Communicating learning progress to students and parents, and
Improving the district curriculum.

Other important information was gathered from the districtwide 2004-2005 Parent Survey. Parents were asked if they received information from school staff regarding the following programs/services: Special Education, Bilingual/ESL, Gifted and Talented, tutoring, and Advanced Placement and dual credit courses for high and middle school only. Parent responses across grade levels showed that 13% (elementary), 21% (middle school), and 25% (high school) disagreed that staff had given them educational program information. When asked about Advancement Placement or dual credit courses, 27% of middle school and 20% of high school parents disagreed. In keeping with AISD's Guidelines for Model Customer Service, these percentages of disagreement must be addressed if the District is to provide effective courtesies when providing services to customers (e.g., parents, community members).

Parents at all grade levels provided mostly positive survey responses to items concerning how school staff interacted with parents and students. However, parents of high school students agreed less often to these items than parents of students at other school levels.

Parents also were asked if they were aware of AISD's Ombudsman office. Percentages of responses from parents across grade levels showed that less than two-thirds (62%) were aware of this office. Thus, results from both the Employee Coordinated Survey and the 2004-2005 AISD Parent Survey indicated that a number of teachers and parents were not aware of the AISD Ombudsman office.

In school year 2004-2005, 58 AISD campuses used funds to employ parent support specialists. These staff provided workshops and other services to parents and community members to enhance, empower, and encourage their participation in the education of children. During the year, they also implemented a District initiative, the elementary Read and Rise Circles Program, and began to address a District concern about student transition between grade levels. The parent support specialists provided professional development sessions for school staff and participated in their respective school's at-risk student assistance program. According to Dr. L. Clark-Brown, AISD's Dropout Prevention/Reduction Coordinator, "This program is designed to make an 'IMPACT' through facilitation and provision of follow-up services to families that avert or alleviate the at-risk status of students."

Parent support specialists are vital links between parents, communities, and schools because they often live in the communities in which they work, communicate in the language (or languages) common to the community and school, and provide parents with academic training opportunities or information to support student learning. Thus, these staff can assist the District in efforts to close the academic gap between low achieving students and others by providing a crucial link with parents.

In Fall 2003, AISD mandated the implementation of a districtwide accountability model for all parent involvement staff that included a set of major duties, Key Performance Indicators, and time and effort documentation for parent support specialists employed at campuses. Data regarding parent support specialists for 2004-2005 indicate that these AISD staff performe

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information to parents about classroom and campus-related requirements and expectations.

6. Document AISD's community involvement through the Austin Partners in Education (APIE) program and the Quality Zone Academy Bond Program (QZABP).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During 2004-2005, the office staff:

- Coordinated parent involvement activities districtwide and provided 16 special professional development workshops/sessions for 61 parent support specialists (57 Title I campus staff, 2 Bilingual Education staff, and 2 GEAR UP staff).
- Facilitated Title I and Title I Migrant Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings.
- Provided leadership in the implementation of the Read and Rise Circles Program (a District initiative), and integration and improvement of the grade level transition process, including the coordination of the Read and Rise Circles Program Parent Celebration (n=230) held at the Delco Center on May 5, 2005.
- Published or made available parenting periodicals.
- Provided on-site enrichment opportunities including evening adult literacy classes, 27 Taking Care of Business classes for parents of students who are at risk of legal intervention due to truancy; 40 weeks of on-site parent education classes for 56 parents; and 160 days of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.
- Provided summaries of parent support specialists' time and effort documentation to the associate superintendents.
- Conducted 18 parent involvement presentations for community groups, such as the Texas Association of School Boards, Austin Community College, and Family Connections.
- Worked with schools that did not have parent support specialists to enhance their parent involvement efforts.

In addition, office staff at the Family Resource Center participated in 23 community resource fairs, including the Celebration of Families event (n=2,300 in attendance), and partnered with The Community Foundation Agency (TCFA) to provide free income tax services to 500 families. The Center is also the meeting headquarters for AISD's Parent Family Involvement Advisory Council (PFIAC).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A strong component of community involvement in AISD is the Austin Partners in Education (APIE) program, a partnership between AISD and the Texas Uniform Unincorporated Nonprofit Association (TUUNA) foundation that encourages business and community involvement in public schools. Partners are matched with the schools of their choice and provide volunteer services, in-kind contributions, and cash donations. In addition to APIE volunteers, parent support specialists also recruit and train other community volunteers.

EMPLOYEE COORDINATED SURVEY RESULTS

The 2005 Employee Coordinated Survey was distributed to a sample of AISD employees through e-ma

Table 1: Numbers and Percentages of AISD Staff Agreeing That They Provided Information About Parental Involvement Expectations, 2004-2005

I provide parents of students at my campus with information about the following parental involvement expectations:	Non-Teaching (n=245) %	Teachers Elementary (n=346) %	Teachers Middle (n=139) %	Teachers High (n=153) %
Attending and participating in meetings, workshops, etc.	87	76	53	33
Advocating for their child	85	65	45	38
Providing input in decision-making	83	55	40	28
Working with child at home on school related tasks	83	83	58	48
Working toward parent/campus solutions	78	78	30	26
Advocating for their child's school	61	61	27	16

Source: AISD Employee Coordinated Survey, 2004-2005.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Campus staff were asked about the types of professional development they would like to receive in the following areas: general parent-staff communication skills; advising parents about grade-level curriculum and graduation requirements; working with parents regarding student behavior at school (attendance, discipline, dress code, etc.); advising parents on how to support students' learning at home (study skills, learning activities, etc.); district/campus parent involvement policy; district/campus parent involvement resources; and advising parents about IMPACT meetings. As shown in Table 2, 56% of the teachers (n=531) chose working with parents on student behavior at school, and 68% chose advising parents on how to support student learning at home. These two categories were chosen frequently by other professionals, administrators, and classified staff. In addition, classified staff also wanted training about advising parents on the IMPACT team process (65%). These same topics have been identified frequently in the past three years of the survey. (See AISD's Parent and Community Involvement Summary Reports listed in the Reference section of this report).

Table 2: Numbers and Percentages of AISD Campus Staff Requesting Specific Parent Involvement Workshop Topics, 2004-2005

Survey Items	Administrators (n=76) %	Classified (n=17) %	Other Professionals (n=110) %	Teachers (n=531) %
Working with parents on student behavior at school (attendance, discipline, etc.)	66	70	48	56
Advising parents on how to support student learning at home	59	59	57	68
General parent–staff communication	32	59	24	9
District/campus parent involvement policy	21	59	17	17
Advising parents on IMPACT meetings	20	65	20	16
Advising parents on grade level curriculum	13	53	15	21
Advising parents on graduation requirements	13	9	14	9
District/campus parent	p	u	s	

Table 3: Numbers and Percentages of AISD Non-teaching Staff Responses About Awareness of AISD Support Services or Community Resources, 2004-2005

I am aware of the following AISD support services or community resources:	Administrators (n=94) %	Classified (n=17) %	Other Professionals (n=134) %
Operation School Bell (OSB)	93	100	96
AISD Ombudsman Office	86	76	40
IMPACT (AISD Dropout Prevention Program)	86	100	87
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	86	100	87
Family Resource Center (AISD Support Services)	33	94	33
Family Connections Organization	33	94	33

Source: AISD Employee Coordinated Survey, 2004-2005.

SUPPLEMENTAL ACADEMIC SERVICES

Table 5 shows that the majority of campus

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON EMPLOYEE COORDINATED SURVEY RESULTS

The AISD employee coordinated survey data suggest that teachers need more information about parental involvement, supplemental academic programs, use of benchmark test results, and support services at their campuses. In fact, for th

AISD PARENT SURVEY.80 0 10.

Table 7: Percentages of Parent Respondents Who Agreed With Having Positive Experiences with Various School Staff, 2004-2005

Survey Item	School Staff	Elementary % Agree	Middle % Agree	High % Agree
School staff treat me with courtesy and respect.	Teachers	98	93	89
	Office Staff	96	94	92
	Counselor(s)	98	96	93
	Assistant Principals	98	93	91
	Principals	97	94	93
	eachers	97	84	78
	ffice Staff	92	86	85
	ounselor(s)	93	90	87
	ssistant Principals	93	81	78
	rincipals	93	82	79
School staff welcome my input in academic decisionn decisc decisi				

Review of survey results from both the 2005 AISD Parent Survey and the 2005 AISD Employee Coordinated Survey show that about two-thirds of parents and less than one-fifth of teachers were aware of the AISD Ombudsman office. See Table 9.

Table 9: Percentages of Responses of AISD Parents and Teachers by Grade Level About Awareness of the AISD Ombudsman, 2004-2005

I am aware of the AISD Ombudsman	Elementary %	Middle %	High %	
AISD Parent Survey-Parents	69	66	Tw	10.98

Table 11: Percentages of Parents' Responses To Survey Items About Whether School Staff Provided Information Regarding Specific AISD Academic Programs/Services, 2004-2005

School staff provided me with information about the following programs:	School Level	% Agree	% Disagree
Student Success Initiative (EL only)	Elementary	97	3
Special Education	Elementary	89	11
	Middle	80	20
	High	74	26
Bilingual/ESL Program	Elementary	89	11
	Middle	78	22
	High	72	28
Gifted and Talented Program	Elementary	87	13
	Middle	75	25
	High	71	28

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only one professional development session to campus staff, and 2% (n=1) reported that they had not provided training sessions to campus staff. *(Major Duty 5 and Key Performance Indicator 2)*

Table 14 shows a summary of numbers of families (parents and children) served through IMPACT Team efforts. Ninety-five percent (n=54) of the parent support specialists indicated that they had provided services to families of Level I high needs students for whom preventative intervention was not an option (e.g., students and families thrust into homelessness, loss of only source of income, and/or families facing major medical problems). Ninety-five (n=54) percent of the parent support specialists also provided Level II intervention services (e.g., assisted with obtaining clothing, tutoring, mentoring, medical services, family literacy classes, student enrollment for free or reduced-priced lunch, and registration for judge-ordered parenting classes) for families of at-risk students through their campus IMPACT team, or as a follow-up service after an IMPACT teamo(e)Tj0.0n0.090e597classgar 525.59991 Tm3691 T ac e549991 Tm(sFTj4, h12 0 0 12 4

listing. While not shown in Table 15, parent support specialists also recruited 718 parents for participation in the Medicaid program and conducted 169 Medicaider eligibility searches as part of their wellness activities. *(Major Duty 2 and Key Performance Indicator 1)*

Table 15: Number of Parents in Attendance by Activity Category as Reported by AISD Parent Support Specialist, 2004-2005

Activity	# Parent Participants (Duplicated Count)
Assemblies	34,143
Literacy and Curriculum	
Family Night	16,708
Family Literacy	9,220
Principal Get Together	8,581
Seminars	3,909
TAKS	3,437
TEKS	1,229
Learning Walks	1,190
Principles of Learning	1,114
Fairs	
Fund-raising	11,977
***Other**	10,541
Academics	7,234
Health	2,774
Wellness Workshops	
***Other**	9,526
Dental	4,614
Vision	2,915
Immunization	2,870
Self Esteem	511
Stress	304
Social Issues Workshops	
***Other**	4,747
Drugs	777
Teen Pregnancies	398

Source: Parent Support Specialists' Fall 2004 Report and Spring 2005 Questionnaire.
Note: Other activities were too numerous to list in table.

Aside from reporting activities and workshops, parent support specialists were asked to list three conference-type activities that required them to act as facilitators (e.g., set up the conference or meeting, contact parents, act as advocate or translator) and to provide follow-up contacts and services where applicable. Fifty-one percent (n=25) of the parent support specialist respondents listed assistance with regular parent-teacher conferences and 41% (n=20) listed oral or sign language translation during parent-teacher conferences. Thirty-seven percent (n=18) mentioned set-up and participation in Admission, Review, or Dismissal (ARD), Local Support

Team (LST) meetings, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act hearings. Other activities reported included 27% (n=13) who set up and participated in academic/progress, grade placement, TAKS, and/or grade level conferences or meetings; 27% (n=13) who provided assistance with attendance, discipline, and conflict resolution conferences; 18% (n=9) who made home visits with school staff; and 8% (n=4) who facilitated and followed-up on students' medical or vision problems. *(Major Duty 1 and Key Performance Indicator 3)*

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Some parent support specialists participated in activities that extended beyond their regular duties. For instance, when asked if they supplemented their Austin Partners In Education (APIE) program with additional personally-recruited volunteers, 90% (n=44) of the parent support specialists reported recruiting a total of 2,002 parents who volunteered 39,272 hours of service in their schools. In addition, they reported that a total of 391 business organizations donated 7,820 hours of volunteer service as mentors, buddies, and in other roles. Finally, they reported that 545 other individuals and groups (e.g., university students, school campus staff, and community members other than parents) volunteered 49,695 hours of service as mentors or tutors. *(Major Duty 6 and Key Performance Indicator 3)*

ADULT LITERACY

Federal and state Title I Part A grant guidelines suggest that all Title I schools collaborate with other programs in the district, including adult literacy programs, to empower parents through self-improvement so that they may assist their children in succeeding academically. Based on questionnaire results, 69% (n=34) of parent support specialists held adult literacy classes on their campuses during the 2004-2005 school year. The parent support specialists at 32 campuses enrolled parents in adult literacy classes at other sites because the classes were unavailable at their own campuses. A total of 1,763 adults were enrolled in these classes between August 2004 and May 2005. Forty-eight percent (n=851) of the enrolled adults completed the classes by May 2005, and 19% (n=164) entered the workforce for the first time. *(Major Duties 2, 4, and Key Performance Indicator 1)*

USE OF D

THE READ AND RISE CIRCLES PROGRAM

In fall 2004, parent support specialists at elementary schools were asked to help the District implement a new initiative, the Read and Rise Circles Program, sponsored by the National Urban League, Scholastic Inc., and State Farm Insurance companies. The Read and Rise Circles Program is an early literacy and pre-reading skills program (Parents as First Teachers or Los Padres/Madres Como Los Primeros Maestros) aimed at developing strong reading skills in children during their early childhood years (birth to 4 years). The program objective is to train parents to:

Be first teachers;

Use the home as first campus;

Use the kitchen table as first desk, first library table, and/or first math or science lab; and

Use junk mail for geography, shopping, and many other kinds of teaching activities.

Read and Rise Circles Program training was provided to 43 parent support specialists during fall 2004 by the Family Resource Center's Parent Program specialist. In January 2005, five parent support specialists shared experiences, tips, and translated materials with other parent support specialists at their monthly professional development meeting. The presenters suggested that parent support specialists:

Take the program's teaching manual apart, laminate the pages, and put them into a binder for planning and copying ease.

Utilize available resources, such as campus staff's bilingual teaching materials, Eager To Learn and KLRU tapes, personal storybooks, and other teaching tools.

Prepare and practice presentations, and make a prop box or bag for all of the books and charts that will be used in the presentation.

Modify presentations to fit the home language of the audience (Spanish for Spanish-speakers, English for English speakers, and bilingual for Spanish-English speakers).

Keep presentations short (a maximum of 7 minutes).

Use the reading and mathematics comprehension levels appropriate for your audience.

Model animated reading and use of junk mail as teaching tools.

Give parents something to take home to put into practice.

Make a Show and Tell Book for posterity's sake. The book is a large, 36" x 48", stand-alone, fold out three-panel, display board. Making the book is a required activity in the program's curriculum. The Family Resource Center's Parent Program specialist ordered the display boards and one-time use cameras for the project.

Parent support specialists picked up these items at the end of the January (cameras) and March (display boards) professional development sessions. They were used to make a visual record of the program's curriculum, activities, and participants. These boards also were designated to be part of a planned Read and Rise Circles Program Showcase at the end of the school year.

The parent support specialists requested at the January 2005 meeting that their Read and Rise Program activities be recorded through the annual Parent Support Specialist Questionnaire. Thus, the Questionnaire asked each elementary parent support specialist to provide:

A brief description of their program, including a mission statement, teaming

nursery rhymes, vocabulary lists, “Make-It Take It” booklets, building blocks, and behavior modification materials.

Parent support specialists shar

Coordinated Survey, many campus staff reported the need for training on how to work with parents to support student learning. Campus administrators should promote parent specialists' ability to provide professional staff development training sessions to teachers and other campus staff. Then, campus staff may gain improved skills and knowledge on how to work with parents toward the goal of student academic success. Parent support specialists should also enhance parents' and staff's awareness of AISD support services and community resources through presentations or other communications specific to these services and resources.

AISD COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

AISD has access to many local business and community volunteers and resources through Austin Partners in Education (APIE). Both monetary donations and volunteer hours are given to support Austin schools through APIE. According to APIE staff, APIE also partners with the Quality Zone Academy Bond Program (QZABP), a bond program that allows school districts to receive a waiver on repaying interest on school bonds that are sold if each campus in the bond package shows a 10% contribution in total dollar amount of community support in its participating fiscal year. This partnership consistently has resulted in savings to the district.

Table 14 describes community partnership information provided by APIE for the past three years. Increases were observed in 2004-2005 from 2003-2004 for all categories except number of volunteers. APIE's records show that schools with parent support staff accounted for 39% of in-kind contributions, 70% of cash donations, 47% of volunteer services, and 26% of volunteer hours. APIE staff's computed cash value of volunteered services provided by the reporting schools totaled $3,240,580. For more information from APIE'w 12 0 0 12 71.9d Tm(reco)Tj12 0 0 1,5

value of these hours. Since this information allows the opportunity to save district monies,

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recommended that campus administrators use the parent support specialists to provide the training that teachers need to work with parents on improving student achievement and behavior.

Second, campus and district administrators must use cost-effective means in their efforts to provide parents, teachers, and students with information about district resources available to them, such as the Ombudsman office and grade-level transition programs, and should encourage use of such resources. Parent support specialists are the ideal medium for this task because: (1) they already use these resources in many of the services performed for parents, students, or school staff; (2) they have established relationships with teachers, parents, and students enrolled on their campuses; (3) they often facilitate some of the activities associated with the Ombudsman office or the grade-level transition camps; and (4) they can merge this information into other training offered to school staff, parents, and students.

A third recommendation is that campus staff pay close attention to reporting APIE community support data because AISD realizes savings through the Quality Zone Academy Bond Program based, in part upon these data. Contributions also provide validation of community support, which helps the District's standing in the community and improves the District's chances for approval in applications for large grants that may be invested in furthering students' academic achievement.

AISD must address certain school staff's (especially teachers') perceptions about the effective use of Benchmark test results on their campuses because the Student Learning Profile (Benchmark) Assessment Process is a part of AISD's current curriculum, and teachers should be using these data to improve teaching strategies, to measure student progress, and to communicate the progress to students and parents. Also, there is a possibility that staff's negative opinions about the tests could be passed on to parents, which could hinder the helpfulness of benchmark testing. Since AISD's Curriculum department staff have specific skills in the administration, interpretation, and application of AISD's benchmark tests, a fourth recommendation is for AISD's Curriculum department staff to provide more professional development training sessions to campus staff regarding benchmark testing and the use of the results. Professional development might bring accord among campus staff regarding whether or not their campus' use of the results is effective.

According to AISD Policy on Community Relations [GK (LOCAL)], parents, families, and community members are all partners with schools for the purpose of promoting student success throughout a child's educational experience. Therefore, the final recommendation is that campus administrators make every effort to offer parents at all grade levels, especially at high school grade levels, support and opportunities to have two-way communication and input on academic decisions involving their children.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: STAFF RESPONSES TO THE EMPLOYEE COORDINATED SURVEY

Numbers and Percentages of AISD Staff Responses to the Employee Coordinated Survey Item About Provision of Information to Parents on Classroom Requirements or Expectations, 2004-2005

I provide parents of students at	Non-Teaching Staff (n=245)			Teachers (n=647)
about the following	Administrators	Classified	Other	

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Austin Independent School District

Office of Accountability
Maria Whitsett, Ph.D.

Department of Program Evaluation
Holly Williams, Ph.D.
Martha Doolittle, Ph.D.

Author
Wanda Washington

Board of Trustees
Doyle Valdez, President
Ave Wahrmund, Vice President
Patricia Whiteside, Secretary
Cheryl Bradley
Rudy Montoya, Jr.
Johna Edwards
Mark Williams
Robert Schneider
John Fitzpatrick

Superintendent of Schools
Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.

Publication Number 04.05
January 2006