Austin Independent School District
*Department of Program Evaluation*

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# ACCELERATED READING AND MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION EVALUATION REPORT, 2007–2008

The Student Success Initiative (SSI) was created by the 76th Texas Legislature (1999) to ensure that all students receive the instruction and support they need to be academically successful in reading and mathematics (math). For SSI grade advancement during the 2007–2008 school year, students were required to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) grade 3 reading test to be promoted to grade 4, to pass the grade 5 reading and math tests to be promoted to grade 6, and to pass the grade 8 reading and math tests to be promoted to grade 9 (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2007a). The state funding sources established to support SSI are the Accelerated Reading Instruction (ARI) and Accelerated Mathematics Instruction (AMI) entitlements. In 2007–2008, ARI and AMI funds were available for school districts to provide intensive, targeted instruction for students in kindergarten through grade 8 (K–8) who had been identified as at risk for reading or math difficulties (TEA, 2007b).

SSI students had three opportunities to pass 2008 TAKS reading (grades 3, 5, and 8) or TAKS math (grades 5 and 8) tests. The Grade Placement Committee (GPC) was convened for an SSI student who failed a TAKS test (TEA, 2007a). The committee consisted of the student's principal, parent or guardian, and reading or math teacher. After reviewing all facts, circumstances, and local school board standards, the GPC could promote the student if members concluded by unanimous decision that the student was likely to perform on grade level, given additional accelerated instruction during the next school year.

This report summarizes intervention efforts by the Austin Independent School District (AISD) to provide academic support to K–8 students at risk for reading or math difficulties. All K–8 reading and math intervention services were documented by intervention teachers, and progress monitoring forms were submitted to the AISD Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) for use in this evaluation.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The AISD intervention model incorporates a three-tiered approach for struggling learners: in the classroom (Level I); before, during, or after school (Level II); and summer school for students in targeted grades who did not pass TAKS reading or TAKS math (Level III) (AISD, 2005). Although all K–8 students who have been identified as at risk for reading and/or math difficulties are eligible, Texas Education code TEC §28.006 requires districts to provide accelerated instruction to a student after he or she has not met the standard on a TAKS test required by SSI (TEA, 2007b). Therefore, in 2007-2008, the district emphasized reading

intervention at grades 3, 5, and 8 and math intervention at grades 5 and 8.

Elementary students were eligible to receive accelerated reading instruction, based on poor performance on one or more of the following reading assessments: Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), Tejas LEE, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Flynt-Cooter (FC) informal reading inventory, district benchmark assessments, and TAKS reading. Students who failed the 2007 grade 5 TAKS math test and/or who scored low on the district's beginning-of-year benchmark tests in math were eligible to participate during 2007–2008. Eligibility for middle school intervention was based on a student's poor performance on district benchmark assessments or the previous year's TAKS reading and TAKS math tests.

The ARI and AMI school-year intervention program was established to provide Level II intervention services to groups of 5 to 10 students for 2 to 3 hours per week (AISD, 2005). Although most intervention classes met after school, some intervention classes were held before school or on Saturdays. Fall and spring sessions were offered at most schools. The program design included a special session for students in grades 3, 5, and 8 who did not pass the first administration of TAKS (reading and/or math), and a summer school session (Level III) for students who did not pass the second administration of TAKS (reading and/or math). Specific curricula and materials were provided for intervention classes, and teachers participated in professional development opportunities. At the elementary school campuses, funds were available for a mentor teacher to support ARI and AMI teachers for up to 2 hours per week. The middle school programs had a contact person (e.g., assistant principal, instructional coach) who served as a liaison with program staff.

Although the grade 8 SSI promotion requirement was added in 2007–2008, the ARI/AMI allocation for AISD was $3,342,600, a decrease of 3% from the 2006–2007 allocation of $3,450,977. The 2007–2008 allocation for ARI was based on the number of grade 3 students who did not meet the passing standard on the first administration of 2007 TAKS reading. Funding for AMI was based on the number of grade 5 students who did not meet the passing standard on the first administration of the 2007 TAKS math test. As district results for the first administration improve, the ARI and AMI allocations decrease. The 2007–2008 distribution of grant funds was as follows: 54% payroll costs, 42% supplies and materials, 2% professional and contracted services, and 2% other operating costs.

To supplement the ARI/AMI entitlement, campus staff used other resources (e.g., local funds and such grant funds as Reading First, Optional Extended Year Program [OEYP], 21st Century, Title I, Prime Time, and Account for Learning [AFL]) to support interventions for students in grades K–8 who were identified as being at risk for reading or math difficulties.

### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

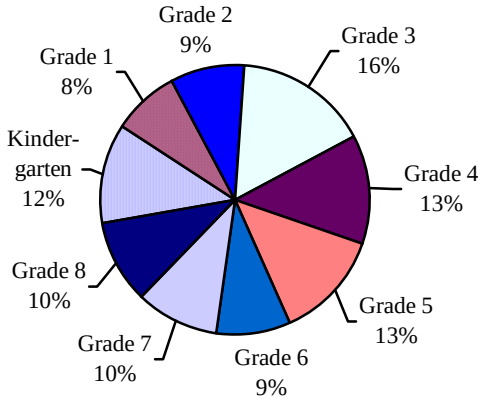
During the 2007–2008 school year, 23,491 AISD K–8 students participated in reading and/or math interventions, representing a range of funding sources. This unduplicated count represents a 17% increase in the number of students served, compared with the number in 2006–2007 (n = 19,531). According to AISD student records, demographic and enrollment information for K–8 reading and math intervention students in 2007–2008 included the following:

- Fifty-four percent (n = 12,628) were male students.
- Eighty-three percent (n = 19,429) were from low-income families.

- Forty-four percent (n = 10,256) were English language learners (ELLs).
- Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic group (n = 17,076, or 73%), followed by African American (n = 3,403, or 14%), Anglo/other (n = 2,577, or 11%), and Asian (n = 387, or 2%) students.
- Eighty-two percent of accelerated instruction was provided in English, 11% in Spanish, and 7% in a combination of English and Spanish.

Compared with students in other grades, a greater percentage (16%) of grade 3 students participated in reading and math interventions. The grade distribution for 2007–2008 reading and math intervention students in K–8 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Reading and Math Intervention Students, by Grade, 2007–2008




*Source.* DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008

**INTERVENTION SERVICES**

According to AISD's beginning-of-year benchmark test data and 2007 TAKS scores, 24% (n = 13,706) of all AISD K–8 students were eligible for reading intervention and 36% (n = 15,137) of students in grades 2 through 8 were eligible for math intervention in 2007–2008. Based on assessment data, the highest-need students were selected for interventions funded by ARI or AMI. Principals used other funding sources, when available, to extend this intervention opportunity to other students at risk for reading or math difficulties.

Of the 23,491 K–8 students who received accelerated reading or math instruction outside of the regular classroom, 7,255 (31%) students participated in both reading and math interventions, for a total of 30,746 intervention services during 2007–2008. Of the total number of K–8 interventions provided, eligibility and participation information included the following:

- Sixty percent (n = 18,484) of interventions were for reading and 40% (n = 12,263) were for math.
- Sixty-seven percent (n = 21,666) of all interventions were for elementary students.
- ARI provided funding for 32% (n = 5,860) of reading interventions.
- AMI provided funding for 56% (n = 6,854) of math interventions.
- Fifty-five percent (n = 13,012) of K–8 intervention students participated in more than one intervention opportunity.

Table 1 presents a duplicated count of students comprising the total number of interventions provided. Numbers are unduplicated within a subject. For example, if a student participated in ARI and other reading interventions, that student was counted only in the ARI

category. The same was true for math intervention students. Thus, students could be counted once in reading and/or once in math interventions.

Table 1. Accelerated Reading and Mathematics Instruction Participants, by Grade Level and Type of Intervention, 2007–2008

| | Students served by type of intervention | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade | # ARI | # Other reading | Total reading | #AMI | #Other math | Total math | All interventions |
| **K** | 39 | 2,711 | 2,750 | 11 | 46 | 57 | 2,807 |
| **1** | 113 | 1,777 | 1,890 | 0 | 85 | 85 | 1,975 |
| **2** | 75 | 1,787 | 1,862 | 81 | 399 | 480 | 2,342 |
| **3** | 1,848 | 1,366 | 3,214 | 1,405 | 743 | 2,148 | 5,362 |
| **4** | 1,227 | 1,131 | 2,358 | 1,361 | 780 | 2,141 | 4,499 |
| **5** | 1,468 | 879 | 2,347 | 1,899 | 435 | 2,334 | 4,681 |
| **6** | 373 | 969 | 1,342 | 590 | 796 | 1,386 | 2,728 |
| **7** | 294 | 1,005 | 1,299 | 532 | 1,095 | 1,627 | 2,926 |
| **8** | 423 | 999 | 1,422 | 975 | 1,029 | 2,004 | 3,426 |
| **Totals** | **5,860** | **12,624** | **18,484** | **6,854** | **5,408** | **12,262** | **30,746** |

*Source.* DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008
*Note.* Numbers are unduplicated within subject, but a student could be counted in both subjects.

## STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The effectiveness of the AISD K–8 reading and math intervention program was evaluated by reviewing the end-of-year assessments. For K–2 students, the early reading assessments revealed whether students were on grade level at the end of the school year. TAKS reading and TAKS math results for 2008 were used to determine the effectiveness of interventions for students in grades 3 through 8. This section provides student achievement data for students who participated in reading and/or math interventions and for district students.

### K–2 INTERVENTION STUDENTS

In Fall 2007, 7,722 (36%) of all AISD students in grades K–2 were identified for reading intervention. Eighty-five percent (n = 6,502) of all identified K–2 students received reading interventions: 227 in the ARI program and 6,275 in a program funded by a source other than ARI (e.g., AFL, bilingual summer school, local reading specialists, Reading First, and Title I). Reading levels for intervention students in grades K–2 were determined by using one or more of the state-approved early reading tests. To help prepare for the 2008–2009 school year, a majority (51%) of the kindergarten students who participated in reading interventions attended the 2008 ELL Summer School for pre-K and kindergarten students. Of the students in grades K–2 who received reading interventions and had end-of-year assessments, 48% (n = 3,042) were considered to be on grade level in reading by May 2008.

AISD developed benchmark math tests for students in grades 2 through 12 to aid in diagnosing student math difficulties, based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum. Of the 936 grade 2 students identified on the benchmark test as being at risk for math difficulties, 480 (52%) participated in math interventions outside the classroom: 81 in the AMI

program and 399 in a program funded by a source other than AMI (e.g., AFL, local math specialists, and Title I). Twenty-seven percent (n = 43) of the intervention students had a score at or above 70% on the end-of-year benchmark test. No district or state math assessments exist for students in grades K–1.

### GRADE 3 THROUGH 5 INTERVENTION STUDENTS

Students in SSI grades and subjects received 37% (n = 11,321) of all reading and math intervention opportunities during 2007–2008. As a result of this focus, and after three administrations of TAKS, the percentages of students passing grade 3 reading (88%), grade 5 reading (75%), and grade 5 math (69%) were greater than the percentages of students passing in non-SSI grades and subjects (i.e., grade 3 math and grade 4 reading and math). Overall, 75% of elementary intervention students passed in reading and 65% passed in math (Table 2).

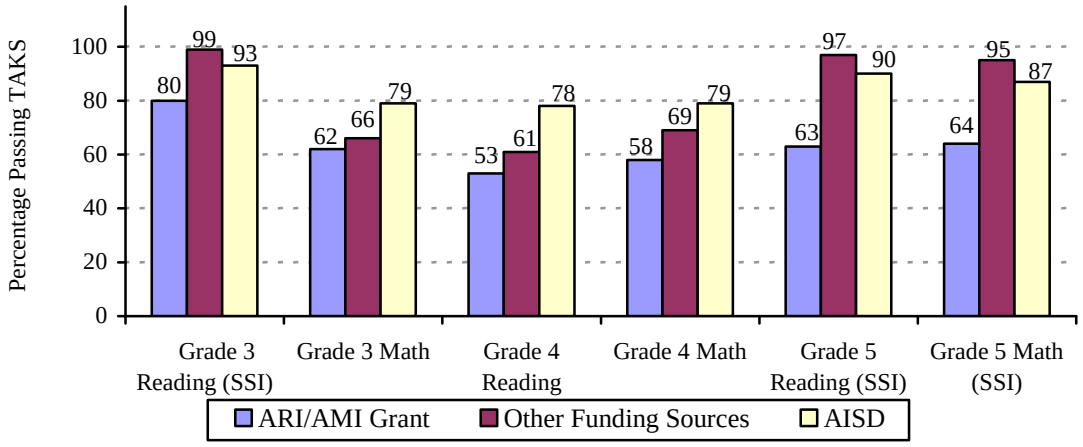
Table 2. Reading and Math Intervention Students in Grades 3 through 5 Who Passed the 2008 TAKS (Cumulative)

| | Reading | | | Math | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade** | **# Tested** | **# Passed** | **% Passed** | **# Tested** | **# Passed** | **% Passed** |
| **3** | 2,973 | 2,607 | 88% | 2,004 | 1,278 | 64% |
| **4** | 2,166 | 1,222 | 56% | 1,987 | 1,235 | 62% |
| **5** | 2,095 | 1,570 | 75% | 2,161 | 1,496 | 69% |
| **Total** | **7,234** | **5,399** | **75%** | **6,152** | **4,009** | **65%** |

*Source.* DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008 and 2008 TAKS files
*Note*. Highlighted percentages were subject to SSI grade advancement requirements.

The majority (59%) of all interventions were funded by a source other than ARI or AMI. The percentages of students who participated in other reading and math interventions and passed TAKS were greater than the percentages of ARI or AMI students who passed, which may be due in part to ARI and AMI serving highest needs students. District passing percentages for reading and math in non-SSI grades and subjects were below 80%, while district passing percentages for SSI grades and subjects ranged from 87 (grade 5 math) to 93 (grade 3 reading) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Grade 3 through 5 Students Passing the 2008 TAKS (Cumulative), by Subject and Program




*Source.* DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008 and 2008 TAKS files

### GRADE 6 THROUGH 8 INTERVENTION STUDENTS

In 2007–2008, targeted intervention was extended to grade 8 students identified as at risk for difficulties in reading or math for the first time. Middle schools experienced an additional impact in 2007–2008 when they were required to offer intervention to students who failed one or more 2007 grade 5 TAKS tests and were promoted to grade 6.

In Summer 2007, elementary school GPCs met and decided to promote 826 students who failed one or more 2007 grade 5 TAKS tests (76 remained at elementary and 751 moved to middle school). Of the 751 students who were promoted to grade 6 at middle schools, 193 (26%) failed reading only, 314 (42%) failed math only, and 244 (32%) failed both reading and math in 2008. In addition to intervention outside of the classroom, academic classes were scheduled during the regular school day, targeting students who needed additional instructional time in reading or math.

The overall TAKS results for intervention students in grades 6, 7, and 8 showed that 67% passed TAKS reading and 51% passed TAKS math. As was the case for elementary intervention students, the percentages of SSI students in grade 8 who passed TAKS reading (81%) and TAKS math (58%) were greater than the percentages of students in non-SSI grades and subjects who passed. Between 43% and 67% of intervention students in the grades and subjects for which SSI requirements did not apply passed after one administration of TAKS. Grade 7 had the lowest percentages of students passing TAKS reading (50%) and TAKS math (43%) of all the grade levels that participated in interventions during 2007–2008. Table 3 shows the cumulative percentages of students in grades 6 through 8 who participated in reading and/or math interventions from Fall 2007 through July 2008 and passed the TAKS.

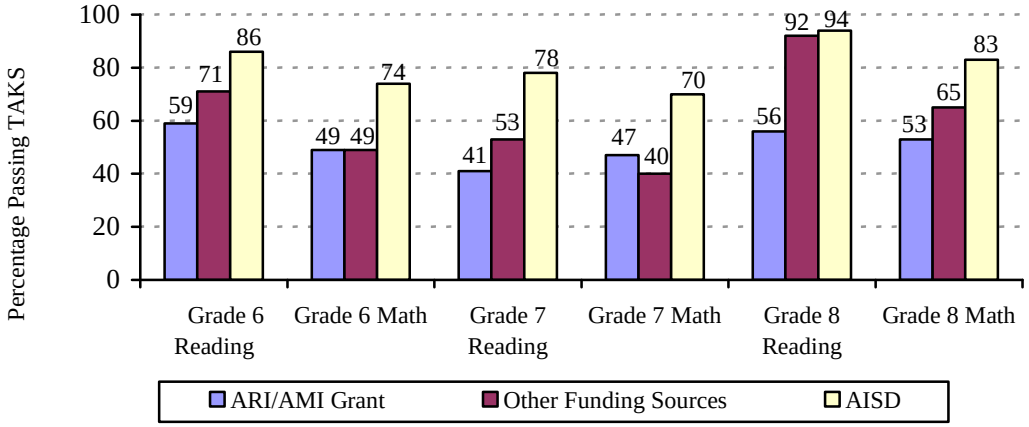
Table 3. Reading and Math Intervention Students in Grades 6 through 8 Who Passed the 2008 TAKS (Cumulative)

| | Reading | | | Math | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade** | **# Tested** | **# Passed** | **% Passed** | **# Tested** | **# Passed** | **% Passed** |
| **6** | 1,113 | 750 | 67% | 1,036 | 507 | 49% |
| **7** | 1,028 | 513 | 50% | 1,167 | 504 | 43% |
| **8** | 1,129 | 913 | 81% | 1,557 | 909 | 58% |
| **Total** | **3,270** | **2,176** | **67%** | **3,760** | **1,920** | **51%** |

*Source.* DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008 and 2008 TAKS files
*Note.* Highlighted percentages were subject to SSI grade advancement requirements.

In 2007–2008, 38% all middle school reading and math interventions were focused at grade 8. Middle schools offered some daytime intervention courses to students who were at risk of difficulties in reading and/or math. As was true for elementary interventions, the percentages of SSI students in other reading and math interventions who passed were greater than the percentages of ARI or AMI students who passed. As shown in Figure 3, grade 6 math and grade 7 reading and math were below 80%, while district passing percentages for grade 8 SSI students were 94 for reading and 83 for math.

Figure 3. Grade 6 through 8 Students Passing 2008 TAKS (Cumulative), by Subject and Program




*Source*. DPE ARI/AMI/other intervention participation records, 2007–2008 and 2008 TAKS files

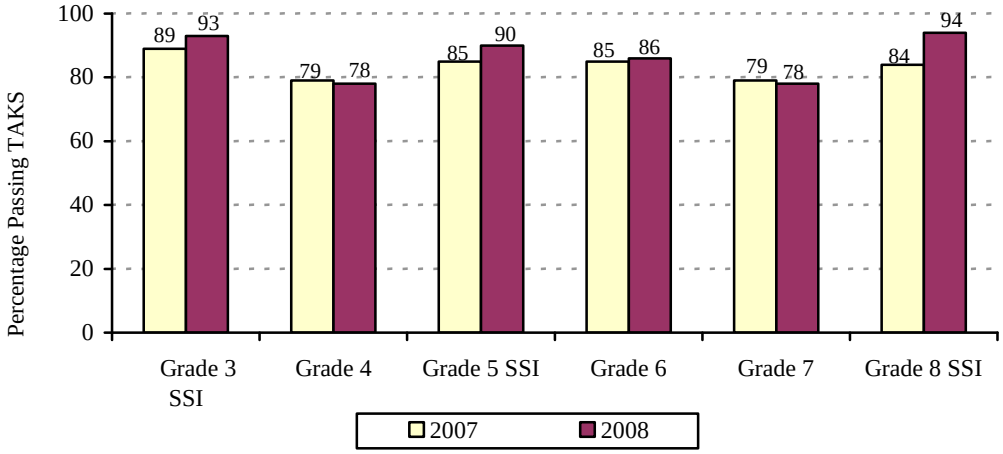
## 2-YEAR SUMMARY OF DISTRICT TAKS FOR GRADES 3 THROUGH 8

Overall, TAKS passing percentages increased from 2007 to 2008 for intervention students in SSI grades and subjects. In 2007-2008, 82% of all SSI reading intervention students (72% in 2006-2007) passed TAKS reading and 65% of SSI math intervention students (62% in 2006-2007) passed TAKS math, even though grade 8 was added to the SSI promotion requirement. A review of 2007 and 2008 district TAKS reading and math data for all AISD students in grades 3 through 8 shows that, in most cases, the percentages of AISD students passing TAKS reading or TAKS math increased from 2007 to 2008.

### TAKS Reading

With the exception of grades 4 and 7, the percentages of AISD students in grades 3 through 8 passing TAKS reading increased from 2007 to 2008. The 10-point increase in the percentage of grade 8 students passing TAKS reading from 2007 to 2008 is especially impressive. This represents a positive impact in the first year of targeted intervention to grade 8 students subject to the SSI promotion requirement in 2008. Figure 4 shows the percentages of all AISD students passing TAKS reading in 2007 and 2008.

Figure 4. 2007 and 2008 Cumulative District Rates for Students Passing TAKS Reading

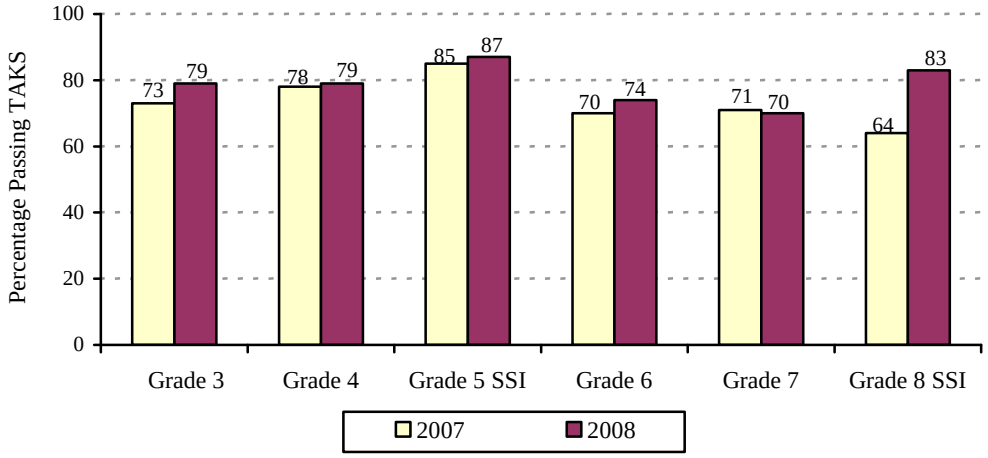



*Source.* AISD 2007 and 2008 TAKS files

### TAKS Math

With the exception of grade 7, the percentages of AISD students in grades 3 through 8 passing TAKS math increased from 2007 to 2008. As was the case with grade 8 reading, the increase in percentage of students in the district passing grade 8 TAKS math is impressive. The percentage of grade 8 students passing TAKS math increased from 64% in 2007 to 83% in 2008, likely a result of the targeted intervention and three opportunities to pass TAKS. Figure 5 shows the percentages of all AISD students passing TAKS math in 2007 and 2008.

Figure 5. 2007 and 2008 Cumulative District Rates for Students Passing TAKS Mathematics




*Source.* AISD 2007 and 2008 TAKS files

## SUMMER SCHOOL 2008

Summer school played an important role for students in grades 3, 5, and 8 who were subject to SSI grade promotion requirements. This was their last attempt to meet the passing standard on TAKS reading and/or TAKS math. The elementary summer school program was an extension of the school year program to advance student achievement to pass the third administration of TAKS for SSI students. Summer school 2008 student data were included in the aggregated reading and math intervention data presented previously.

### ELEMENTARY SSI SUMMER SCHOOL

In June and July 2008, 1,548 students (532 in grade 3 and 1,016 in grade 5) attended nine elementary summer school sites for reading and/or math instruction to prepare for the third administration of TAKS. Prior to the start of summer school, 178 teachers (55 in grade 3 and 123 in grade 5) participated in a day and a half of professional development sessions specific to summer school curricula and teaching strategies.

The summer school intervention program lasted 15 days for math and 16 days for reading, including a day for each TAKS test; the 2008 program was two days shorter than the 2007 summer program. Grade 3 students participated in reading instruction only. The numbers and percentages of grade 5 students participating in the daily instruction were as follows: 279 (27%) in 4 hours of reading, 405 (40%) in 4 hours of math, and 332 (33%) in 2 hours of reading and 2 hours of math.

### JULY 2008 TAKS GRADES 3 AND 5

The percentages of summer school grade 3 students overall and Spanish-speaking test takers in grades 3 and 5 passing TAKS reading increased from 2007 to 2008. However, grade 5 summer school students' passing rates for the third administration of the English TAKS tests decreased from 2007 to 2008. Overall, 25% of summer school students in grades 3 and 5 who took the July 2008 tests passed, compared with 30% in June 2007. Table 4 shows the numbers and percentages of summer school students who took and passed TAKS in June 2007 and July 2008, by grade and language.

Table 4. Summer School Students Who Took and Passed TAKS Reading or Mathematics, June 2007 and July 2008

| TAKS grade and subject | June 2007 TAKS | | | July 2008 TAKS | | | % Point |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # Tested | # Passing | % Passing | # Tested | # Passing | % Passing | Change 2007-2008 |
| **Grade 3 reading** | | | | | | | |
| **English** | 334 | 130 | 39% | 276 | 108 | 39% | 0 |
| **Spanish** | 232 | 78 | 34% | 201 | 79 | 39% | +5 |
| **Total** | **566** | **208** | **37%** | **477** | **187** | **39%** | **+2** |
| **Grade 5 reading** | | | | | | | |
| **English** | 560 | 172 | 31% | 489 | 98 | 20% | -11 |
| **Spanish** | 89 | 21 | 24% | 71 | 18 | 25% | +1 |
| **Total** | **649** | **193** | **30%** | **560** | **116** | **21%** | **-9** |
| **Grade 5 math** | | | | | | | |
| **English** | 543 | 158 | 29% | 541 | 108 | 20% | -9 |
| **Spanish** | 121 | 14 | 12% | 145 | 25 | 17% | +5 |
| **Total** | **664** | **172** | **26%** | **686** | **133** | **19%** | **-7** |
| **Summer Total** | **1,868** | **569** | **30%** | **1,723** | **436** | **25%** | **-5** |

*Source.* AISD 2007 and 2008 TAKS files and DPE summer school files
*Note*. The number of grade 5 students is duplicated because students can take both tests.

### July 2008 TAKS Grade 5

In 2007, AISD implemented a plan to extend the summer school instruction to provide more support to the students who would take both tests. The 2007 summer schedule allowed grade 5 students who needed to pass both tests to have 4 hours of instruction in each subject. Due to budgetary restraints in Summer 2008, the district returned to a half-day summer school program, which meant the grade 5 students who needed instruction in both reading and math received 2 hours of instruction, rather than 4 hours of instruction, in each subject. Table 5 shows the numbers and percentages of grade 5 summer school students who took and passed TAKS reading and/or TAKS math by the subject of instruction provided. Six students (2%) who took grade 5 TAKS reading and TAKS math during Summer 2008 passed both tests.

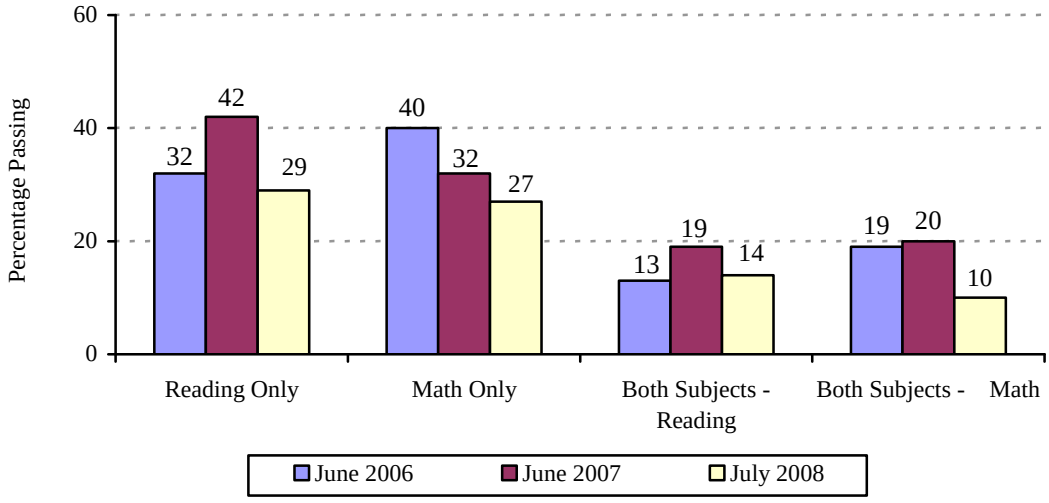
Table 5. Grade 5 Students Passing TAKS Reading and/or Mathematics During 2007 and 2008 Summer Schools, by Intervention Subject

| Grade 5 summer school intervention subject | # Took TAKS reading | # Passed TAKS reading | % Passed TAKS reading | # Took TAKS math | # Passed TAKS math | % Passed TAKS math |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2007 summer school** | | | | | | |
| **Reading only** | 307 | 129 | 42% | - | - | - |
| **Math only** | - | - | - | 322 | 104 | 32% |
| **Reading and math*** | 342 | 64 | 19% | 342 | 68 | 20% |
| **2007 Total** | **649** | **193** | **30%** | **664** | **172** | **26%** |
| **2008 summer school** | | | | | | |
| **Reading only** | 261 | 75 | 29% | - | - | - |
| **Math only** | - | - | - | 387 | 103 | 27% |
| **Reading and math**** | 299 | 41 | 14% | 299 | 30 | 10% |
| **2008 Total** | **560** | **116** | **21%** | **686** | **133** | **19%** |

*Source.* AISD 2007 and 2008 TAKS files and DPE summer school files
* 4 hours of instruction per subject in 2007; ** 2 hours of instruction per subject in 2008

The change in the number of hours of summer school instruction available to grade 5 students who needed to pass both TAKS tests from 4 hours per subject in 2007 to 2 hours in 2008 may have had an impact on the percentages of students passing. Figure 6 compares the rates of grade 5 students who attended summer school and took TAKS reading and/or TAKS math and passed the test(s) in June 2006, June 2007, and July 2008. Grade 5 students needing to pass both tests at the end of summer school had 2 hours of instruction per subject in 2006, 4 hours in 2007, and 2 hours in 2008. In this analysis, the percentage of grade 5 students who took and passed both TAKS reading and TAKS math was highest in 2007 when they received 4 hours of instruction per subject. In every comparison, the passing rate for grade 5 TAKS decreased from 2007 to 2008.

Figure 6. Grade 5 Summer School Students Who Took and Passed TAKS Reading or Mathematics in 2006, 2007, and 2008, by Area of Instruction




*Source.* AISD TAKS files and DPE summer school records for 2006, 2007, and 2008
*Note*. Instruction for students taking both tests-2 hours in 2006, 4 hours in 2007, 2 hours in 2008

Although the goal was for students to pass TAKS at the end of the summer session, it is important to know how many of the students made gains during this final attempt to pass TAKS. To find out if growth occurred during the summer program, an examination of July 2008 TAKS reading scale scores for grade 3 and grade 5 students who attended summer school and who had a previously scored February or April TAKS test was conducted. The same analysis was completed for grade 5 students on TAKS math. The TAKS passing scale score is 2100.

Although only 25% of all students in grade 3 and 5 who attended summer school passed the July TAKS test(s), 62% of all grade 3 and 5 students who attended summer school made gains on their July TAKS scale score, compared with their prior scale score. The percentages of students making gains from the prior TAKS score was 70% for grade 3 reading, 52% for grade 5 reading, and 66% for grade 5 math.

### JULY 2008 RESULTS FOR GRADE 8 STUDENTS

In Summer 2008, grade 8 students attended summer school at four middle school campuses to prepare for the July TAKS tests. Of the 898 grade 8 students who took the July 2008 administrations of the TAKS reading or TAKS math tests, 178 (20%) took both tests. Overall, in July 2008, 18% of grade 8 students passed TAKS reading and 28% passed TAKS math. A greater percentage of students who took one test passed, compared with students who needed to pass both tests (Table 6).

Table 6. Grade 8 Students Who Took and Passed TAKS Reading or Mathematics, by Intervention Subject in July 2008

| Grade 8 summer TAKS subject | # Took TAKS reading | # Passed TAKS reading | % Passed TAKS reading | # Took TAKS math | # Passed TAKS math | % Passed TAKS math |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2008 summer school** | | | | | | |
| **Reading only** | 49 | 14 | 29% | - | - | - |
| **Math only** | - | - | - | 671 | 222 | 33% |
| **Reading and math** | 178 | 26 | 15% | 178 | 12 | 7% |
| **2008 Total** | **227** | **40** | **18%** | **849** | **234** | **28%** |

*Source.* AISD 2008 TAKS files and DPE summer school files

## TEACHER FEEDBACK

In April 2008, all K–8 ARI and AMI teachers, mentor teachers, and contact persons were asked to respond to an online survey about the school-year reading and math intervention programs. Specific topics on the survey included professional development opportunities, curricula and materials, challenges and strengths of the program, and suggestions for improvements to the program. The ARI and AMI professional staff responding to the surveys included 307 teachers and 68 mentor teachers at elementary schools, and 62 teachers and 10 contact persons at middle schools. The following program strengths were mentioned most often.

### ELEMENTARY ARI/AMI PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Elementary intervention teachers shared their thoughts about the value of the additional assistance available to struggling students through the ARI/AMI intervention programs.

According to one intervention teacher, "These programs allow students to access learning and experience success via small group instruction and tailored intervention lessons designed to help them meet success."

**Campus/Program Support (n = 41)**

According to elementary respondents, the program's teachers, administrators, and support staff were dedicated to working together to help students be academically successful. One teacher said "competent and dedicated teachers willing to put in the time needed to make the program effective" were the greatest strength of the program. Another teacher added, "Our teachers are our strength. We are very committed to helping students do their very best."

**Small Group Instruction (n = 38)**

According to teachers, students benefited from individualized instruction in a small group setting at the participating elementary schools. According to one teacher, "Working in small groups allows additional support and encouragement to students. Even though they get this in the classroom, many struggling students need lots of support and encouragement."

**Curricula/Materials (n = 37)**

Teachers appreciated the curricula and materials available for the program. According to one teacher, a strength of the ARI/AMI program was the "great variety of resources to use and monitoring forms to record progress." A list of materials and resources that had a positive impact on student learning during interventions was compiled and given to program managers. One of the mentor teachers summarized the benefit of the program as follows: "Students are passing their TAKS tests. We have provided extensive learning opportunities along with effective teaching to help students make the mark. Our school's increases in students passing have been great. The success could not be accomplished without ARI."

### ELEMENTARY ARI/AMI PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

Although ARI and AMI teachers, mentor teachers, and contact persons praised the efforts of the district to offer support for students at risk of reading or math difficulties, they made the following suggestions to improve the intervention program.

**Focus on Early Intervention (n = 57)**

Elementary teachers emphasized the need to expand the program to reach more students, particularly K–2 students. On the survey, 94% of elementary ARI and AMI teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "At my campus, TAKS test takers in SSI grades and subjects who need additional instruction time receive intervention outside of the classroom." However, they expressed less agreement about intervention for K–2 students: 26% agreed or strongly agreed that K–2 students who needed additional instruction in math received intervention; and 45% agreed or strongly agreed that K–2 students who needed additional instruction in reading received intervention. One teacher said, "Allowing greater access to interventions for K–2 would move us leaps and bounds toward where we want to be. I believe early intervention is critical to addressing student needs before they become compounded and more difficult to cover." As discussed earlier in this report, K–2 students who needed additional instruction time were not the

focus of most intervention programs because they were not subject to the SSI grade advancement requirements.

**Curricula/Materials (n = 43)**

Teachers gave suggestions about specific types of materials that would be helpful in interventions, including more Spanish materials, TAKS-formatted materials, educational computer software, and math manipulatives. A list of suggestions for additional curricula and materials was given to program staff.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ARI/AMI PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Middle school ARI and AMI teachers believed the reading and math intervention efforts at their campuses were helping students pass TAKS or other state tests (94% agreed or strongly agreed). According to one middle school contact person for the grant, "Students who attend have a higher rate of passing state assessments. In fact, our 8$^{th}$ graders who took the ARI intervention had a 100% passing rate the first time they took TAKS."

ARI and AMI teachers and contact persons were asked to respond to the survey question, "What do you think are the major challenges for AISD to provide reading and math intervention to middle school students who are at risk of failing TAKS?"

According to middle school ARI and AMI teachers (n = 20) student attendance was the major challenges for the intervention program. Motivating students to attend and stay focused at the end of the day was difficult when other after-school activities competed with the intervention. Many teachers indicated that students would benefit more from electives that provided intervention during the school day than they would from interventions after school or on weekends. According to one teacher, "Many of the students who are at risk of failing the TAKS are students who have poor attendance or family matters that interfere with their ability to stay after school. More adult mentors are needed for these students." Although 76% of elementary teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students enrolled in intervention classes attended regularly, only 52% of middle school teachers responded positively about student attendance at intervention classes.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ARI/AMI PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

Although challenges occurred for the middle school ARI and AMI programs, 87% of intervention teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The administrators at my campus provide support to make this intervention beneficial for students." When asked for ways to improve the program, middle school respondents said it was important to provide more intervention during the school day (n = 10). Because it was difficult to get students to attend after-school or Saturday intervention classes, many middle school teachers suggested that more intervention opportunities are needed during the school day. According to one teacher, "AISD needs to reach the students during the school day. The kids don't care about learning after school—they are tired and all they want to do is go home." Other teacher suggestions included the need for more resources selected by teachers, more buses so more students can participate, and additional computer/technology resources.

## SUMMARY

The 2007–2008 school year was the final year of implementation of the SSI with the expansion of the grade advancement requirement to grade 8. The students in grade 8 during 2007–2008 were in kindergarten when the initiative began in 1999–2000. Due to limited resources and increased demand, offering intervention services to all students who could benefit from additional small group instruction had become extremely difficult. AISD's 2007–2008 ARI/AMI entitlement for AISD of $3,342,600 for reading and math intervention for K–8 students was supplemented by funds from other grants or programs (e.g., Reading First, OEYP, 21st Century, Title I, Prime Time, AFL).

Of the 23,491 K–8 students who participated in reading or math interventions in 2007–2008, 31% participated in both. SSI students had three opportunities to pass TAKS during 2007–2008. TAKS results for SSI intervention students indicated that 88% of grade 3, 75% of grade 5, and 81% of grade 8 intervention students passed TAKS reading, and 69% of grade 5 and 58% of grade 8 intervention students passed TAKS math. For reading and math intervention students not in grades subject to SSI grade advancement requirements, the percentages of students passing TAKS ranged from 43% to 67%.

A review of 2007 and 2008 TAKS reading data for AISD students in grades K–8 shows that with the exception of grades 4 and 7, the percentages of students passing TAKS reading increased for the grades on which the ARI grant has an impact. The almost 10 point increase in the percentage of grade 8 students passing TAKS reading from 2007 to 2008 is especially impressive. This represents a positive impact in the first year of targeted intervention to grade 8 students subject to the SSI promotion requirement in 2008. The increase in percentage of students in the district passing the grade 8 TAKS math is impressive, as well. The percentage of all AISD grade 8 students passing TAKS math increased from 64 in 2007 to 83 in 2008.

Although much has been accomplished through the district's reading and math intervention programs, much remains to be done. It is critical that (a) classroom teachers have skills to assist struggling students (i.e., professional development opportunities); (b) parents cooperate with teachers in efforts to provide academic support to their students (i.e., parental involvement opportunities); and (c) students have early and frequent opportunities to succeed (i.e., early intervention).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for reading and math interventions is great among AISD students. In the 2007–2008 school year, 24% of all K–8 students were eligible for reading interventions, and 36% of students in grades 2 through 8 were eligible for math interventions. The following recommendations to improve the K–8 intervention programs in 2008–2009 are offered to district decision makers for consideration.

- Provide teacher training to expand knowledge and increase effective use of classroom-based reading and math intervention strategies, and to support intervention programs outside the classroom.

- Focus more resources on early intervention. Elementary teachers emphasized the need to expand the program to reach more students, particularly K–2 students.
- Provide more intervention opportunities during the school day to reach more students without compromising instruction in other core content areas—especially at middle school, where intervention teachers reported that extended-day and extended-week interventions were poorly attended.
- Return 2009 summer school instruction time to 4 hours per subject for elementary grade 5 SSI students. In this analysis, grade 5 students who took both TAKS reading and TAKS math were more likely to pass when they received 4 hours of instruction per subject than when they only received 2 hours.
- Continue to maximize intervention funds by coordinating ARI and AMI instruction efforts with other entitlement and grant programs at the campus and district level to provide interventions for all K–8 students who have been determined to be at risk for reading and/or math difficulties. As the percentage of students passing TAKS increase, ARI/AMI funding decreases, which will necessitate the use of multiple funding sources.

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# AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT




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