive support for parents when they were collaborating with AISD staff on their special education students' educational plans in the following ways:

- Increase the positive participation of parents in the education of their child by identifying their concerns, issues, and interests
- Guide parents and staff in forming and maintaining productive interpersonal relationships by engaging in communication that leads to resolution of issues

The liaison served 156 students, 102 AISD staff, and 126 families during 2010–2011. On a case by case basis, the parent liaison worked with AISD district and campus staff and families of AISD special education students by presenting, discussing, and sometimes monitoring implementation of specific strategies, interventions, and activities to support the student's education. The liaison's three areas for effective staff-parent relationships were communication, active involvement, and parental support. The liaison's activities included the following:

- Shared information with principals about possible barriers to working effectively with parents
- Encouraged parents to address and communicate issues about their children to school staff promptly; clarified in an open discussion any details of parents' concerns about their child's special education plans; when necessary, referred parents back to their student's school administration staff when they had sought central office staff involvement first (without having talked to school staff first)
- Ensured equity of special education supports and services provided to students across all campuses

- Supported parents as mediators when meeting with parents and campus administration staff
- Worked with parents and school staff on proposed strategies and effective collaboration approaches before meetings to discuss student's educational issues, thereby helping make the meetings go more smoothly
- Provided information to district-sponsored family and parent resource fairs in the community; presented a workshop about special education topics at a regional conference for Phi Delta Kappa; participated in the Austin African-American Men and Boys conference
- Provided six professional staff development sessions about a variety of topics, including writing measurable IEP goals and objectives, and understanding the IEP process
- Created sample protocols, lesson plans, and strategy ideas for staff to use with parents and students

Sustainability for this project's activities centers on what has made this project successful: establishing effective staff-parent relationships through systematic communication, active involvement, and parental support. For example, the liaison ensures that staffs in the associate superintendents' offices have the information they need when accessing district special education data systems, leads them in discussions about the use of mediation, and continues to make them aware of parents' concerns about their special education child's issues as these arise. The liaison also ensures that proactive approaches are taken with parents by doing thorough information gathering about the student's educational history, including any previous educational issues addressed; communicating with campus administration; and finding out whether parents have spoken with campus administration about their concerns. The liaison also offers follow-up communication and support to parents, as needed. The liaison has established a relationship with the district's family support team for parents of special education students and has developed a framework for specific parent training modules, information sharing, and support groups. This framework can be provided through the district's parent involvement cooperative to parents of students with special education needs. The liaison also worked with several community organizations (e.g., Citizen Schools and Girlstart) that help provide after-school activities to ensure AISD special education students have opportunities to participate.

PROJECT: TIMELY PPCD EVALUATION

This project was focused on helping the district meet state requirements for on-time evaluation of 3- to 5-year-old students, referred by early childhood agencies and parents, who may need special education services, and on providing timely notification to the students'

receiving campuses so ARD meetings can be set up with staff and families of the children. This project's original 2-year allocation was $576,035, and this funding was used for the salaries of a dedicated PPCD evaluation team of SLPs, educational diagnosticians, and licensed school psychologists.

The project's successes included providing evaluation services at 80 elementary schools to 1,525 students and their families, and serving 222 staff. Timely compliance for evaluations rose from 56% in 2007–2008 to 93% in 2010–2011. Through numerous training sessions and staff meetings at district and campus levels, project staff reviewed the PPCD process and paperwork and provided ongoing training about evaluation for SLPs, special education evaluation team members, and PPCD teachers. The special education evaluation team members revised a PPCD reporting template, as well as screening, evaluation, and placement processes and handouts to provide more consistency in the evaluation process across the district. In addition, the project staff interacted with several community agencies throughout the project (e.g., Any Baby Can, Infant Parent program, Easter Seals, Child Inc., and Relief Nursery).

Parent comment about the PPCD evaluation process:

"I appreciate PPCD and my son's excellent progress, and thank you to the teachers for their great efforts and the education they give my child."

Parent and campus staff survey results during Fall 2010 showed positive feedback and satisfaction with timely evaluation services. Among parent survey respondents, 87% of English-speaking parents and 91% of Spanish-speaking parents reported being satisfied with the referral process for their child's evaluation. When asked about their child's screening process, 64% of English-speaking parents and 86% of Spanish-speaking parents were satisfied. When asked about their child's evaluation process, 84% of English-speaking parents and 91% of Spanish-speaking parents reported being satisfied. Similarly, 93% of English-speaking parents and 91% of Spanish-speaking parents were satisfied with the ARD process. Likewise, most parents (i.e., 85% English-speaking and 90% Spanish-speaking) reported satisfaction with the time between referral and start of services for their child.

Staff survey results also indicated satisfaction with information provided by the PPCD evaluation team (87%) and with timelines of information provided by the PPCD evaluation team (75%). Two-thirds of PPCD staff reported being able to meet evaluation timelines with greater ease than in the past, and 88% indicated the current evaluation process and information were helpful in planning students' programming.

Staff comments about the PPCD evaluation process:

"Overall this process has been much more helpful and effective than campus-based evaluations and has allowed campus SLPs to better manage their 'already in school' referral loads."

"The reports I have received are excellent and give useful information."

The challenges were evident during the first year of the project when the entire PPCD evaluation process had to be changed, and staff had to be trained. With these changes came improved compliance in meeting timelines for conducting student evaluations; streamlining of processes (e.g., more efficient steps from initial referral to ARD); and a reduction in paperwork. The staff provided comments and suggestions for improvement in the survey, such as additional training for evaluators; home visits during evaluations; better communication with Early Childhood Services and among evaluation team members (e.g., provide a single point of contact for parents); and more evaluators. Parents also provided suggestions for improvement through the survey, including shortening the length of time between screening and start of services, as well as between start of services and the start of school; improving the evaluation process; lengthening the PPCD classes; and lessening the use of acronyms (i.e., to facilitate understanding).[8]

Sustainability for this project's activities is supported in several ways, including the district providing funding for three PPCD evaluation team members to ensure that evaluation of students can be done in a timely manner. In addition, the district has revised the referral and screening process and is funding a new student screening tool (Speed DIAL 4), available in English and Spanish, that provides students' standard scores for use during students' evaluations.

PROJECT: COMPLIANCE AND STUDENT TRANSITION

The compliance and student transition project began at the end of the 2009–2010 school year in response to the district's need for more stringent campus and district monitoring and compliance of state and federal special education requirements. The goals of the project were to increase compliance, as measured by audit folder reviews; create compliance protocols and have them implemented by special education teachers; develop and implement e-trainings as professional development tools for compliance; have improved systems for compliance district wide; have campus staff take more ownership of compliance issues; have improved protection of students' rights; and have 100% compliance with a TEA corrective action plan, in relation to district tracking of students at residential facilities. Total numbers of individuals served by this project were 1,000 students, more than 100 campus staff, and 85 parents. This project's original allocation was $170,000, and this funding was used for supporting the salaries of two compliance facilitators as well as for supplies.

Successes were seen in all of these goal areas, including the following accomplishments:

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[8] A full summary of parent and staff surveys results can be found at
http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_10-18_RB_PPCD_Parent_Staff_and_Community_Survey_Results.pdf

- District systems and processes were improved; a database for tracking students in residential facilities (i.e., as specified by the district's operating guidelines) was created; and e-training modules were developed.
- Three e-training professional development modules about compliance issues were created and viewed by more than 100 AISD staff.
- More than 50 volunteer surrogate parents were trained about specific procedures in the residential facility tracking process.
- Due to coaching of special education case managers, and staff's intensive review of and improvements made to students' IEPs, the district reached 92% compliance with state requirements for students' transition monitoring. Prior to these efforts, the compliance rate was 59%.

Some challenges facing the project included ensuring all campuses had representatives participate in training and ensuring that all required protocols for compliance were used consistently by campus staff. To help address these challenges, the project staff created a training matrix and an IEP checklist for the special education director and special education coordinators to use with campuses. The protocols for compliance will be addressed at future district-level special education staff meetings. These steps will enable staff in the district's Department of Special Education and at the campuses maintain efforts toward compliance with state and federal special education laws and regulations.

Goal 4. Reduce Dropout and Increase Graduation Rates

PROJECT: DROPOUT PREVENTION THROUGH STUDENT COURSE CREDIT RECOVERY FOR PROGRESS TOWARD GRADUATION

Initially, the purpose of this project was two-fold: to recover and reenroll special education students who had dropped out of Reagan and Travis High Schools and support their progress toward graduation through course credit recovery, and to work with currently enrolled special education students at Reagan and Travis who were at risk of dropping out and support their school attendance, number of course credits earned, and graduation. This project's original 2-year allocation was $440,000, and the funding was used for salaries of a high school special education teacher and a social services specialist.

In the first year, the project's successes were in recovering students who had dropped out of school: nine students were reenrolled, and eight of those graduated. In addition, project staff worked with another eight students who were at-risk of dropping out, and seven of these stayed in school and graduated. Also in the first year, eight staff training sessions were provided to staff. In the second year, the focus changed to work with currently enrolled students to prevent dropout. Thus, the project staff worked with 33 12th-grade special education students to increase their likelihood of graduation, and these students graduated on time. Other outcomes from the project included the creation and use of student progress forms (e.g., referral, intake, contact, course credit checklist, 6-week grades, home visits), and numerous school-community connections were made with supporting social service agencies (e.g., Caritas, Travis County Integral Care, Capital Area Food Bank, Child Protective Services, SafePlace, and Communities in School).

The challenges reported by project staff included a lack of sufficient working space at the high schools that allowed staff to work with their students. However, a project staff office was located next to a computer lab, enabling students and staff to work together. Another challenge was not having enough certified teachers to work with the targeted students in an off-site location (only one teacher was certified in special education and social studies). However, the students were able to take advantage of evening school classes led by certified teachers offered on the campuses. Finally, the short duration of the project may have hindered the amount of time staff could work with students to help them be successful. For example, project staff wanted to be able to spend time with incoming at-risk 9th graders and work with them throughout high school, but this was not possible given the 2-year length of the funded project.

Sustainability for this project's activities primarily focuses on project staff providing the Department of Special Education chairs with information about successful strategies to use with students at each of the high school campuses. In addition, the Department of Special Education staff are sharing data from the target campus with staff at other high schools and discussing how the strategies can be duplicated with existing staff.

PROJECT: COMPUTER-BASED STUDENT ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SUPPORT

This project focused on students at middle and high schools (although some elementary schools began participating by the end of 2010–2011), and the primary goal of this project was to provide computer-based prescriptive instruction to students who were at most risk of dropping out of school. The project activities focused on supporting students in academic skill-building, course completion, and course credit recovery mainly in the core academic subjects (i.e., ELA, math, science, and social studies). The expected outcomes of the project were for participating students to show gains over their prior year's performance on TAKS and district-developed benchmark assessments and to promote participating students' successful graduation rates (i.e., as compared with rates of their similar peers). This project's original 2-year allocation was $745,772, and this funding was used for the salaries of a field technician specialist and a project specialist, as well as for substitute pay for teachers, supplies, software, and contracted services.

A new software program was adopted in year 2 of the project to improve targeted skills instruction to students, while also providing access to rigorous curriculum. Adoption of the new software came with an implementation plan that included milestones for the software vendor to complete to make the software compliant with accessibility standards. The implementation plan also outlined how teacher training would occur and how technology support would be provided by the vendor. Ultimately, the district was able to purchase the software under an ownership license. The next major revision to the software is expected to occur in approximately 5 years. Thus, the district will be able to provide software access to students until the next major software revision, at which point, the district will have to decide how to secure funding to upgrade this resource. Thirty-two schools participated, serving more than 1,720 students in 2010–2011, with 138 staff benefitting from training, support, and use of the software. Most students served by the program in 2010–2011 were at secondary schools (76%) and were Hispanic/Latino (67%), economically disadvantaged (86%), and receiving special education services (60%).

The project had several successes, including some gains in students' TAKS passing rates. Although a change was made to the software used in the project between 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, participating students' TAKS passing rates increased during these two years. As shown in Figure 5, this group of students who were struggling academically showed

improvement from their 2009–2010 to their 2010–2011 TAKS results in math, writing, science, and social studies (with increases of 6%, 2%, and 9%, respectively).

Figure 5. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Percentages, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, Among 2010–2011 AISD At-risk Students Participating in the Odyssey Software Program
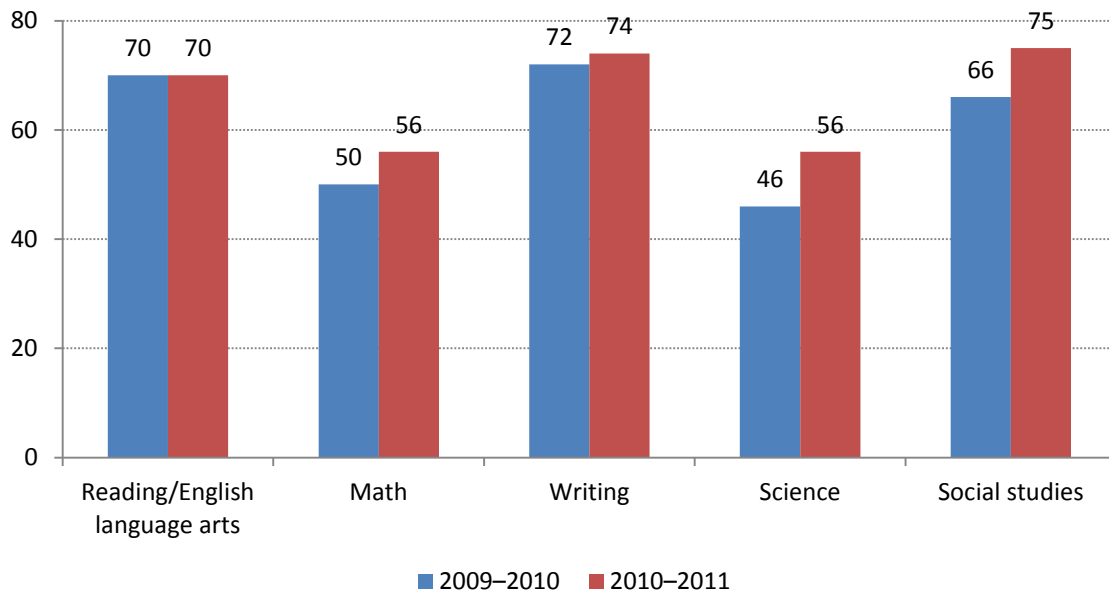
Source. AISD TAKS records

Other successes from the project were as follows:

- Some school-specific information was provided by staff citing the benefits of the software, including the following: Anderson High School reported 12 participating students who graduated and 43 students who earned course credits; three students from the district's alternative learning center graduated, in part due to the support of the software; both Crockett and Lanier High Schools reported cases of individual students who were successful and motivated to use the software to gain course credits and prepare for graduation; Austin High School staff reported they saw faster student remediation in math and reading with use of the software.

- A survey of school staff implementing the software showed that 81% were using the software for students' targeted skills instruction, and 18% were using it for students' credit recovery. Of the survey respondents from high schools, alternative campuses, and the district's twilight (night) school, 45% were using it for targeted skills instruction and 54% were using it for credit recovery. About 90% of teachers reported seeing measurable improvement in students' learning with the use of the software, 94% indicated they felt adequately supported to use the software, and

65% indicated some of their students would not have graduated if they had not had the software to support their learning. Some teachers provided positive comments about the software, including the fact that the software gave students an additional learning tool, allowed students to work independently at their own pace, and provided teachers with a way to deliver appropriate differentiated instruction to students.

> **Teacher survey comment:**
>
> "In our unit, students are often times at very different places academically. The software allows us to give the students school work that is based on their individual academic level. It assures us that the students aren't being left behind or stuck doing something too easy."

- When participating students were surveyed, 71% agreed that the experience with the software was a positive one. Comments included the following: "It helped me understand the classes that I have failed better than sitting with a bunch of people around laughing when I get something wrong;" "The software helped me to do my work and learn everything and helped me understand the books."

Project staff reported that the main challenges were changes that occurred due to switching software between 2009–2010 and 2010–2011. Due to that change, the following issues, common to a quick implementation, were noted: (a) the need to ensure all teachers were trained in using the new software, (b) the need to ensure the software was compatible with all district computers and network system requirements, and (c) the need to determine whether the software would meet all targeted students' academic needs.

For sustainability, the district purchased the software for 5 years and obtained support and training from the vendor. The grant-funded project manager's position was eliminated, but the district's assistive technology staff will continue to provide campus staff support for the software. Furthermore, a point person will be identified for each campus that uses the software to ensure updates, training, and user issues are addressed.

Goal 5. Improve Teacher Quality and Evaluate Programs

PROJECT: SUPPORTING STUDENT ACCESS TO THE GENERAL CURRICULUM

In collaboration with efforts in the model inclusion project (see goal 1), this project's activities centered on providing intensive training opportunities and follow-up technical support to campus staff in two areas: how to implement research-based model inclusion practices in the classroom, and how to develop and ensure efficient and effective special education staffing and services, as well as student scheduling, based on special education students' needs. Through a competitive bidding process, AISD hired an external consulting group to provide training and support to campus staff teams for model inclusion, as well as strategic staffing and scheduling practices, during the 2010–2011 school year.

This project's original 2-year allocation was $1,150,000, and this funding was used for extra duty pay for staff, substitute pay for teachers and for support personnel, as well as for contracted services and reproduction costs.

The project's successes included the training of more than 750 staff team members representing 110 schools in model inclusion practices during 2010–2011 professional development sessions entitled "Model Inclusion - US+." By the end of the Spring 2011 semester, some contracted services and funds remained; thus, a revised contract was agreed upon by AISD and the consulting group to ensure better use of services for the remainder of the grant period through September 2011. In addition, online modules were developed to offer continuous professional development opportunities about inclusion to campus principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals. One of the most beneficial outcomes came in the form of a new district-wide approach for campuses to determine their special education staffing needs. Using staffing forms to analyze classrooms' and students' needs, campus staff conducted analyses of campus special education staffing, based on students' needs. This analysis will allow them to provide a more accurate staffing request to district special education leadership on an annual basis. In addition, campuses are implementing more efficient class scheduling for special education students to ensure they receive appropriate services, as outlined in their IEPs.

The main challenge noted by the project manager was that full implementation was uneven across the district. That is, some campuses' trained teams have struggled to get effective inclusion practices implemented among all staff at their campus. In some cases, campus leadership was slow to change how they were operating, and thus did not fully support the new model inclusion and staffing practices.

Sustainability for this project's activities includes a recorded set of professional development training modules provided by the consulting group during the year, which will be available to staff in future years. In addition, forms and processes were created for campus leadership staff to use annually when determining special education staff's requests, based on special education students' needs. Additionally, a special education student data system report has been created for district special education leadership to use in monitoring campus-level information about IEP inclusion hours for students, according to content area (i.e., both in and out of general education settings), to gauge whether students' IEP requirements are being met. The district already has realized an increase in the percentage of special education students spending instructional time in general education classrooms. The district average percentage increased from 57.7% in 2010–2011 to 61.1% at the end of the first 6 weeks in 2011–2012.[9]

PROJECT: IEP MONITORING SYSTEM

The goal of this project was to develop a web-based IEP student progress monitoring system, which would be used by special education service providers to monitor progress of students in meeting the goals stated in their IEPs. In addition, this system would provide detailed reports with graphing capabilities that would be easy for staff and parents to interpret. This project's original 2-year allocation was $100,000, and this funding was used for contracted services to hire a programmer to create the web-based IEP progress monitoring system.

The monitoring system was developed during the 2009–2010 school year, and then piloted for use during the 2010 summer school session for staff in the extended school year program. During the 2010–2011 school year, the monitoring system was made available to all special education service providers on a voluntary basis. For 2011–2012, the monitoring system is available for use by all special education service providers for all special education students. The project's successes include serving AISD's special education students at all campuses by providing staff (*n* = 1,843) and parents (*n* > 8,500) with critical progress monitoring information about students' academic and behavior performance so staff and parents could make educational decisions. Seventeen training sessions about the system were provided to staff. Feedback from staff was that the system was easy to use.

The primary challenge occurred during the pilot phase, when Department of Special Education staff discovered that many of the goals in students' IEPs were not written in measurable terms. The Department of Special Education staff initiated a number of required

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[9] Data summaries were provided by the district's special education student database.

staff training opportunities during 2010–2011 to address this issue and provided guidance about how to write measureable and meaningful IEP goals (some of these trainings were funded by the ARRA IDEA grant).

Sustainability for this project's activities comes from the district's management information system staff programmers taking responsibility for supporting the IEP monitoring system. For example, during Summer 2011, the programmers modified the electronic goal page of the IEP form to improve goal writing, to improve the interface between the IEP document and the IEP progress monitoring system, and to provide an interface with the district's new web-based response to intervention tracking system. These system improvements will provide staff with a detailed history of students' progress across services. In addition, a printed guide and three web-based tutorials were developed during the project to provide staff with continued training and support in the future, beyond the grant.

PROJECT: OBTAINING DUAL CERTIFICATION AND IMPROVING SPANISH PROFICIENCY

This project had two components, both of which were aimed at building district staff's capacity in needed areas: (a) bilingual (Spanish, English) SLPs and (b) support for current staff in getting additional certification as board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs). This project's original 2-year allocation was $50,000, and this funding was used for contracted services, extra duty pay for staff, staff tuition and fees, and reading materials.

For the bilingual SLP component, a series of courses was designed in collaboration with a local college and a local university to accomplish two things: increase staff participants' Spanish fluency (from intermediate to advanced) and further develop their knowledge and understanding of students' bilingual development and how it interacts with communication impairments. By the end of 2010–2011, four of six staff completed intensive Spanish-language instruction training as well as a training about understanding issues related to the communication impairments of bilingual students. Two of the four staff increased from intermediate to intermediate-high proficiency on a Spanish-language proficiency measure to ensure fluency administered (i.e., as a pre- and post-assessment) by a local college. All exhibited growth in the use of Spanish.[10] Based on posttest results and the instructor's recommendations, two staff identified as proficient will be able to provide Spanish-language speech therapy to Spanish-speaking students who have communication disabilities in the coming year, thereby enhancing the district's capacity to serve students. Participating staff had positive responses to the program, such as the following: "The class was hard, but I learned a lot." "It was great to study Spanish like that. I didn't realize how much of it I've forgotten."

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[10] Staffs in both the AISD English Language Learner Department and Special Education Department are reviewing the staff participants' Spanish proficiency test scores as well as information provided by the class instructor to determine participants' proficiency for providing bilingual speech therapy.

Challenges reported for the bilingual SLP component included budget constraints that limited the program to serve only four of six staff, and the need for the project coordinator to devote more time to serving students on campuses due to service needs, thereby limiting the coordinator's time on the project. However, for sustainability, the four bilingual SLPs will be provided with a mentor to support them during the coming school year, and they will be part of several cross-departmental teams. In addition, the training model used could be repeated not only with the speech staff, but with staff in other departments that have similar needs, if funds are found to support the training.

For the BCBA certification component, no further funding is available at this time to continue the program. However, two staff completed coursework and more than 1,500 supervised hours on AISD campuses, where they helped develop special education students' functional behavioral assessments. In September 2011, these two staff took the BCBA certification exit examination, and one passed. Upon passing the exam, the staff person became qualified to work with AISD special education students who have intensive needs and to provide professional development opportunities to campus teachers and specialists.

PROJECT: PROJECT EVALUATIONS

To help ensure grant accountability and provide ongoing support to grant project staff, funds were set aside to support a program evaluator position for the 2-year ARRA IDEA grant. This project's original 2-year allocation was $140,000, and this funding was used to support the program evaluator's salary as well as to pay for an external consultant group's review of AISD's special education processes.

The program evaluator provided a variety of evaluation support functions to project staff, including but not limited to the following:

- Supported logic modeling, planned with grant leadership staff for short-term and long-term evaluation and reporting needs and outputs
- Attended all grant project meetings and assisted with meeting presentations, as needed, including community meetings
- Provided each project team with guidance about determining how project goals, objectives, activities, expected outcomes, and formative and summative measures are linked; helped team members revise measures when necessary
- Provided each project team with data gathering, analysis, and reporting support
- Created and administered surveys, as requested
- Provided monthly or as-needed reports about different project topics (e.g., budget)
- Wrote full reports twice annually about all the projects' activities and progress made (Doolittle, 2010a; Doolittle, 2010b; Doolittle & Koehler, 2010)

- Provided a sustainable evaluation guidance document for use by staff after ARRA IDEA grant activities are completed. This document lists evaluation resources both inside and outside the district for staff to use when planning an evaluation.[11]

The challenge for the project evaluator, which also provided valuable opportunities for creating bridges across departments and staff groups, was keeping track of all 25 projects and their different activities and data. This opportunity led the project evaluator to gain an understanding about the variety of ways in which district and campus staff worked to improve the educational experience of special education students, the quality of their staff members and activities, and the experiences families of special education students had with the school district. Having program evaluation staff dedicated to the grant enabled all project staff to have support in planning, collecting, analyzing, and summarizing information about project successes, challenges, and sustainability efforts. In addition to the special education grant leadership team, the project evaluation function provided one of several critical supports for grant management, accountability, progress monitoring, and transparency in grant activities. The grant evaluation support also helped strengthen ties between the Department of Special Education and departments within AISD's accountability division (i.e., campus accountability, assessment, program evaluation). Furthermore, collaboration between special education staff and program evaluation staff through the grant project work fostered opportunities for an awareness of how evaluation activities can benefit project work. If there is a legacy for the role of the grant evaluator, it pertains to special education staff's use of evaluation as another tool for program improvement. Empowering staff by building their knowledge and skills in using evaluation as a tool for planning, monitoring, and improvement will be a lasting legacy for the contributions of evaluation to this grant.

PROJECT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Due to a district review and realignment of grant project priorities, this project was eliminated and the funds were reallocated to other ARRA IDEA projects for professional development opportunities. This project's original 2-year allocation was $10,000.

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[11] See report at http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_10-40_ARRA_IDEA_Evaluation_Sustainability_Report.pdf

KEY SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

The AISD ARRA IDEA grant activities delivered benefits to students, staff, and families by having projects that had clearly defined, measurable goals and objectives, along with a grant management process in place to assure transparency, accountability, and monitoring. Some of the successes, challenges, and lessons learned are described below.

KEY SUCCESSES

Supporting Student Achievement and Educational Experiences

With the support of ARRA IDEA grant funds, many AISD special education students who participated in some grant-funded projects experienced increases in TAKS passing rates (from the previous year) or gains in assessed primary reading skills (from beginning to end of year). In addition, many special education students experienced an improvement in the amount, quality, and type of services needed to support their school success. At the high school level, students who had dropped out or who were at risk of dropping out were able to gain course credits toward graduation. Other high school special education students received critical career education and on-the-job experiences to help begin to bridge the gap between high school and their life beyond school. Some students who were academically at risk received the intervention support they needed to reduce the likelihood of being referred for special education. Campus staff received additional training opportunities, such as how to write measurable goal statements for students' IEPs and how to improve inclusive classroom instructional practices. In addition, campus staff received resources, materials, supplies, and software to use in the classroom to improve instruction and provide critical academic interventions for special education students in math, reading, and other core subjects. Some parents participated in positive parenting trainings, and most reported better behavior from their children and improved parent-child relations as a result.

Improving District and School Special Education Processes

Some grant projects provided or improved parents' opportunities to be meaningfully involved in their child's education. For example, assistance was provided by project staff to parents and school staff to improve communication and resolve issues regarding their students' academic needs. In other projects, efforts were made to improve district and campus processes for accessing and using student information, including improvements in staff being able to share information with families about their child's progress. The grant activities helped AISD staff improve district and school compliance and accountability in meeting state and federal requirements for serving special education students. Specifically, staff provided screening to determine eligibility for special education services and to improve the efficiency with which other academic services were provided by campus staff to special education students. The grant also improved the district and campus staffing plan process so critical services could be provided efficiently to students when they were needed.

Improving Staff Quality

Campus staff received training, including online training, which will be available in the future. Training opportunities for model classroom inclusion practices for improved student instruction was provided during 2010–2011, coupled with on-campus technical support to ensure staffs were implementing these practices effectively. School staff also received resources (e.g., instructional materials, supplies, and software) to use in the classroom to improve instruction and provide needed or improved interventions for students. One grant project allowed some staff to obtain dual certification and improve their Spanish proficiency to provide better service to parents and special education students. All grant project team members were empowered and trained to use effective project management and evaluation tools, which included setting meaningful and measureable outcomes, using several sources of data, implementing regular monitoring of results, and providing accountable reports about project activities.

Other benefits have been realized after the ARRA IDEA grant through sustainability of jobs saved or created. Of the 363 staff who had some or all of their salary supported by ARRA IDEA funds from 2009–2010 to 2010–2011, 301 (83%) were actively employed in AISD as of September 2011. This shows that AISD was able to support some of these positions using other fund sources, thereby sustaining the efforts begun through the grant. This occurred in spite of the district facing budget challenges and job cuts at the end of 2010–2011.

CHALLENGES

It is important to remember that all of the grant projects were not implemented fully until the beginning of 2010–2011; thus, the potential full impact of these projects' activities on student outcomes may have been muted or delayed. Also, even though the accountability system relies on indicators such as the state's mandatory academic assessments and graduation rates, some project outcomes may be seen in other types of student indicators, such as performance on classroom tests, attendance rates, and disciplinary incident rates. Some grant-funded activities (e.g., teacher training) may take time for implementation to occur through improved teacher instruction. Thus, it may be another year or two before the district sees meaningful gains in some student performance indicators.

Grant management challenges faced during the 2 years included keeping track of and managing the large number of grant-funded projects. Twenty-five projects were financed, each with key team members, a budget, and activities to implement and monitor. Some projects took a year or more to implement fully, and other projects changed their focus. This situation required rethinking, restarting, or reallocating resources to make the project activities occur. Another grant challenge was staffing; with only 2 years of grant funding, project staff and Department of Special Education staff found it difficult to find, hire, and retain grant-funded positions that were only going to last 2 years. Some staff began seeking

jobs prior to the end of 2010–2011, so some project positions went unfilled. This was coupled with the district's budget shortfall and subsequent reduction in force, whereby more than 1,000 job positions were cut.

LESSONS LEARNED

As the grant progressed from 2009 to 2011, several lessons were learned and efforts to improve practices and procedures were renewed within special education. Staff confirmed the benefits of having shared communication, frequent update meetings, and use of effective project management procedures and documentation. Stronger collaborations across departments and offices are being established to serve all students better. With an emphasis on data-based decision making, staff are creating and using measurable outcomes for all district, department, and campus efforts when setting expectations for special education student's performance and staff's performance. By necessity, staff had to learn to adapt to changing demands and circumstances in the district, such as resource limitations and a recent reduction in staff. The ARRA IDEA grant itself caused district special education staff to try to prepare for the "funding cliff" before the grant ended by taking steps to ensure each grant-funded project had a sustainability plan in place for continuing services. Special education leadership staff continues to look for effective and creative ways to improve the efficiency of their staffing formulae and to ensure that adequate services are being provided to students across the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AISD continues to seek ways to improve the academic experiences of all its students, including special education students. The district's Department of Special Education website lists several target areas for improvement,[12] of which the following are just a few:

- Special education students will be successful by showing increases in graduation rates, STAAR participation and passing rates, completion of IEP goals, daily participation in general education (inclusive) classrooms, and participation in extracurricular or school-related clubs or organizations. Fewer special education students will be removed from their schools due to discretionary discipline incidents.
- Parents will be empowered as partners by having increased attendance at ARD meetings and district-sponsored events, and participation in district special education advisory committees; parents will show increased satisfaction with special education services; fewer parents will file complaints.

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[12] See http://www.austinisd.org/academics/docs/sped_Goals.pdf

- Staff will be empowered to improve students' meaningful and measurable IEP goals that are aligned with TEA criteria, provide timely notice to parents about ARD meetings, reduce the rate of students' identification for special education, improve their ability to meet state and federal compliance requirements in a timely manner, increase collaboration across district departments and offices to improve systems and procedures. Special education staff will show decreases in staff-intensive support for campus assignments.

The ARRA IDEA grant caused district and campus staff to make a critical review of all special education services being provided and to look for ways to improve them. District and campus staff can take what has been learned from the ARRA IDEA grant experience and apply it toward attaining these goals. To attain these goals, special education staff and all other district and campus staff will need to work together and make these goals their shared priority. Putting processes in place to attain these goals may be the most important challenge. Thus, one recommendation is getting staff's and parents' buy-in on all these goals and the paths to reach them. By having the district's strategic plan as the basis, staff should put the needs of all struggling learners (e.g., special education students, English language learners, students who are several grade levels behind, and students who have had intermittent school participation) at the center of all district- and school-related planning for scheduling, staffing, and instructional activities.

In addition, although great strides were made in improving AISD programs and services supporting a positive educational environment for special education students, making available high quality instruction by teachers, and providing support for families of special education students, staff can take the project processes used in the ARRA IDEA grant as they continue to improve the education of students. During the grant, staff learned about starting, maintaining, and ending grant-funded projects, at the same time that the district was experiencing tightening budget and staffing reductions. Staff can take what was learned from this experience to prepare for future opportunities in which funding may be temporary or may change. Staff also can consider long-term strategies for implementing system-wide improvements and activities that have long-term benefits. This was evident in some of the systemic changes and improvements accomplished by several grant projects (e.g., data systems and professional development modules). Staff can benefit from the process used to manage and track progress for each ARRA IDEA project (e.g., by using specifically defined measurable goals and outcomes, gathering data and review results frequently during the project, and implementing communication processes to keep staff updated). These basic project management practices can be applied in any endeavor to track the progress of educational practices and programs, including interventions.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – THE LEGACY OF ARRA IDEA IN AISD

One of the main federal goals of ARRA funding was to provide a one-time stimulus to school districts for improvements that could be sustained by districts after the funding was gone. Most of AISD's ARRA IDEA projects had a sustainability plan in place, providing an opportunity for continued future benefits to students, staff, and parents. In addition, the ARRA IDEA grant project management approach enabled all participating staff to use an effective, data-based, decision-making process, supported by an evaluation-focused logic model that ties together goals, objectives, activities, and measurable outcomes. Regular monitoring and communication about all grant project activities enabled grant staff to discover successes as well as potential problems early, and encouraged all grant staff to commit to regular and beneficial discussions. This regular communication often benefitted project team members by providing insights, new ideas, and sharing of resources that otherwise may not have been possible. These project management and program evaluation techniques are a lasting legacy for staff to use as they continue striving to support students' achievement gains; staffs' skill and knowledge development (e.g., improvements in teachers' classroom instructional practices); and family connections to students' educational experiences.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. AISD Services and Funding for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,
Individuals With Disabilities Act (ARRA IDEA), 2009–2011 (as of November 1, 2011)

| Projects | Numbers served (may contain duplicated counts) | | | | | | Funding | |
| | Students | | Staff | | Families | | | |
	2009–2010	2010–2011	2009–2010	2010–2011	2009–2010	2010–2011	Two-year allocation	Two-year expenditures
1. Develop model inclusion demonstration schools and classrooms	0	0	0	600	0	0	$730,000	$371,827
2. Campus innovative inclusion practices to eliminate the achievement gap	749	1,294	0	0	0	0	$500,000	$487,892
3. Extended learning opportunities	See results for project 2. Campus innovative inclusion practices						$750,000	$417,206
4. Tier 3 reading	0	1,141	79	253	0	0	$1,365,653	$1,498,052
5. Garcia RtI computer-based project	131	187	7	13	0	150	$201,000	$190,353
6. Support students with autism	159	1,355	200	89	314	1,355	$752,000	$213,214
7. Increase vocational supports for students with disabilities	77	112	14	15	0	0	$369,000	$121,793
8. PPCD pre-literacy, in-home skill development	12	70	4	18	14	68	$636,000	$81,262
9. Decentralization of services	55	169[13]	0	0	55	169	$1,800,000	$5,264,663
10. TEKS curriculum alignment for students with significant cognitive disabilities	300	706	108	100	4	5	$400,000	$261,140
11. Improve IEP measurable goal writing; implement modified benchmarks	0	0	194	651	0	0	$126,000	$218,816
12. Early Intervention Services (EIS)	604	568	105	85	0	0	$2,267,000	$1,971,020
13. Parent training to support positive student behavior	0	134	104	80	240	1,181	$860,000	$153,823
14. ARD/IEP facilitators	258	470	663	994	318	418	$1,330,000	$458,810
15. IEP data system	0	10,801	2	1,843	0	8,500	$450,000	$131,541

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA project, finance, grant and evaluation records; Doolittle (2010a, 2010b)
Note. Expenditures will be finalized later by TEA. Other expenditures not included here totaled $1,615,174 and covered indirect costs, some state-funded special education staff salaries, and materials and services used by special education students. Numbers served may contain duplicated counts if individuals received more than one service across the different projects.

[13] An additional 164 students were served on their home campus at the beginning of the 2011–2012 school year.

Appendix A. (continued) AISD Services and Funding for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals With Disabilities Act (ARRA IDEA), 2009–2011 (as of November 1, 2011)

| Projects | Numbers served (may contain duplicated counts) | | | | | | Funding | |
| | Students | | Staff | | Families | | | |
	2009–2010	2010–2011	2009–2010	2010–2011	2009–2010	2010–2011	2-year allocation	2-year expenditures
16. Enhance outreach to Spanish-speaking families (NOBLE)	0	0	3	52	39	67	$387,000	$145,528
17. Parent liaison/IEP facilitation	25	156	125	102	39	126	$336,000	$274,301
18. PPCD evaluation	716	1,525	247	222	716	1,525	$576,035	$474,414
19. Compliance	0	1,000	0	100	0	85	$170,000	$154,101
20. Dropout prevention	37	33	93	40	22	19	$440,000	$174,822
21. Computer-based curriculum	1,368	1,720	108	138	0	2	$745,772	$716,188
22. Ensuring staff capacity to support student access to the general curriculum	0	0	239	759	0	0	$1,150,000	$723,494
23. IEP monitoring system	186	10,801	33	1,843	0	8,500	$100,000	$131,363
24. Dual certification	0	0	7	8	0	0	$50,000	$27,435
25. Program evaluation	0	0	11	22	0	0	$140,000	$150,463
26. Professional development opportunities	No project since funds were transferred to other projects						$0	$0
Total all projects	4,677	32,242	2,346	8,027	1,761	22,170	$16,422,010	$14,813,521

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA project, finance, grant and evaluation records; Doolittle (2010a, 2010b)

Note. Expenditures will be finalized later by TEA. Other expenditures not included here totaled $1,615,174 and covered indirect costs, some state-funded special education staff salaries, and materials and services used by special education students. Numbers served may contain duplicated counts if individuals received more than one service across the different projects.

Appendix B. Summary of AISD Jobs and Expenditures Data on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA) Quarterly Reports Submitted to Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Quarter	Total FTEs[14] of jobs created and saved	Total expenditures
07/01/11 – 09/30/11	11.00	$ 14,936,134.82[15]
04/01/11 – 06/30/11	298.82	$ 12,637,783.59
01/01/11 – 03/31/11	111.19	$ 10,728,820.00
10/01/10 – 12/31/10	109.19	$ 8,401,869,.03
07/01/10 – 09/30/10	94.94	$ 5,010,801.83
04/01/10 – 06/30/10	100.72	$ 3,722,062.71
01/01/10 – 03/31/10	84.32	$ 1,693,213.40
10/01/09 – 12/31/09	64.99	$ 400,446.68
04/15/09 – 09/30/09	45.00	$ 0
Average FTEs	**102**	

Source. TEA ARRA IDEA Expenditure Reports for AISD, 2009 to 2011

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[14] FTE = full-time equivalent
[15] Final expenditures will not be determined by TEA until later in 2011.

Appendix C. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Passing Rates, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, for Eliminate the Gap (ETG)-tutored Special Education Students and All Other Tested Special Education Students

Reading/ELA TAKS version	2009-2010		2010-2011	
	ETG-tutored special education students (*n* = 585)	All other special education students (*n* =4,694)	ETG-tutored special education students (*n* = 981)	All other special education students (*n* = 4,315)
A	62%	61%	69%	65%
K	77%	86%	74%	87%
M	90%	86%	94%	87%
All	81%	78%	86%	80%
Math TAKS version	2009–2010		2010–2011	
	ETG-tutored special education students (*n* = 461)	All other special education students (*n* = 4,711)	ETG-tutored special education students (*n* = 1,083)	All other special education students (*n* = 4,164)
A	53%	44%	65%	53%
K	65%	77%	74%	85%
M	84%	73%	91%	78%
All	73%	66%	83%	72%

Source. AISD cumulative student TAKS records, AISD ARRA IDEA ETG project records

Note. Different students may have participated in tutoring each year, thus the TAKS passing rates may describe results for different sets of students. It is possible that other special education students received other types of tutoring separate from this project.

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