Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities

EVALUATION REPORT, 2003-2004

Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation
December 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Austin Independent School District (AISD) has received federal funding through the Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant since the 1987-1988 school year. The purpose of the SDFSC grant is to supplement state and local educational organizations' efforts towards education on and prevention of substance abuse and violence. During the 2003-2004 school year, AISD received a total Title IV grant of $507,934. These funds were used to provide districtwide student programs and support services as well as campus-level initiatives. In conjunction with other federal and local grants, as well as with the support and services provided by community agencies, AISD provided drug and violence prevention education and programming to sustain and buoy identified protective factors for over 80,000 students both within AISD and in the private, non-profit, and delinquent facilities within the district's boundaries.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Substances. Based on both discipline referral rates and student reports, the prevalence of alcohol and drug use among 7th through 12th graders showed an increase in the 2003-2004 academic year. The number of students disciplined for alcohol-related offenses increased by 12%. Student self-report surveys also reflected a significant increase in alcohol use, with higher rates of students reporting that they had used alcohol within the past month. There also was a districtwide increase in the number of students disciplined for possession or use of marijuana (12%), corroborated by high school students most frequently reporting that they considered marijuana to be the most serious problem on their campus (28%). Although student self reports only reflected an increase at the middle school level in the number of students who reported using tobacco within the past month, 46% more students (52% more in middle schools, 35% more in high schools) were disciplined for tobacco-related offenses in 2003-2004 than in 2002-2003.

Safety. The number of students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression showed a considerable increase over the rates reported in 2003-2004 for elementary students (30% increase), middle school students (14% increase), and high school students (24% increase). In addition, both 7th and 8th grade students and middle school teachers overwhelmingly reported that school safety is the most serious problem on their campus.

Nonetheless, the majority of students (84%) and teachers (93%) continue to report feeling at least somewhat safe at school.

PROGRAMS

During 2003-2004, districtwide student programs (PAL, ROPES, and INVEST/Positive Families) served students as well as staff members and other adults. In addition to the districtwide programs, selected elementary campuses and all secondary campuses in AISD were allotted funds with which to conduct their own student program initiatives based on individual campus needs. Although campuses continue to use a large portion of their funds (22%) on one-time events and assemblies, there was a significant increase (80%) in the percentage of funds that was spent on classroom-based education efforts, such as character education and drug and violence prevention instruction (34%). Overall, campus administrators reported positive outcomes as a result of their programs, including decreased discipline referrals and increased student knowledge about the dangers of substance use.

Support services also contributed to districtwide prevention efforts. A behavior specialist provided assistance with the development and modification of student behavior intervention plans at middle school campuses. Two drug prevention counselors provided service referrals and other focused services at two AISD schools with high at-risk student populations, and one program specialist in Guidance and Counseling provided staff development and leadership regarding promoting healthy, safe schools to all AISD school counselors. In addition, a data processing assistant facilitated timely and accurate entry and analysis of student discipline data and assisted with the creation and regular dissemination of discipline data to campuses.

Districtwide support also was provided in the form of professional development. A core group of district and campus level staff received specialized training in Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) as part of an initiative to explore the benefits and processes of PBS and lay the groundwork for implementation across the district. Additional training of campus staff and behavior support teams from two pilot campuses began in the spring.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation of the AISD Title IV program was conducted using multiple sources of data. District discipline data were a primary source of information regarding the incidence rates of violence and substance use and possession on campus. A districtwide student

survey of 4th-12th graders also was conducted to determine attitudes regarding school safety and substance use as well as self-reported prevalence of substance use. In addition, campus administrators, teachers, and staff were surveyed for their perceptions of substance use and safety issues on their campuses. Based on findings from this evaluation, several recommendations are made.

1. **Coordinate and consolidate programming related to districtwide Title IV goals and priorities.**

    Continued decreased funding coupled with increased numbers of students being disciplined for drug use and for verbal and physical aggression during 2003-2004 indicate that the Title IV program at AISD needs to become more focused. The district must expend Title IV funds only on activities that adhere to the Principles of Effectiveness and are proven through research to be effective at preventing violence and substance use. Program management needs to consolidate efforts to provide the greatest amount of impact possible, rather than continue to meagerly support an array of programs that fail to meet their potential due to the constraints of under funding, delayed execution, or poor match to actual needs. Districtwide program goals need to be more succinct and should include priorities for action.

2. **Job responsibilities and funding source(s) of all Title IV grant personnel need to be functionally and proportionally aligned.**

    In line with the goals of focus and consolidation, all personnel funded by the Title IV grant should be functionally and proportionally aligned with goals and objectives of the grant. Specifically, all grant-funded staff should clearly understand their roles in supporting the larger districtwide Title IV program goals. In addition, the proportion of funding drawn from Title IV for each (fully- or partially-) funded individual should be equal to the proportion of their duties that are related to Title IV activities.

3. **Eliminate or restrict use of campus-based program funding.**

    Title IV funding for campus-based programs should either be completely eliminated or restricted to a limited number of selected programs. Further, if not eliminated, the programs available for campus selection must: satisfy the federal requirement that funds be spent only for proven, effective, and research-based programs; adhere to the Principles of Effectiveness; be chosen based on identified district and campus needs; and be aligned with a districtwide initiative or effort in support of Title IV goals.

4. Make better use of existing ROPES facilities and of Title IV funds.

Funds that are used to support offsite participation in ROPES could be shifted to fund ROPES facilitators to staff existing AISD ROPES facilities that are currently underutilized. This would be more cost-effective and contribute to program quality and consistency.

PREFACE

Staff in the Department of Program Evaluation evaluate the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program in compliance with federal Title IV SDFSC legislation, state law, and district mandates. Some of the outputs of the evaluation include a standardized report to the Texas Education Association (TEA), the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) addendum, and this narrative report, which help to fulfill some of the requirements of the Principles of Effectiveness (see below) mandated by the federal grant.

SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVENESS

Principle 1: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall base their programs on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems in the schools and communities served.

Principle 2: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall establish measurable goals and objectives aimed at ensuring that the elementary and secondary schools and the communities to be served by the programs have safe, orderly, and drug-free learning environments, and design their programs to meet those goals and objectives.

Principle 3: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall design and implement their programs for youth based on scientific research or evaluation that provides evidence that the programs used prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior among youth.

Principle 4: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall base their programs on the prevalence of risk factors, including high or increasing rates of reported cases of child abuse and domestic violence; protective factors, buffers, assets, or other variables in schools and communities in the State identified through scientifically based research;

Principle 5: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall include meaningful and ongoing consultation with and input from parents in the development of applications and administration of programs or activities.

Principle 6: Recipients of SDFSC funds shall evaluate their programs periodically to assess progress toward achieving goals and objectives, and use evaluation results to refine, improve, and strengthen programs, and to refine goals and objectives as appropriate.

Source: No Child Left Behind Act (Sec. 4115.a), U.S. Department of Education, 2002

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INTRODUCTION: TITLE IV AT AISD

Austin Independent School District (AISD) has received federal funding through the Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant since the 1987-88 school year. The purpose of the SDFSC grant is to supplement state and local educational organizations' efforts towards education on and prevention of drug abuse and violence. Grant funds are funneled from the U.S. Department of Education, through state education agencies (e.g., the Texas Education Agency), to school districts and other entities at the local level. From the 1995-96 funding year until 2001-2002, supplemental funds were provided to districts that showed "greatest need." However, the funding formula was changed in 2002-2003, eliminating supplemental grant allocations to districts. This change has resulted in an overall reduction in Title IV funding at AISD (Figure 1).

Figure 1: AISD Title IV SDFSC Grant Allocations, 1995-96 through 2003-2004
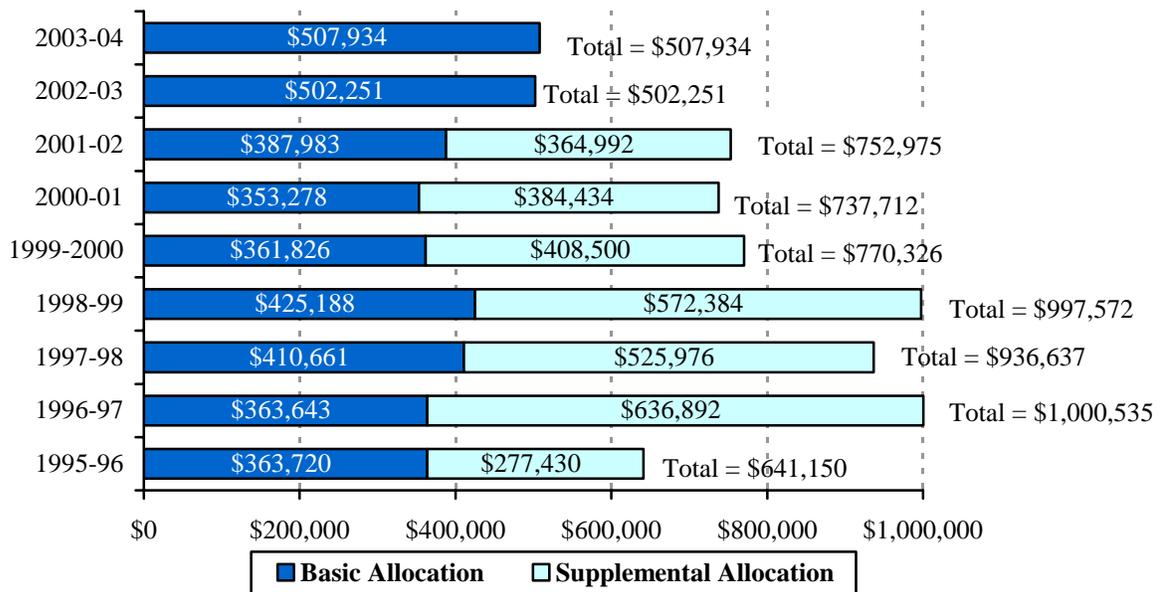
Note – Allocation for each year includes only monies awarded during that funding cycle. Funds rolled forward from previous funding cycles are not included.
Source: AISD grant records.

During the 2003-2004 school year, AISD received a total Title IV grant of $507,934, which was used to provide districtwide student programs and support services as well as campus-level initiatives. Title IV funding provides only part of the programming for drug and violence prevention in AISD. Federal and local grants, as well as the support

and in-kind services provided by community agencies, are essential to the provision of drug and violence prevention education and programming at AISD. Agencies including (but not limited to) Lifeworks, YMCA, American Cancer Society, Communities in Schools, and Safe Place provide services such as curricula, counseling, mentoring, and structured group activities to students at schools across the district (Appendix A). Combined, community and grant-funded programming sustains and buoys identified protective factors for over 80,000 students within AISD and in the private, non-profit, and delinquent facilities within the district's boundaries.

AISD takes a multi-faceted approach to providing drug and violence prevention education through Title IV. In addition to programs aimed at student education on violence and substance use prevention, Title IV funding was used in 2003-2004 to provide districtwide support services in the form of specialized personnel, professional development, and program evaluation. In 2003-2004, $200,317 (44%) of the Title IV budget was spent on student programs (such as ROPES, PALs, and other campus based initiatives), and the remainder was expended for districtwide support services (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Total AISD Title IV Expenditures by Program Component, 2003-2004

Districtwide Support Services

- Counseling* 33%
- Professional Development 11%
- Evaluation 7%
- Administration 2%
- Other 3%

44%

Student Programs

- PAL 4%
- INVEST/ Positive Families 7%
- Campus Programs 10%
- ROPES 23%
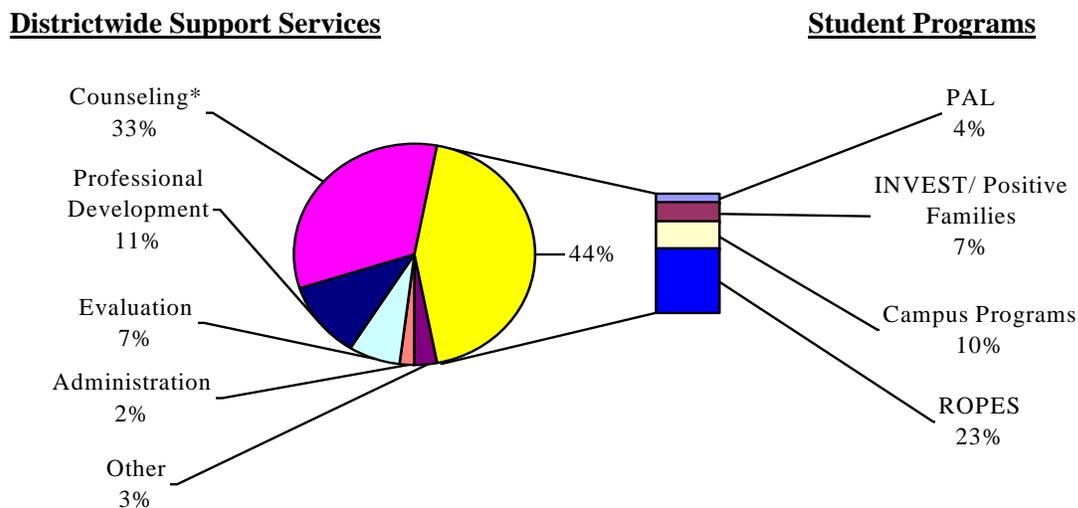
* Two of the funded counselors were housed at Garza and the ALC, secondary campuses that have no specified attendance zones. Garza is an alternative high school into which students choose to transfer, and the ALC is the district's disciplinary alternative education program.
Source: 2003-2004 AISD Title IV Budget

Three of the student programs, PAL, ROPES, and INVEST/Positive Families, are offered centrally to students from home campuses across the district. PAL is a peer mentor

program in which older students (PALs) mentor younger students (PALees) in their own school or in schools in their vertical teams. The ROPES program consists of a series of workshops designed around physical challenges that provide experiential learning opportunities for students. INVEST and Positive Families are school-based curriculum programs for middle and high school students and their parents, available to students referred to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) for first-time misdemeanor drug or alcohol offenses (INVEST) or for physical aggression, fighting, or persistent misbehavior (Positive Families).

In addition to districtwide programs, each secondary campus received Title IV funds to implement their own student programs based on campus-specific needs. Some campus administrators used their funds to supplement districtwide programs at their campus. Campus programs are described in Part 2 of this report.

Districtwide support services provided a foundation and structure for the student programs. Two full time counselors who specialize in drug and violence prevention services and one partially funded counseling program specialist were available to assist schools with their specialized needs. In addition, a behavior specialist provided supplemental assistance to middle school staff in developing strategies to support students with severe behavior difficulties. Curriculum materials and professional development in the areas of violence and drug prevention were provided. In addition, specialized training in Positive Behavior Supports was provided for a core group of district and campus level staff. Finally, a portion of the funding was used to support discipline data management, for administration of the grant, and for evaluation of the programs implemented through grant funds. The components of districtwide support services are described in Part 3 of this report.

Although no longer required by the grant, AISD hosted an annual meeting of the Title IV Advisory Council. This helped to facilitate district-community collaborations and provided a forum for input from district stakeholders and community agencies. Many community agencies (e.g., Lifeworks, Safe Place, Communities in Schools, and YWCA) participated in the Advisory Council meeting. In addition, several AISD staff who represented other federal and local grant initiatives with similar goals (such as the Middle School Drug Prevention and School Safety Coordinators and the Elementary School Counseling Demonstration grants) were present.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: FRAMING THE PROBLEM

In order to begin to address the problem of youth substance use and violence it is essential to develop an accurate understanding of the problem. In the parlance of Title IV regulations, the process of obtaining understanding of district-specific issues is called a needs assessment. AISD uses three primary data sources regarding the current prevalence of student substance use and violence within the district. These data sources include the district's discipline incident reporting system, a student self-report survey, and a survey of district employees.

SUBSTANCE USE IN AISD
District Student Discipline Data Related to Substance Use

For the second year in a row, the number of students disciplined for the use or possession of tobacco, alcohol, and all other drugs (e.g., marijuana, ecstasy, etc.) increased for each category of substance use offense (Figure 3). This year, the greatest increase occurred in tobacco-related offenses, with 46% more offenses reported in 2003-2004 than in 2002-2003. In addition, drug and alcohol offenses each increased 12%.

Figure 3: Number of AISD Students Disciplined for Substance Use or Possession,
2001-2002 through 2003-2004
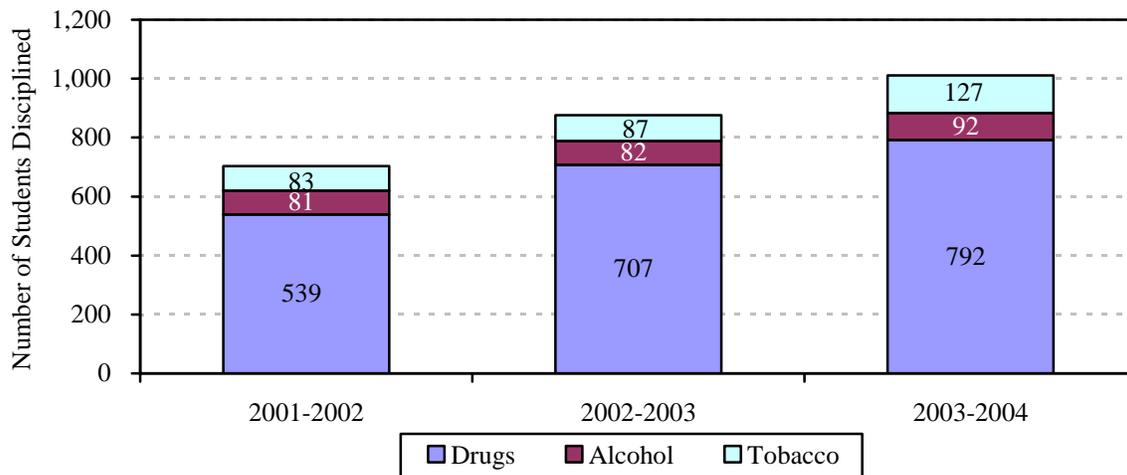
Note – Students are unique within offense categories (e.g., possession of drug, use of drug, possession of alcohol, etc.), but not between offense categories. Therefore a student who commits repeat offenses within a offense category will represented only once, while a student who commits multiple offenses across offense categories will be represented more than once.
Source: AISD Student Discipline Records (PEIMS 425 data)

Student Survey Data Regarding Substance Use

A self-report student survey of substance use and school safety is administered to a random representative sample of AISD students annually. On alternating years, the district either participates in the statewide Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) survey, as it did in the 2003-2004 school year, or independently conducts a similar survey as was true in 2002-2003. The student survey is used to track student knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behavior over time. The secondary school version of the TCADA survey is distributed to 7th through 12th graders and includes a variety of survey questions that tap students' perceptions about and experiences with substance use, feelings regarding school safety, incidences of bringing substances or weapons to school, and participation in school-based prevention and education activities. The primary school version of the survey is distributed to 4th through 6th graders and includes a more limited set of questions that mainly focus on substance use. The student survey is a valuable tool for longitudinal assessment of trends within AISD and for annual comparisons between AISD and state or national samples.

The TCADA School Survey of Substance Use was administered in the spring of 2004. Procedures were employed to ensure that the survey was anonymous, confidential, and voluntary. A random sample of 4th thru 12th grade classrooms was selected for student participation in the survey. Of the 8,920 students enrolled in the selected 7th through 12th grade classrooms, a total of 5,996 students returned valid completed surveys, yielding a response rate of 67% for the secondary school version of the survey.[1] Of the 3,346 students enrolled in the selected 4th through 6th grade classrooms, a total of 2,659 students returned valid completed primary surveys, yielding a response rate of 79% for the primary school version of the survey.[1]

General Usage Trends

The trends in usage are consistent with those reported in previous years (Christian, 2003; Oswald and Christian, 2003). Alcohol was once again the most prevalent substance that students reported using. In addition, an analysis of the data by grade level further supported the previous finding that recent substance use incrementally increases with grade level for most substances. For example, students in 8th grade were more likely to report tobacco use than students in 7th grade. The exception to this is in the reported recent

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[1] The response rate does not include surveys that were excluded from analysis due to invalid responses or exaggeration (e.g., when a participant indicates that they have used a non-existent, made-up, substance).

use of inhalants, where usage peaked in 7th grade then incrementally decreased with each grade.

Figure 4 provides a comparison of the 2003 AISD Substance Use and Safety Survey (SUSS) and 2004 TCADA data for recent substance use by 7th and 8th grade students and 9th through 12th grade students; Figure 5 provides a comparison of the 2004 and 2002 data for recent substance use by 4th through 6th graders (this population was not sampled for the 2003 survey). The greatest change in the prevalence of reported substance use was for alcohol among both groups of 7th and 8th graders and 9th through 12th graders. While these increased rates may be due to chance alone (i.e., a result of sampling error) rather than due to true changes in prevalence, it should be noted that this student self report mirrors increased numbers of students disciplined for alcohol offenses (up 12%) during the same time period. It will be important to monitor trends in upcoming years to determine whether alcohol use is in fact becoming more prevalent among middle and high school students, so that prevention efforts can be monitored, revised, or increased in this area if necessary.

Figure 4: AISD Secondary Students Reporting Recent* Use, 2003 and 2004

Middle School (7th and 8th Grade) Students

High School (9th - 12th Grade) Students
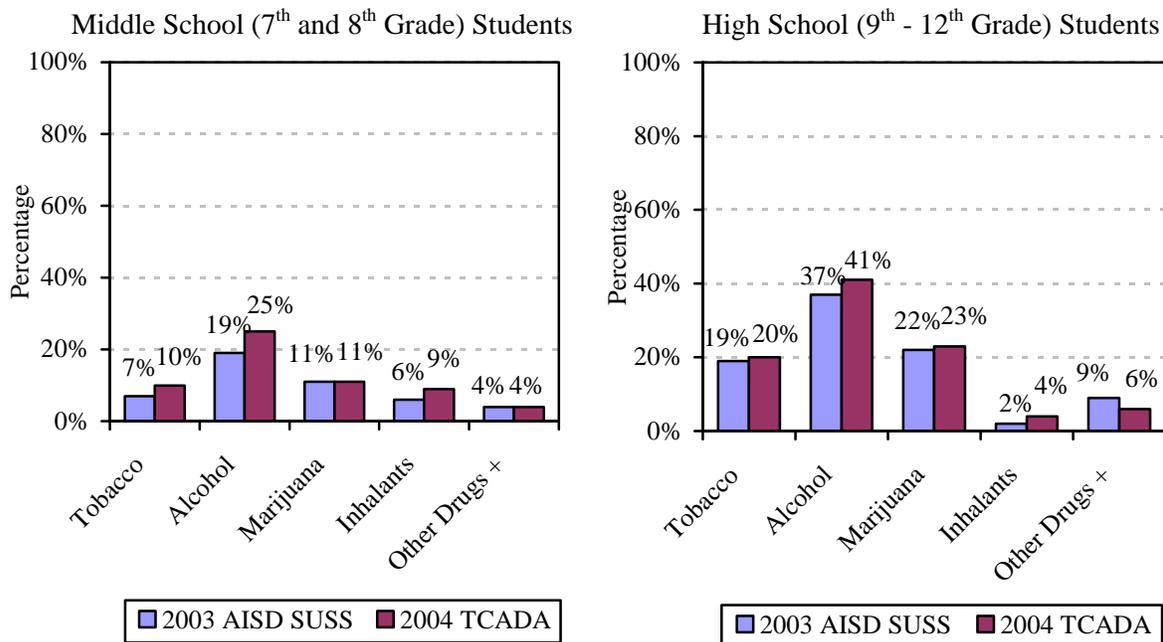
Recent is defined as within the past month
[+]*Other Drugs* include: cocaine, crack, ecstasy, hallucinogens, and heroin.
Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Sources: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use and 2003 AISD Substance Use and Safety Survey

Figure 5: AISD 4th through 6th Grade Students Reporting Recent* Use, 2002 and 2004
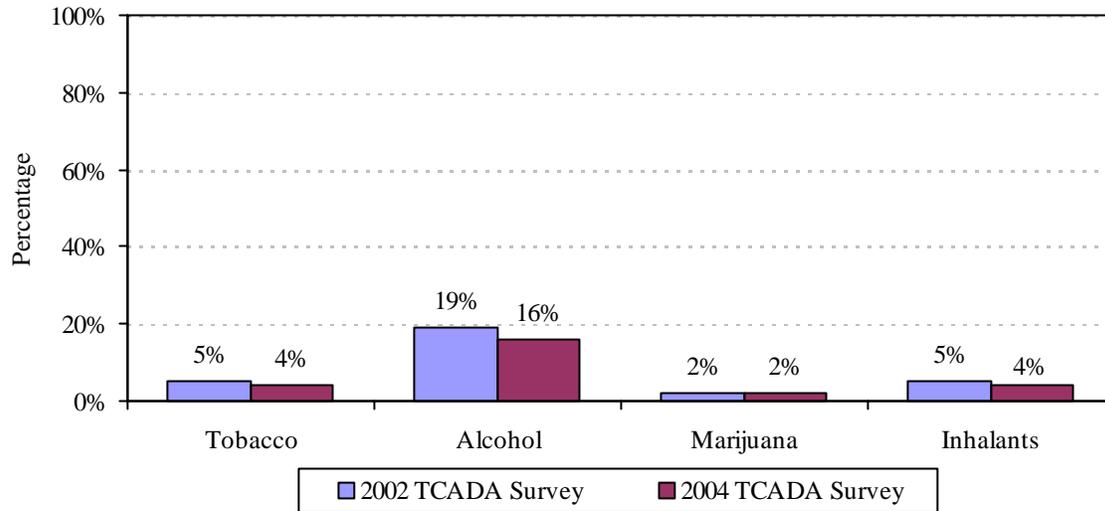
Recent is defined as within the past month

Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution. Sixth grade students were sampled to be representative of both middle and elementary school populations of 6th graders.

Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use; 2002 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use

Comparison of the AISD Sample to the Texas Sample

The results of the 2004 TCADA *Texas School Survey of Substance Use* (Public Policy Research Institute, 2004) provide statewide data to which the AISD results can be compared. When looking at the overall sample of 7th through 12th graders, the AISD sample reported similar rates of substance use within the past month for alcohol and inhalants and lower rates of tobacco use. However, the AISD sample reported higher rates of marijuana use (16.5%) than the statewide sample (12.6%). In fact, when the data for secondary students were broken out by grade level, AISD students at every grade level reported higher rates of marijuana use than the statewide sample for the grade level. Another interesting finding when the data were broken out by grade level was that the AISD sample of 7th and 8th grade students reported higher rates of use for all of the substances than the statewide sample for these grade levels, while the AISD sample of 9th through 12th graders reported rates that were either lower than or closer to the rates for the statewide sample.

The AISD sample of 4th through 6th graders reported similar rates of substance use within the school year as the statewide sample for tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana, but lower rates of inhalant use (3.8%, compared to 7.6% for the statewide sample). Even with the data broken out by grade level, AISD students at every primary grade level reported

either lower rates of use for each of the substances or rates that were within one percentage point of the rate reported by the statewide sample. The only exception to this trend was with regard to alcohol and marijuana use among 6th graders. AISD 6th graders reported higher rates of both alcohol use (24.7%) and marijuana use (4.9%) relative to the statewide sample (22.2% and 3.5%, respectively).

Risk and Protective Factors for Substance Use

Student Perceptions of Substance Use. The majority of 7th through 12th graders perceived tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use to be at least *Somewhat Dangerous* (3 on a 4- point scale ranging from *Not Dangerous at All* to *Very Dangerous*). Those who perceived these substances to be at least *Somewhat Dangerous* were less likely to report that they used them (Figure 6), and those using substances were less likely to perceive them as at least *Somewhat Dangerous*.

Figure 6: AISD 7th through 12th Grade Students Reporting
Regular Use* by Perception of Risk, 2004
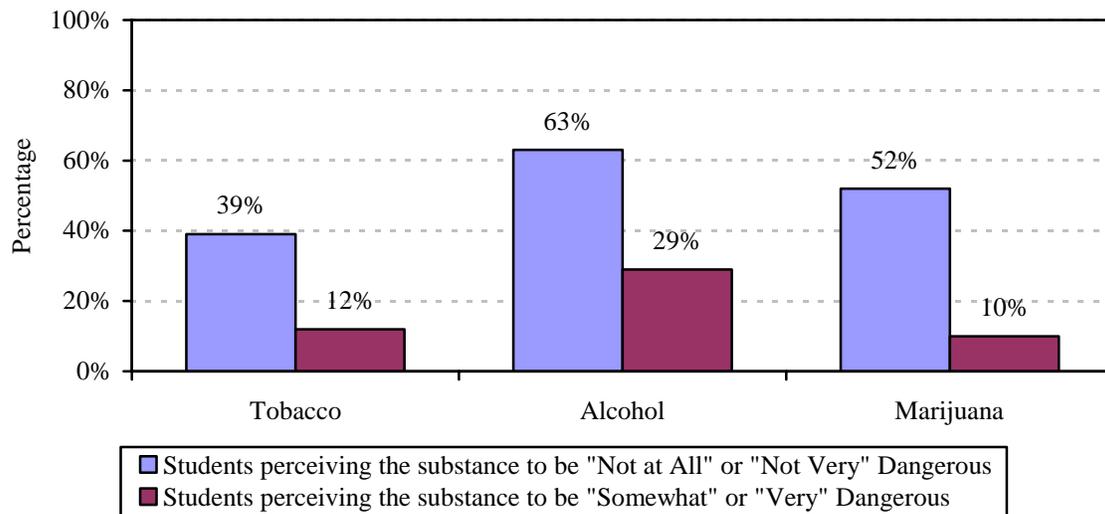
Regular Use is defined as those who reported using the substance "About once a month," "Several times a month," "Several times a week," or "Every day."
Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use

Nonetheless, some students who perceived use of substances to be *Very* or *Somewhat Dangerous* still reported that they used those substances at least once a month. For example, 29% of 7th through 12th grade students who believed alcohol to be at least *Somewhat Dangerous* reported that they used it at least monthly, compared to 36% of the overall group of 7th through 12th grade students. This phenomenon was more prominent concerning tobacco and alcohol use than marijuana use. These results suggest that

prevention efforts should not simply convey the dangers of drug and alcohol use, but should instead provide students with the skills that they need to be able to resist using the substances to which they are most frequently exposed (due to contact with peers, etc.).

Usage by Peers. Based on the survey results, students' substance use is strongly related to their perceptions of their friends' use. As displayed in Figure 7, students who reported that at least some of their friends (*Some, Most,* or *All*) were using alcohol, tobacco or marijuana were more likely to report that they were using those substances at least monthly themselves. Thus, peer influence appears to be an important risk and protective factor for substance use.

Figure 7: AISD 7th through 12th Grade Students Reporting
Regular* Use by Peer Usage, 2004
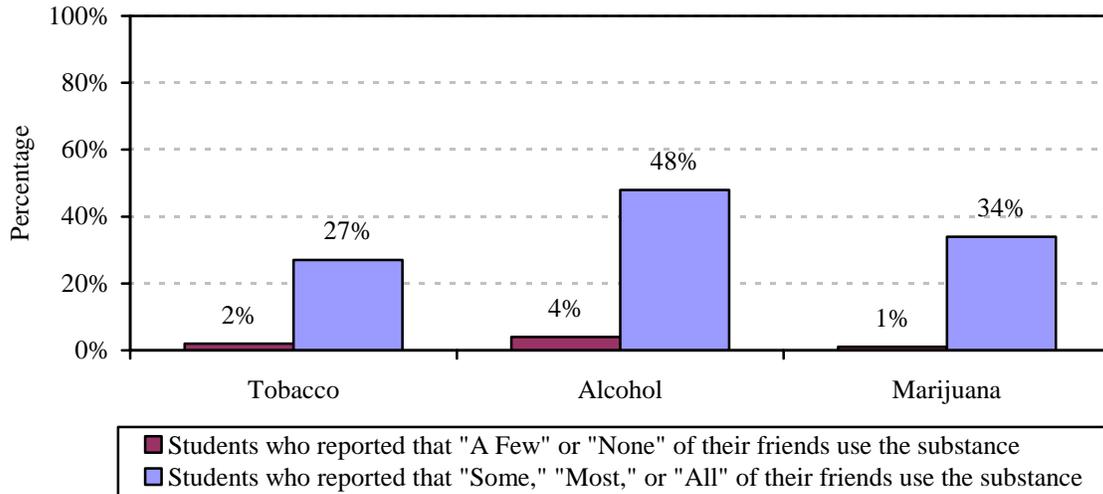
Regular Use is defined as those who reported using the substance "About once a month,"
   "Several times a month," "Several times a week," or "Every day."
Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use

Academic Performance. For the fourth year in a row (see also: Christian, 2002, Christian, 2003, and Oswald and Christian, 2003), student substance use has proven to be related to academic performance. The percentage of students reporting lifetime use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana increases with each decrease in reported grades (A through F). When comparing students who reported receiving mostly A's or B's to those who reported receiving mostly C's, D's, or F's (Table 1), the differences in the percentages of students reporting monthly substance use were statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) for each of these substances. While a causal relationship cannot be inferred from these data, these

findings suggest that there may be an important link between self-reported substance use and self-reported academic performance.

Table 1: 7th through 12th Grade Students' Self-Reported
Substance Use by Academic Performance, 2003-2004

Percentage of students who report using…	Students who report receiving mostly…	
	A's and B's	C's, D's, and F's
Tobacco at least once a month.	14%	27%
Alcohol at least once a month.	34%	47%
Marijuana at least once a month.	18%	35%

Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use, Supplemental Questions

Parental Attitudes Towards Substance Use. Survey data also indicate a strong relationship between students' self-reported substance use and their perceptions of their parents' attitudes toward substance use. Specifically, both 7th and 8th graders and 9th through 12th graders who believed that their parents approved of kids their age using substances, or whose parents had not conveyed a strong message regarding substance use, were much more likely to report using tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana at least monthly. Interestingly, 7th and 8th grade students who reported that their parents disapprove of tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana use also were more likely to say that they would seek parental help for a drug or alcohol problem than those who believed that their parents approved of kids their age using substances or whose parents had not conveyed a strong message regarding substance use. The difference in these percentages was not statistically significant for 9th through 12th grade students. While it is difficult to tease out the relationship between parental attitudes toward substance use, student substance use, and help-seeking behavior, these data support previous findings (Oswald & Christian, 2003) that parental communication regarding substance use may play a significant role in preventing substance use. There is an opportunity here for AISD to contribute positively through the provision of more support and information to help parents talk with their children about the dangers of using drugs.

School Level. The 2003-2004 survey provided representative samples of elementary 6th graders (n = 226) and middle school 6th graders (n = 686), thus allowing for a comparison between these groups. Based on this analysis, the percentage of students reporting alcohol use "since school began in the fall" was significantly higher for the

middle school 6th graders (26.7%) than for the elementary school 6th graders (18.6%).
Statistically significant differences were not found for tobacco, inhalant, or marijuana use.

Interestingly, statistically significant differences between these groups also were
found for students' reports of how many of their close friends use tobacco, alcohol,
inhalants, and marijuana. In the case of each of these substances, the percentage of middle
school 6th graders reporting that some or most of their friends use the substance was
greater than the percentage of elementary school 6th graders reporting that some or most of
their friends use the substance. In addition, the higher rates of reported use among middle
school 6th graders does not appear to be explained by differences in other known correlates
of substance use, such as parental attitudes, grades, and age, because there were no
significant differences between the elementary and middle school 6th graders on these
variables. Thus, there does appear to be something about the middle school experience
itself that contributes to reports of increased use among 6th graders. For example, the
social pressures associated with transitioning to middle school or the influence of older
peers may result in increased usage.

Sources of Information and Assistance. The majority of students surveyed reported
receiving information about drugs or alcohol from at least one school source during the
current school year (Table 2). Fourth through 6th grade students most frequently received
information from a teacher (58%) or a school counselor (55%). Seventh and 8th grade

Table 2: AISD Student Report of Information Received on Drugs or Alcohol, 2004

Source of Information…	4th-6th Graders	7th & 8th Graders	9th-12th Graders
Health class ("your teacher" for 4th-6th graders)	58%	39%	42%
An assembly program	40%	31%	29%
Guidance counselor ("a school counselor" for 4th-6th graders)	55%	25%	12%
Science class	--	45%	25%
Social studies class	--	11%	10%
Student group session	--	12%	10%
An invited school guest ("a visitor to your class" for 4th-6th graders)	40%	30%	24%
Some other school source	38%	28%	25%
Total % of students who reported receiving information from any (at least one) of the above sources	80%	73%	67%

Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use

students most frequently received information in either a Science class (45%) or a Health class (39%). Ninth (9th) through 12th grade students most frequently received information in either a health class (42%) or an assembly program (29%).

When asked to indicate any individuals from whom they might seek help if they had a drug or alcohol problem, both 7th and 8th graders and 9th through 12th graders most frequently selected their friends (59% of 7th and 8th grade students and 68% of 9th through 12th grade students) (Table 3). The next most frequent responses were their parents (48% of 7th and 8th grade students and 50% of 9th through 12th grade students) and another adult outside of school (47% of 7th and 8th grade students and 51% of 9th through 12th grade students).

Unfortunately, 16% of both 7th and 8th grade students and 9th through 12th grade students said that they would not go to anyone for help if they had a drug or alcohol problem. In addition, students who indicated that they would not seek help from anyone also were significantly more likely to report using marijuana at least monthly than those who said that they would seek help. Twenty percent (20%) of 7th and 8th graders who said that they would not go to anyone for help reported using marijuana monthly, compared to only 14% of those who said that they would seek help. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the 9th through 12th grade students who said that they would not go to anyone for help reported using marijuana monthly, compared to 25% of those who said that they would seek help.

Table 3: AISD Student Report of Help Seeking
Regarding a Drug or Alcohol Problem, 2004

Person(s) that students reported they would go to for help …	7th & 8th Graders	9th-12th Graders
A counselor or program in school	31%	23%
Another adult in school (such as a nurse or teacher)	24%	25%
A counselor or program outside school	26%	30%
Parents	48%	50%
A medical doctor	32%	35%
Friends	59%	68%
Another adult (such as relative, clergyman, or other family friend)	47%	51%
" I wouldn't go to anyone"	16%	16%

Note – Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use

**AISD Employee Coordinated Survey Data Regarding Student Substance Use**

As a part of the AISD Employee Coordinated Survey, a random sample of 1162 AISD employees at elementary, middle, and high schools received surveys including substance use and safety questions from the Department of Program Evaluation. A series of questions was included in this survey to obtain staff opinions and perceptions about student substance use, student and staff safety, and AISD prevention education efforts. Eighty-one percent of the employees sampled (N=1162) returned surveys, though not all participants responded to all questions.

Middle school and high school teachers were asked to provide an estimate of the percentage of students who they teach who they believed to have used alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco in the past month. They reported their responses in increments of 10% (e.g. 0, 1-10%, 11-20%, etc.). For both middle school and high school teachers, the median response for marijuana and tobacco was equal to or greater than the prevalence of the substance use based on the student reports. This also was true for high school teachers' reports of alcohol use. In contrast, middle school teachers tended to underestimate the prevalence of alcohol use. While the prevalence of alcohol use based on 7th and 8th grade students' self-reports was 25%, 54% of teachers estimated that 20% or fewer students used alcohol at least once a month. In other words, for most substances and grade levels, teachers estimate more students use substances regularly than the number of students who report using substances regularly. The exception is for alcohol, for which middle school teachers underestimate the prevalence of use when compared to student reports. It makes sense that alcohol use would be underestimated, since it is the substance that students report that they are least likely to bring to school. However, this does suggest a continued need to raise teachers' awareness regarding substance use among middle school students.

VIOLENCE IN AISD

The majority of both students and staff at AISD continue to report feeling safe when they are at school (Figure 8). Eighty-four percent (84%) of 7th through 12th grade students and 93% of middle and high school teachers reported feeling at least somewhat safe. The Student Climate Survey provides an additional source of information regarding student perceptions of school safety. This survey, which was administered to students in grades 3 through 11 in the spring of 2004, asked students to express their level of agreement with the statement, "I feel safe at my school." Sixty-six percent (66%) of middle school students (n = 15,642) and 68% of high school students (n = 14,855)

expressed agreement with this statement (a choice of *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* on a four-point scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*). Among elementary students (n = 18,217) the rate was much higher (87%).

Figure 8: Staff and Student Perceptions of School Safety, 2003-2004
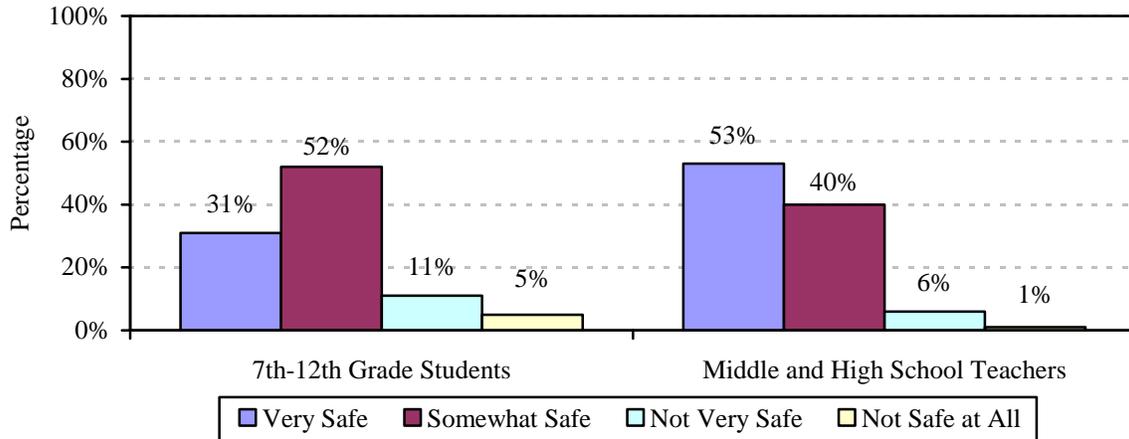
Note – Student responses are weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Sources: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use; 2004 AISD Employee
        Coordinated Survey

As shown in Figure 9, the number of students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression[2] showed a substantial increase from the 2002-2003 to the 2003-2004 academic year for elementary students (30% increase), middle school students (14% increase), and high school students (24% increase). These increases were much greater than the corresponding changes in the enrollment figures, which were less than 3% for each group of students. While the increases in middle school and high school students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression are similar to those that occurred from the 2001-2002 to the 2002-2003 academic year, the 30% increase in the number of elementary students disciplined is much greater than the 4% increase that occurred between the previous years. While this analysis suggests a trend of increasing verbal and physical aggression on campuses, it is important to be aware that these results may simply reflect an increase in staff awareness of violence or increased efforts to discipline and accurately report these offenses.

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[2] *Verbal and physical aggression* includes the following reporting categories: rude to student, threat or harassment of student, physical aggression toward student, assault of student, aggravated assault of student, sexual assault of a student, rude to adult, threat or harassment of adult, physical aggression toward adult, assault of adult, aggravated assault of adult, retaliation against adult, sexual assault of an adult, gang violence, terrorist threats, kidnapping, and murder.

Figure 9: Number of Students Disciplined for Verbal and Physical Aggression*,
2001-2002 through 2003-2004
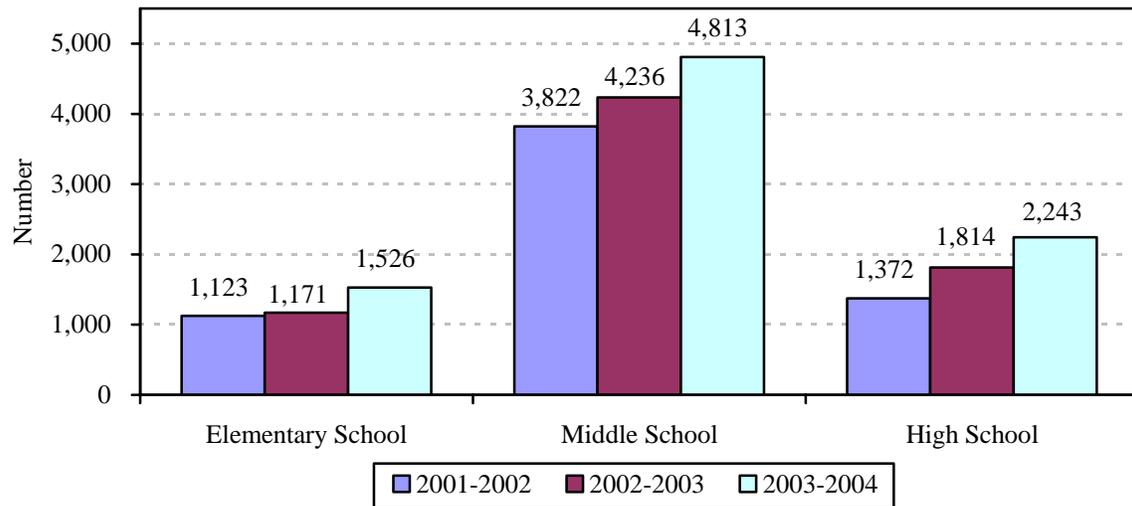
Verbal and physical aggression includes the following reporting categories: rude to student,
threat or harassment of student, physical aggression toward student, assault of student,
aggravated assault of student, sexual assault of a student, rude to adult, threat or harassment
of adult, physical aggression toward adult, assault of adult, aggravated assault of adult,
retaliation against adult, sexual assault of an adult, gang violence, terrorist threats,
kidnapping, and murder.

Note – Students are unique within offense categories (e.g., rude to student, threat or harassment of
student, physical aggression toward student, etc.), but not between offense categories.
Therefore a student who commits repeat offenses within a offense category will represented
only once, while a student who commits multiple offenses across offense categories will be
represented more than once.

Source: AISD Student Discipline Records (PEIMS 425 data)

Weapons

     The number of students disciplined for the possession of illegal weapons continued
to decline in the 2003-2004 academic year. However, the number of students disciplined
for legal knives showed a 36% increase over the number reported for the 2002-2003
academic year (Figure 10). In conjunction with the 8% increase that was observed
between the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years, these data seem to suggest a rising
trend in student possession of legal knives (blade length < 5.5 inches) on campuses.
However, it is once again important to be aware that these changes may reflect changes in
discipline practices and improved reporting related to these offenses.

Figure 10: Number of Students Disciplined for Weapon Possession,
2001-2002 through 2003-2004
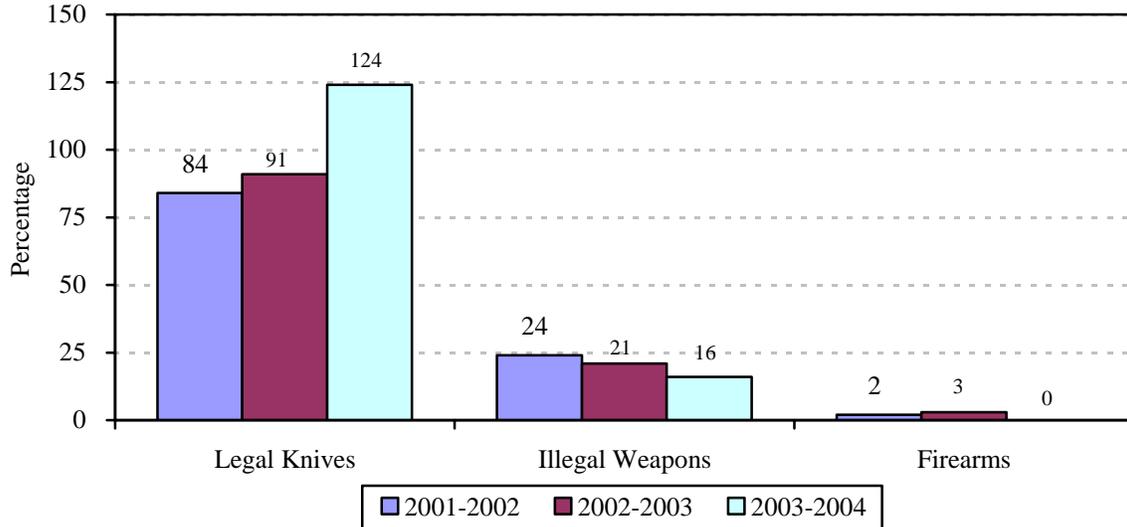
Note – Legal Knives are those with blades less than 5.5 inches in length; Illegal Weapons
        includes all illegal and/or prohibited weapons except legal knives and firearms.
Source: AISD Student Discipline Records (PEIMS 425 data)

Students' self-reports of weapons that they brought to school (Table 4) are
consistent with the analysis of the discipline data and support the principal findings from
previous years. Knives continue to be the weapon that secondary students most commonly
report bringing to school, with 6% of 7th and 8th grade students and 8% of 9th through 12th
grade students reporting that they brought a knife to school during the 2003-2004
academic year.

Table 4: Percentages of AISD Secondary Student Self-Reports of
Weapons Brought to School, 2003-2004

	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Overall 7th & 8th Graders*	Overall 9th-12th Graders*
Gun	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Knife**	5%	8%	7%	9%	8%	8%	6%	8%
Other Weapon	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%

*Weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
**Knife is not defined on the survey; students are unlikely to distinguish between legal and illegal
    knives.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use, Supplemental Questions

STUDENT AND STAFF CONCERNS REGARDING SUBSTANCE USE AND SAFETY

Both students and staff responded to items regarding their perceptions of the most serious problems on their campuses. When the results are broken out separately for the 7th and 8th grade group and the 9th through 12th grade group, some important differences are apparent (Table 5). Both 7th and 8th grade students and middle school teachers overwhelmingly indicated that student safety is the most serious problem on their campuses. Concern for school safety among 7th and 8th grade students was further supported by the high rate of students who indicated that they believed bullying to be at least "somewhat a problem" at their school (59%).

Table 5: Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Most Serious Problems
on Their Campuses, 2003-2004

Of the following, which do you consider to be the most serous problem on your campus?	Middle Schools		High Schools	
	7th & 8th Grade Students	Teachers	9th-12th Grade Students	Teachers
Student Safety (fighting, harassment, & threats)[*]	41%	57%	20%	17%
Student marijuana use	17%	9%	28%	18%
Student vandalism, criminal mischief	4%	9%	4%	21%
Student alcohol use	3%	2%	11%	21%
Student tobacco use	3%	1%	4%	2%
Student use of other drugs (e.g., prescriptions or other medications that you are not taking because you are sick)	5%	--	8%	--
Student Weapon Possession	4%	0%	3%	1%
Violence or threats of violence towards staff	2%	4%	2%	3%
Staff drug/alcohol use	--	0%	--	1%
None of these are serious problems on my campus	22%	17%	21%	16%

*Students were asked separate questions regarding student safety, while teachers were asked one
        question that included fighting, harassment, and threats.
Note – Items left blank were not included either on the student or the teacher version of the survey;
        Student responses were weighted to be proportional to grade level population distribution.
Source: 2004 TCADA Texas School Survey of Substance Use, Supplemental Questions

While high rates of both 9th through 12th grade students and teachers reported student safety as the most serious problem on their campuses (20% of students and 17% of teachers), even higher rates of students and teachers reported student marijuana use as the most serious problem (28% of 9th through 12th grade students and 18% of teachers). This

suggests that the most immediate concerns of students and staff at middle schools are related to student safety, while those at high schools are related to both safety and substance use.

There also were important differences among student and teacher perceptions of the most serious problems on their campuses. High school teachers were more likely than students to report student alcohol use as the most important problem. Perhaps more significantly, middle school teachers were much less likely than students to report student marijuana use as the most serious problem on their campuses.

These results seem to suggest different priorities for targeting prevention efforts to elementary, middle and high school students. Focused prevention efforts are needed at the elementary level to better prepare 5th graders who will transition to middle school in the following year for that change. While high school prevention efforts are needed to address the immediate problems of both school safety and substance use, middle school prevention efforts might be best targeted to the immediate problem of school safety issues and the long-term prevention of substance use. In addition, it is important to note that the discrepancy between the rates of 7th and 8th grade students and middle school teachers indicating that marijuana is the most serious problem on their campuses may indicate that middle school teachers are underestimating the prevalence of marijuana use on their campuses. These results further support the need to raise teachers' awareness of substance use among middle school students.

PART 2: AISD TITLE IV STUDENT PROGRAMS

CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS

The intent of Title IV campus-based programs is to address those SDFSC issues that are most salient at each individual campus. All AISD secondary campuses, selected AISD elementary campuses, and those Austin-area private nonprofit schools and neglected or delinquent facilities that are within AISD boundaries were eligible in 2003-2004 to receive Title IV funds to initiate their own activities.

Grant guidelines and budget-planning forms were sent to each campus in the fall semester. Each principal appointed a campus staff member to act as a point of contact for SDFSC and to help develop and implement the campus plan. The grant manager and budget specialist verified that each campus' proposed SDFSC program plans and expenditures were aligned with Title IV goals and the campus improvement plans. The funds were made available to campus administrators once plans were approved. Individual campus allocations were based on student enrollment and averaged $500 at selected elementary schools, $1,467 at middle schools, and $2,769 at high schools.

Campus administrators offer a wide array of programs (Figure 11), though they do not always use their money as effectively as possible. For example, despite research that shows that programs with ongoing, sustained efforts are most effective, campuses continue to focus a great amount of their programming funds ($10,024, or 22% of total expenditures for campus-based programs) on one-time events, assemblies, and activities associated with National Red Ribbon Week. While campuses are encouraged to use Red Ribbon Week activities as a vehicle for launching and introducing year-long initiatives toward prevention, campuses rarely report on how or if these activities are related to sustained efforts. As one-time events, research would indicate that they are unlikely to bring about long-term changes in student behavior and attitudes. However, in credit to campuses for responding to feedback regarding their programming, the percentage of campus funds that was spent on classroom-based education efforts (including character education, drug prevention, and violence prevention) increased 80% from the previous year, from 19% of expenditures in 2002-2003 to 34% in 2003-2004.

At the end of the school year, campus administrators reported on the outcomes of the Title IV activities at each of their sites. Campus administrators used a range of methods to evaluate their local programs, including assessing changes in: participation

rates; campus discipline rates; TAKS scores; attendance rates; and student skills, knowledge, and attitudes observed by teachers or measured by surveys. Overall, campus administrators reported positive outcomes as a result of their programs, for example: decreased discipline referral rates, increased student knowledge regarding the dangers of substance use, increased student demonstration of conflict resolution and violence prevention skills, and increased community involvement. Many campus administrators indicated that they planned to improve or continue specific program elements in the 2004-05 school year. Many campus coordinators noted that the timing of the release of funds and the paltry amount provided made it difficult for them to adequately support and implement substantial drug or violence prevention programs. Some additionally noted on their evaluation forms that they were unable to implement their plans in the 2003-2004 year due to the late arrival of curriculum materials or supplies ordered.

Figure 11: Campus-based programs Expenditures, 2003-2004
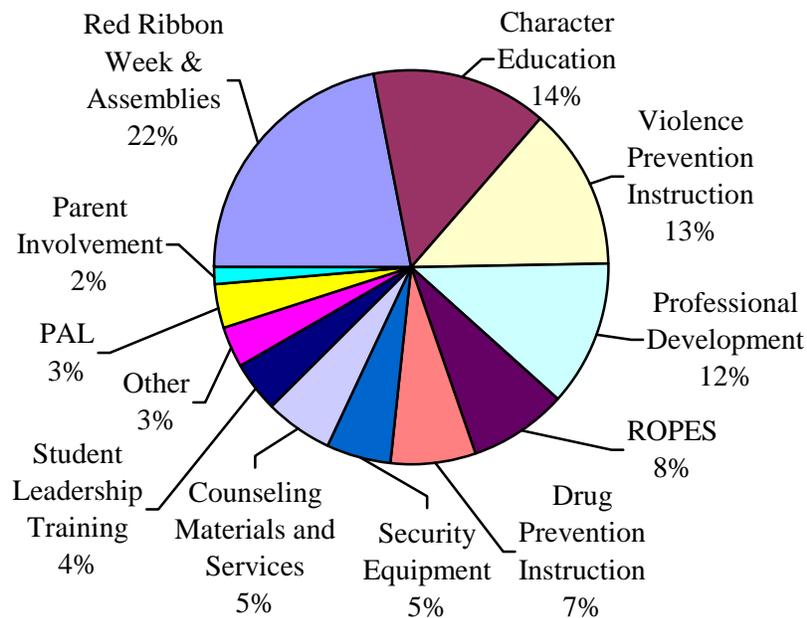
Note – Total campus level expenditures equaled $45,423.
Source: SDFSC Program Records.

Campus evaluation was sometimes inadequate to assess program benefits. For example, some campus programs were assessed by whether or not students enjoyed the program; others only counted participants. The wide variety of programs used across campuses contributed to difficulty in gauging the effectiveness of programs districtwide,

since each program had its own unique features that required different evaluation procedures.

Dividing limited funds across all campuses, and allowing autonomy regarding program selections, may not be the most effective means of using this pool of decreasing funds. However, if campuses are going to continue to receive individual allocations, Title IV requirements for funds to be spent on "scientifically based" programs that are proven effective necessitate that, at a minimum, highly structured guidance be given to campus administrators regarding which programs they may support with Title IV funds. In addition to ensuring districtwide compliance with this federal requirement, consolidation of program offerings across campuses will allow more consistent evaluation and improved information regarding program effectiveness to be gathered.

INVEST AND POSITIVE FAMILIES

When middle and high school students have been removed from their home campuses due to discipline offenses and placed at the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), they may be assigned to specialized alternative education programs in addition to classroom and behavioral instruction. These specialized programs are aimed at increasing student protective factors in an effort to prevent future campus discipline referrals. INVEST and Positive Families are two such programs, which focus on students who have been removed for first-time misdemeanor level drug or alcohol offenses or fighting or physical aggression offenses, respectively.

A keystone of these programs is to require the participation of parents. By increasing communication, family support, problem-solving skills, anger management skills, and conflict resolution methods, students are better able to use healthy approaches to overcoming adversity, rather than turning to drugs or violence again in the future. Due to the similarity of these programs, they will be described together in this section.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Positive Families is a school-based curriculum program for middle and high school students, developed by AISD staff and first implemented in the district during the 1998-99 school year. This program is offered to students as an alternative to long-term removal for first-time fighting or physical aggression offenses. INVEST (Involve Non-violent Values using Education, Self-control techniques, and Trust) is similar to Positive Families with

the addition of an emphasis on drug prevention. INVEST was first implemented in the spring of 2000 and is an adaptation of the previously used SUPER I curriculum, which was implemented in 1996-97.

AISD policy requires that all students who are removed to the ALC for a first-time misdemeanor level drug or alcohol use or possession offense must be offered the opportunity to participate in INVEST and that all students who are removed to the ALC for a first-time fighting or physical aggression offense must be offered the opportunity to participate in Positive Families. Either program may also be offered for other offenses at the discretion of the campus administration. The primary incentive for participation in Positive Families and INVEST is an abbreviated removal to the ALC of two weeks, rather than the average removal of six weeks. Once a student and his or her parents (or other significant adult) successfully complete the voluntary four-session program, arrangements may be made for the student to return to the home school. A more prompt return to the home school prevents erosion of the home-school bond, and it prevents students from falling behind on course credits earned.

Title IV funds supporting INVEST and Positive Families primarily contribute to facilitator compensation for sessions occurring in the evening hours, program materials, and general program support (e.g., supplies, reproduction, snacks for parents and students). The programmatic goals for Positive Families and INVEST include:

- Improvement in student communication skills with other individuals, especially family members,

- Improvement in anger management strategies,

- Acquisition of positive conflict resolution methods,

- Development of effective problem-solving skills,

- Promotion of family involvement in support services, and

- Elimination of short- and long-term substance use among targeted students (INVEST only).

STUDENTS AND FAMILIES SERVED

Four hundred fifty-six (456) students completed the INVEST program during the 2003-2004 academic year. Almost all of these participants were removed to the ALC for drug offenses (87%) or alcohol offenses (12%). One hundred nineteen (119) students

completed Positive Families during the 2003-2004 academic year. These students were removed to the ALC for a variety of offenses, including: assault against a student (19%), fighting/mutual combat (15%), harassment/intimidation/threat of a student (8.4%), other abusive conduct (22%), disruption of the educational process (9%), failure to follow instructions (8%), property offenses (5%), offenses with legal knives (3%), sexual offenses (2%), drug offenses (1%), and other miscellaneous offenses (8%).

PARENT AND STUDENT SURVEYS

Following completion of the INVEST and Positive Families program, both parents and students were asked to complete a survey regarding their perceptions of the program. Responses were received from 379 parents and 380 students. Table 6 displays the results

Table 6: Participant Perspectives on the Outcomes of their Participation in the
INVEST/Positive Families Programs, 2003-2004

	Students			Parents		
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No
The program has helped me think seriously about my child's drug or alcohol use (n=302)*	N/A			74%	13%	13%
The program has helped me think seriously about my drug or alcohol use (n=319)*	55%	26%	19%	N/A		
I better understand how my family communicates (n_p=388; n_s=384).	64%	27%	9%	78%	16%	6%
We agree on how to improve communication (n_p=385; n_s=383).	58%	27%	15%	75%	19%	6%
The program has helped me more comfortable being respected and respecting others (n_p=383; n_s=383).	65%	26%	9%	77%	14%	9%
I can better control my anger (n_p=379; n_s=380).	47%	28%	25%	62%	23%	15%
I can better express my anger (n_p=379; n_s=381).	44%	29%	27%	61%	24%	15%
I believe that our family communication will improve (n_p=385; n_s=384).	55%	35%	10%	74%	20%	6%
This program has helped my family with problem solving (n_p=385; n_s=384).	51%	35%	15%	67%	27%	6%

*   Question was asked only of INVEST participants.
Note – n_p is the number of parent respondents; n_s is the number of student respondents.
Source: 2003-2004 INVEST and Positive Families Program Surveys

from the survey. As in past years, both parents and students overwhelmingly reported that the INVEST and Positive Families programs were beneficial. In fact, the percentage of respondents indicating "yes" was the same or slightly higher for the current year than for the 2002-2003 year for all of the statements except the first two listed in the table.

Across all of the survey items, both student and parent participants were most likely to endorse statements related to program's positive impact on family communication. Respondents indicated that the program helped them to better understand how their family communicates, to agree on how to improve communication, and to improve both communication and problem solving. While most participants endorsed the statements related to controlling and expressing anger, these were the items with which the highest percentages of both student and parent participants expressed disagreement.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE DATA
Recidivism among INVEST Participants

Because campuses are required to offer INVEST for first-time drug and alcohol misdemeanor level offenses, an analysis was carried out to compare recidivism to the ALC among those students who completed INVEST at the time of their first removal for a misdemeanor level drug/alcohol offense (n = 425) with those students who had a first-time misdemeanor drug/alcohol offense but did not complete INVEST or Positive Families at any time during the year (n = 281). It is important to note that, due to their longer length of stay at the ALC, the students who did not participate in INVEST did receive other social services that the INVEST participants did not. For example, non-INVEST participants may have participated in individual or group counseling that addressed issues related to substance use.

The outcomes with regard to recidivism were similar for both the INVEST participants and the students who did not participate and INVEST. Ten percent (10%) of the INVEST participants had a subsequent removal to the ALC during the 2003-2004 academic year; 6% had a subsequent removal specifically for a drug/alcohol-related offense. These percentages were not significantly different from those for the group of students who also were removed for a first time misdemeanor drug offense but who did not participate in INVEST.

While these data do not suggest that participation in INVEST is more beneficial with regard to reducing recidivism than a longer stay at the ALC in combination with other social services, it is important to bear in mind that there may be important differences

between INVEST participants and those who chose not to participate. For example, students whose parents choose to participate in INVEST may do so because their child has a history of drug and alcohol use, a factor that could lead to increased risk of recidivism. In addition, it was not possible to determine whether the students classified as "not participating in INVEST" attended some (but not all) of the INVEST sessions. In fact, some of these students may have benefited from attending some INVEST sessions, even though they did not complete the program. It is possible that these "non-completers" helped to reduce the overall recidivism of the group classified as "not participating in INVEST." In the upcoming year, it will be important to separate out these groups to gain a better understanding of the INVEST program's effectiveness with regard to reducing recidivism among students removed to the ALC for drug and alcohol-related offenses.

Recidivism among Positive Families Participants

Because Positive Families is intended to address discipline problems such as fighting and physical aggression, an analysis was carried out to compare recidivism among students who completed Positive Families at the time of a first-time removal for an offense unrelated to drugs and alcohol (n = 106) with those students who had a first-time removal for an offense unrelated to drugs and alcohol but who did not participate in Positive Families or INVEST at any time during the year (n = 737). As noted in the previous section, it is important to be aware that the students who did not participate in Positive Families may have participated in other social services, such as the Peacemakers program, which focuses on violence prevention. Again these social services were not available to the Positive Families participants due to their shortened length of stay at the ALC.

The outcomes with regard to recidivism to the ALC were the same for both the Positive Families participants and the students who did not participate in Positive Families. Thirteen percent (13%) of the students who completed Positive Families at the time of their first removal for an offense unrelated to drugs and alcohol had a subsequent removal to the ALC. These removals were for abusive conduct toward students (3), abusive conduct toward adults (1), drug offenses (4), alcohol offenses (1) and other offenses (5). This percentage was equivalent to the percentage for the group of students who did not participate in Positive Families or INVEST. As discussed above with regard to the INVEST program, it is important to recognize that other factors may be masking the effectiveness of the Positive Families program with regard to reducing recidivism to the ALC.

PROGRAM REVISIONS AND UPDATES

Both the Positive Families and INVEST program curricula were updated and revised during the summer of 2004 and the new curricula were implemented beginning in the fall of 2004. As a part of these revisions, program information was updated, new activities were designed, and efforts were undertaken to improve the consistency of implementation between instructors. As a result, the evaluation of these programs for the 2004-2005 year will include not only an outcome evaluation, but also a process evaluation to determine whether the new curriculum is being implemented as it was designed.

In addition to the curriculum improvements already underway, it is recommended that ALC staff and the staff at the students' home schools increase their efforts toward providing additional support and services to students as they transition back to their home schools following the completion of INVEST or Positive Families. Students who complete these programs face many of the same needs and issues as students who attended the ALC for a longer period, but have not had the opportunity to receive some of the additional services that the ALC provides. Improved, more intense, transition support may help these students to maximize the benefit of their shortened term at the ALC.

Further, additional outcomes associated with the benefit of returning to the home school at least 4 weeks sooner have not yet been taken into consideration when evaluating the effectiveness of the INVEST and Positive Families programs. For example, simply returning the student to the home school earlier may be related to their credit-earning, grade level advancement, or likelihood of staying on-track to graduate. Future evaluation should consider these and other academic student outcomes as well.

PAL: PEER ASSISTANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The PAL program is a peer-assistance program offering course credit to selected secondary students who receive six weeks of classroom training on various topics before acting as peer mentors (PALs) to younger students (PALees) at their own schools or at lower level schools in their vertical team (e.g., a high school PAL may be mentoring a middle school PALee). During 2003-2004, 858 PALs worked with 2175 PALees in schools at all levels. In addition to mentoring PALees, PAL students of all grade levels participated in a combined total of 35,236 hours of community service. All 12 AISD high schools, as well as 12 middle schools and 26 elementary schools, have a PAL program. Title IV funding provided limited funding ($16,130) for a district PAL coordinator.

The goal of the PAL program is to help students have a more positive and productive school experience through the accomplishment of the following objectives:

- Provide both individual and group-level peer support,

- Help prevent students from dropping out of school,

- Promote improved personal responsibility and decision making,

- Promote improved behavior and school attendance,

- Promote positive interpersonal behaviors,

- Encourage improvement in academic performance via tutoring and academic mentoring,

- Prevent substance abuse, and

- Encourage involvement in community service projects both within the school and in the community.

ROPES: REALITY ORIENTED PHYSICAL EXPERIENTIAL SESSION

The ROPES program was conceptualized as a five-phase series of workshops designed around physical challenges that provide experiential learning for AISD students and staff (Table 7). Each phase is developmentally and instructionally suitable for the students being served and stresses the message that drug use is harmful and wrong[3]. ROPES provides an experiential educational opportunity for students and staff to build skills in leadership, trust, communication, collective problem solving, decision-making and resistance to peer pressure. Risk and resiliency research has shown that developing these skills in students can lead to the prevention of substance use and violence. To instill these protective factors in students, the ROPES program specialists focus on the following objectives:

- Increase students' levels of self confidence,

- Improve students' abilities to make decisions, work in groups, solve problems, make better choices, share ideas, listen to others, and

- Help students see themselves as leaders through leadership skill development.

During the 2003-2004 school year, 2605 students from 28 different AISD campuses, 343 staff, and 16 parents participated in the program at the Frost ROPES course. In addition to the Frost ROPES course at Norman Elementary School, which is the

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[3] For more information about the ROPES philosophy and background, see the 1999-2000 Title IV SDFSC Evaluation Report (Doolittle & Ryan, 2000).

most widely used as well as the largest in the district with the greatest number of physical elements, AISD also has courses located at Bedichek Middle, Lanier High, and Travis High schools. Facilitation at the Bedichek course, in the form of one full time course manager, was funded by a non-Title IV grant. Students from elementary schools that feed into Bedichek Middle School participate in ROPES at the Bedichek course as part of a multi-level effort to ease the transition of students from elementary into middle school. However, the courses at Lanier and Travis are underutilized, as they currently have no funds earmarked for equipment maintenance or replacement and no dedicated staff; any use is sporadic and undocumented.

Table 7: The ROPES Five-Phase Workshops

ROPES Phase	Participants	Purpose	Location
I	Teachers	Teacher facilitator training	Campus
II	Students	Introduction to program	Campus
III	Students	Develop skills: Leadership, trust, communication, group problem-solving, negative peer pressure resistance	ROPES Course
IV	Students	Link ROPES experiences with life experiences	Campus
V	Students	Practice new skills	ROPES Course

Note – Phase IV is optional based on teacher discretion, as it is led by teachers. In addition, Phase V is not offered to elementary students in order to serve more students from those schools.

Reductions in the number of dedicated ROPES staff, in conjunction with ongoing high demand for services, has resulted in the program operating in a scaled back format for the past several years. Previously, ROPES facilitators were able to visit campuses before and after students participated in the course to conduct phases I, II, and IV. However, with only two dedicated staff members, campus visits have been eliminated and phases II and IV of the program have been left up to teachers to complete. Some groups do return to the ROPES course to complete more advanced activities (Phase V), but the majority of participants only come once. It continues to be the perception of the ROPES program manager that many teachers do not complete the follow-up (Phase IV) portion of the program with students. This may be due to a lack of time, a lack of in-depth understanding of the material, or lack of knowledge regarding the benefit provided by reinforcing and expanding on the lessons learned through ROPES. The abbreviated ROPES program

currently provided is no longer the ongoing and sustained effort at drug and violence prevention that it once was, and as such may not be meeting its full potential.

SDFSC funds were used for the following: salaries of a program manager and one staff program specialist at the Frost course, pay for substitutes to allow participation by teachers, transportation costs, and program support (e.g., supplies). However, due to the limited availability of in-house ROPES, campuses continue to spend their Title IV (and other) funds on outside ROPES vendors. This practice is neither cost-effective nor program-minded. Unfortunately, the cost to provide the service externally is greater on a per student basis, so the result is that fewer students are served. In addition, as mentioned above, physical resources (i.e., ROPES courses) that the district has already invested in are underutilized. Finally, the use of outside vendors results in inconsistency of ROPES programming and eliminates any control over the quality or content of the program as provided by others.

Better use of existing resources, such as reinstatement of the neglected courses at Lanier and Travis, as well as full utilization of the Frost course, would better serve the students at AISD. Funds used to outsource ROPES should be reinvested in staff dedicated to providing services at these facilities. In addition, the AISD ROPES program served students and staff from agencies, organizations, and schools in the surrounding area (such as Project HELP, Girl Scouts, Lifeworks, Stony Point High School [Round Rock ISD], Del Valle High School [del Valle ISD], KIP Austin College Preparatory, and the Waldorf School) at no cost. Charging a nominal fee to those outside of AISD to utilize this valuable resource could contribute to making the AISD ROPES program self-sustaining.

PART 3: AISD TITLE IV DISTRICTWIDE SUPPORT SERVICES

COUNSELING SERVICES

For the 2003-2004 school year, two campus-based drug prevention counselors, one at the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) and one at Garza Independence High School, and a program specialist in the department of Guidance and Counseling were funded through the grant. Both ALC and Garza are considered special campuses in AISD; extra support, in the form of additional counselors for students who may be experiencing substance abuse problems or who are at risk for doing so, is warranted due to the higher concentration of these types of students at these two campuses. The program specialist in the Guidance and Counseling department works with school counselors district-wide.

The ALC is a campus for middle and high school students who have been removed from their regular campuses for discipline violations. The role of the drug prevention counselor at the ALC is multifaceted. In addition to serving as the district INVEST and Positive Families program coordinator, she was responsible for student intake, crisis intervention, meeting with students individually and in weekly groups regarding drug and alcohol issues, meeting with parents, transitioning students back to their home schools, making referrals for additional services or treatment, and working with community agencies (e.g., Phoenix House and Safe Place) to coordinate additional drug and violence prevention resources coming into the school.

Garza Independence High School provides an alternative high school setting with an open enrollment policy and flexible class scheduling. Students must apply to be enrolled at Garza and on average are at risk for dropping out of school for reasons such as academic failure, credit deficiency, substance use, teen parenting, or personal or family problems. In a self-reported effort "to blend into a mainstreamed role, to normalize his presence on the campus, and to establish credible relationships with the Garza community," the Garza drug prevention counselor participates in many capacities, including planning and implementing the school's Title IV campus-based programs, being a member of the campus Impact Team (a team charged with providing additional support to students through targeted referral services), providing selected trainings for all Garza teachers, and facilitating three student groups. In addition, he was the primary academic counselor for one-third of the Garza students, and was the counselor to whom students were referred for suspicion of substance use at school.

The program specialist in Guidance and Counseling, 45% funded through the grant, was responsible for orientation of new counselors and staff development for experienced counselors. The program specialist coordinated with community agencies to provide information and training for the middle school counselors in the areas of bully-proofing and sexual harassment. The specialist worked extensively with both of the competitive Title IV grants currently being implemented in the district. Specifically, the specialist returned to the role of program manager for the Elementary Counseling Demonstration Grant and continued coordination with the Middle School Drug Prevention and School Safety Coordinators. Finally, the specialist served on the district committee involved in: examining Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), implementing PBS at two pilot middle school campuses, and preparing to launch PBS districtwide in the 2004-2005 school year.

Many of the services provided by all three counselors are relevant to the Title IV program goals and objectives. However, further alignment of roles and responsibilities with grant goals, as well as proportional distribution of duties with funding, continues to be needed.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

Positive Behavior Support PBS (PBS) is a school-wide systems approach to promote pro-social behaviors and a culture of competence, to reduce chronic disruptive and destructive behaviors among students, and to meet the needs of children with significant behavior challenges. The program is designed to both prevent and intervene in problem behavior and requires school-wide responsibility for teaching positive student behaviors. PBS requires regular and consistent methods for both teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors, as well as for dealing with misbehaviors. An essential component of PBS is the establishment of a school-based Behavior Support Team that includes representatives from all role functions within a school, including administrators, teachers, resource officers, and support staff. This team is responsible for using data to develop, implement, and evaluate PBS activities within their school.

Specialized training in the area of PBS for a core group of district and campus level staff was funded through Title IV. Extensive exploration of the benefits and processes of PBS took place over several months. Three AISD middle schools were selected to pilot the initiative at their campuses. Training of campus staff and behavior support teams began in the spring and baseline data were established for each campus.

Expansion of this program will represent a major effort for AISD in the upcoming year. A districtwide coordinator has been selected and four new positions have been created to support and facilitate the implementation of PBS through training, mentoring, and coaching of campus staff. Funding for PBS is a collaborative effort, including contributions from Title IV, Title V, and local funds. Sixteen schools will receive district support for the implementation of PBS on their campuses in 2004-05.

BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST

One behavior specialist was funded half time by Title IV to provide supplemental support at middle school campuses. The specific role of the behavior specialist was to consult with teachers, teaching assistants, and principals regarding specific students who were demonstrating severe behavior difficulties. Specifically, the behavior specialist assisted in the development and modification of student behavior intervention plans, based on data collected by the campus regarding specific behavior concerns. Through this process, the behavior specialist helped to ensure that all possible options were implemented at the campus level prior to considering a discretionary removal of a student to the ALC. If a student were to be sent to the ALC, she would coordinate with ALC staff to learn what modifications, consequences, or reinforcements were successful so that similar structures could be utilized with the student when s/he returned to the home campus. In addition, the behavior specialist attended IMPACT team meetings to lend support on priority cases. The position is one of on-going support.

ADMINISTRATION AND EVALUATION

The majority of administrative costs (2% allowable) were expended in indirect costs. Although not funded by Title IV, both the budget specialist and the grant manager served essential administrative functions for this program. The budget specialist processed all requests for Title IV funds and expenditures, managed accounting procedures associated with grant funds, and assisted the evaluator in detailing the allocations and expenditures for required reporting to the TEA. The grant manager continued to serve as a leader in the district for drug and violence prevention initiatives. In addition to being the point person for formula Title IV grant initiatives, the grant manager also lead efforts on two related, competitive, grants: the Middle School Drug Prevention and School Safety Coordinators grant and the Travis County School Safety Consortium grant. In addition, the grant manager functioned as a community liaison for the district with regard to drug

and safety issues through participation in several local committees. Examples include the Travis County Underage Drinking Prevention Task Force and the Travis County Substance Abuse Planning Partnership. The grant manager also facilitated consultation between the community and the district's Safe and Drug Free Schools programs by hosting the annual Title IV Advisory Council meeting and through various other activities.

EVALUATOR

This year, one evaluator in the Office of Program Evaluation was funded half time through Title IV. This evaluator was responsible for working with district and program staff to analyze district needs, evaluate all Title IV funded programs and activities in the district, and gather data from the private schools and neglected or delinquent facilities within AISD boundaries that received Title IV funding. Some other responsibilities of the evaluator included: providing technical assistance in planning, needs assessment, and evaluation to campus contacts and district program managers; coordination with the grant manager to ensure district and campus compliance with federal and state mandates of the grant; and preparation and distribution of the required annual TEA Title IV evaluation report and the annual AISD Title IV narrative report. In addition, the evaluator served on the district committee involved in examining the feasibility of launching Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) districtwide and establishing baseline data for the evaluation of PBS implementation at two pilot middle school campuses.

DATA PROCESSING ASSISTANT

Beginning in December, a full time data processing assistant worked with both the Student Discipline Coordinator as well as the Executive Director of Educational Support Services to facilitate timely and accurate entry and analysis of student discipline data. While one of the data processing assistant's primary functions was to review and verify student discipline data for the state Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) submission, additional tasks included providing technical assistance to campus staff regarding their discipline data and assisting with the creation and regular (12-week) dissemination of discipline data to campuses. The data processing assistant also helped provide information and data to district and community-based requestors, such as Title IV Program Evaluation staff, the district level PBS committee, and the Community Safety Task Force. For the 2004-2005 school year, this role was expanded to include campus level reporting to support the PBS initiative.

PART 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued decreased funding coupled with increased numbers of students being disciplined for drug use and for verbal and physical aggression during 2003-2004 indicate that the Title IV program at AISD needs to become more focused. The district must expend Title IV funds only on activities that adhere to the Principles of Effectiveness and are proven through research to be effective at preventing violence and substance use. Program management needs to consolidate efforts to provide the greatest amount of impact possible, rather than continue to meagerly support an array of programs that fail to meet their potential due to the constraints of under funding, delayed execution, or poor match to actual needs. Districtwide program goals need to be more succinct, and include priorities for action.

The structural reorganization of AISD in June 2003 brought more of the Title IV programs under the auspices of one office, that of Educational Support Services. While this helped decrease organizational fragmentation, further coordination of programming is needed for the district to develop a "big picture" of what drug and violence prevention means at AISD and to operate as a program rather than a funding source. Some progress has been made toward improved organization of Title IV efforts, and this is particularly visible in the PBS initiative. To his credit, the Executive Director of Educational Support Services has been a strong leader in this area, emphasizing the necessity for and benefit of using data to understand needs, set goals, and implement effective programs to reach those goals. However, more work remains to be done in the area of developing a truly coordinated effort toward drug and violence prevention in AISD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to maximize the positive impact of limited Title IV funds, the district should implement the following recommendations, emphasizing focus and consolidation of programming.

OVERALL GRANT PROGRAM

- Improve coordination of district planning and implementation of programs and services related to drug and violence prevention through the development of prioritized districtwide program goals and a mapped plan to accomplish those

goals. Focus programming on a limited number of programs that support the goals of Title IV and are proven to be effective. Take better advantage of the new structural organization of the district to facilitate synchronized programming and efficient use of funds.

- Base programming efforts on the Principles of Effectiveness, which provide substantial guidance for determining the design and evaluation requirements of the programs implemented under Title IV. For example, current needs assessment data point to a need for increased emphasis on alcohol and violence prevention at all school levels, and an additional focus on marijuana prevention at the high school level. Programs used in AISD must be based on credible research about effective practices to meet district and campus objectives. Moreover, objectives and results need to be measurable so progress towards goals can be assessed objectively.

- Continue to focus on raising the awareness levels of teachers and administrators regarding student drug and alcohol use through professional development and timely dissemination of campus-level information.

DISTRICTWIDE PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES
- ALC staff and the staff at the students' home schools need to increase their efforts toward providing additional support and services to students as they transition back to their home schools following the completion of INVEST or Positive Families programs.

- Shift funds to support additional staff at district ROPES courses. Increased staffing will better utilize existing course resources and reallocate funds otherwise spent on external ROPES vendors. This will allow control of program quality, and further, because cost per student is less when supplied in-house, a greater number of students can be served.

- Step up alcohol prevention efforts preceding and during the 6th grade transition year. Focus on both alcohol and violence prevention programming at all school levels, and also emphasize marijuana prevention at the high school level.

- Proportionally align all grant personnel funding and their amount of effort toward and responsibility for promoting SDFSC grant goals and objectives,

either through reassignment of duties or by differential allotment of funding. All grant-funded staff should clearly understand their roles in supporting districtwide Title IV program goals.

CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS

- Title IV funding for campus-based programs should either be completely eliminated or restricted to be used on only a limited number of selected programs.   Further, if not eliminated, the programs available for campus selection must: satisfy the federal requirement that funds be spent only for proven, effective, and research-based programs; adhere to the Principles of Effectiveness; be chosen based on identified district needs; and be part of a larger districtwide initiative or effort in support of Title IV goals. For example, campuses that demonstrate a need could request to participate in a district supported program, such as PBS.

- Consolidation of programming will allow district level meta-analysis of campus programs to better understand their impact on student behavior and attitudes. This also will reduce the workload for Title IV coordinators at the campuses by simplifying their roles in the evaluation of campus programs.

- Consideration should be given toward merging the Title IV Campus-based program Planning forms with the required Safety Plans that each campus now must submit annually, to facilitate coordinated planning and efficient use of resources across funding sources.

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APPENDIX:
COMMUNITY AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS

Table A1: In-Kind Services Provided by Community Agencies*

Agency	Services Provided						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
YWCA	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Phoenix House	✓		✓				
Life Works	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Safe Place	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Communities in Schools		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Boys & Girls Club	✓					✓	
Austin Child Guidance Center		✓	✓		✓		
Texas Underage Drinking Prevention Program		✓					
American Cancer Society		✓					
Center for Attitudinal Healing		✓	✓				
Council on At Risk Youth	✓	✓					
Out Youth		✓	✓				
Central East Austin Community Organization						✓	
Longhorn Leaders (University of Texas School of Social Work, Austin Police Department, and the Greater Austin Crime Commission)		✓				✓	
Emmis Communications (HOT 93.3)		✓					
Austin Ice Bats		✓					

Curriculum-based prevention education instruction (short and long-term)

Information dissemination (including presentations and information distribution)

Counseling services (individual and support groups)

Screening and referrals

Structured activity groups (e.g., social/emotional skills focus)

Mentoring

Case management

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* This list includes examples of in-kind services related to SDFSC that were provided by community agencies. It is neither a complete list of agencies, nor is it an exhaustive list of all services provided.

Austin Independent School District