PARENT

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about how to support student learning at home, and working with parents on student behavior at school).

In fall 2003, AISD mandated the implementation of a district-wide accountability model for all parent involvement staff that included a set of major duties (MDs), key performance indicators (KPIs), and time and effort documentation for parent support specialists employed at campuses. Data regarding parent support specialists for 2005-2006 indicated that these AISD staff performed their MDs and met their campuses' goals in providing workshops and other services to parents and community members. However, self-report data indicated that some parent support specialists (22%, n = 12) did not work with their district-assigned vertical teams, and a few (4%, n = 2) did not know who their teams were.

Community contributions to AISD provide validation of community support, which helps the district's standing in the community and improves the district's chances for approval of grant applications. For instance, AISD will realize an approximate financial savings of $8 million for fiscal year 2006 through a community partnership with the AISD Partners In Education (APIE) program and with a bond program, Quality Zone Academic Bond Program (QZABP). The QZABP allows school districts to receive a waiver on repayment of interest on school bonds that are sold, provided that each campus in the bond package shows a 10% contribution in total dollar amount of community support in its participating year.

A review of the APIE's 2005-2006 records showed substantial decreases from the prior year in three categories: in-kind donations, number of volunteers, and volunteer hours. These numbers could have been higher if 100% of schools had completed in full the reports that they had submitted.

In keeping with the purpose of this report, and AISD's commitment to a customer service initiative that focuses on providing excellent customer service to all district customers, stom

2. Because parents are clearly AISD customers and stakeholders, administrators must review parent survey results and make every effort to ensure parents enjoy positive interactions with all school staff. Furthermore, school staff must provide parents of high school and middle school students timely information about graduation requirements (e.g., TAKS academic progress, credits, semester hours) and post-graduation opportunities.

3. Because vertical teams and their operations are aligned with the overall operations of the district, it is important that parent support specialists know their teams and coordinate activities with them. Vertical team coordination encourages inclusive planning, promotes district-wide goals, and produces large turnouts at group activities. By supporting coordinated vertical team activities, staff support parent involvement and improve the district's chances for approval of applications for grants that require support for parent involvement.

4. Currently, AISD's APIE donations are used to satisfy a $5 million interest-free

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AISD PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

POLICY

AISD's Board of Trustees adopted an updated parental involvement policy (GK-LOCAL: Community Relations) in August 2000, based on Joyce Epstein's (1997) list of important parent involvement activities: communication, parent training, promoting student learning, using community resources, participating in decision making, and volunteering. In addition, the AISD Board of Trustees adopted a policy governance model (August 2002) that included executive limitations in 16 distinct areas. The primary executive limitation concerning parents is EL-3, "Treatment of Stakeholders," which outlines appropriate communication with parents and others and describes the responsibility of the superintendent to ensure lawful, ethical, respectful, and dignified treatment of parents, staff, students, and the public.

DISTRICT PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2003, members of AISD's cabinet (i.e., superintendent, associate superintendents, and other lead staff) approved implementation of a district-wide accountability model for parent involvement staff that was designed to ensure uniform delivery of service, forms of communication, and rules of governance across all campuses. These measures were established to provide all AISD families with support, as needed. The model standardized the parent support specialist's job description and role in the school and community; required these staff to submit monthly time and effort documentation; and outlined their responsibilities in terms of MDs, as measured by KPIs. These KPIs are defined later in this report. The 2003-2004 school year was the baseline year for implementing the model, and the 2005-2006 school year was the first year for making improvements, where needed, and evaluating improvements compared with the baseline year.

STAFFING

In 2005-2006, 60 AISD sites used a combination of funds to employ 64 parent support specialists who provided workshops and other se

During 2005-2006, the office staff:

- coordinated parent involvement activities

they provided information to parents about working with their child at home on school-related tasks. The 2005-2006 data for teachers also showed an increase from the prior year with respect to the percentages of teachers providing information to parents regarding campus expectations. However, because the sample size was different between years, further study is warranted to investigate year-to-year differences in response patterns.

Table 1: Numbers and Percentages of AISD Staff Agreeing They Provided Information about Parental Involvement Expectations, 2004-2005 to 2005-2006

I provide parents of students at my campus with information about the following parental involvement expectations:	2004-2005 Non-Teaching (n = 245) %	2005-2006 Non-Teaching (n = 102) %	2004-2005 Teachers (n = 638) %	2005-2006 Teachers (n = 80) %
Attending and participating in meetings, workshops, etc.	87	80	61	76
Advocating for their child	85	88	55	66
Providing input in decision making	83	77	45	55
Working with child at home on school-related tasks	83	75	70	85
Working toward parent/campus solutions	78	59	38	44
Advocating for their child's school	61	63	33	55

Source: AISD Employee Coordinated Survey, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Campus staff were asked about the types of professional development opportunities 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 (e.g., attendance, discipline, dress code); advising parents about how to support students' learning at hom

classified staff. These same

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Table 4: Percentages of Parent Respondents who Agreed with Having Positive
Experiences with Various School Staff from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006

Survey Items	Elementary		Middle		High	
	2004-2005 %	2005-2006 %	2004-2005 %	2005-2006 %	2004-2005 %	2005-2006 %
School staff treat me with courtesy and respect:						
Teachers						
Office Staff						
Counselor(s)						
Assistant Principals						
Principals						

As shown in Table 5, when parents were asked if schools provided them with individual student information, a large majority reported that school staff provided them with adequate information about their child (e.g., positive feedback, personal information regarding the child's behavior, academic progress, academic plans and goals, preparedness for TAKS, and whether the child was at risk of failing a grade). Longitudinal data were available for five of the items on the 2006 survey. Table 5 shows a slight decline in percentages of parent agreement, compared with percentages of agreement on the same items in the 2005 survey.

Table 5: Percentages of Parent Respondents who Agreed with Whether School Staff Provided Information about Their Child from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006

showed a slight increase in their agreement about receiving information concerning availability of tutoring. On the two items new to the survey in 2006, parents of elementary students agreed more often than did parents of secondary students that they received information from school staff about parent involvement opportunities and resources.

Table 6: Percentages of Parent Respondents who Agreed that School Staff Provided
Information Regarding Specific AISD Academic Programs/Services
from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006

School staff provided me with information about the following programs:	2004-2005 %	2005-2006 %
Special Education		
Elementary	89	89
Middle	80	73
High	74	69
Bilingual/ESL Program		
Elementary	89	89
Middle	78	71
High	72	65
Gifted and Talented Program		
Elementary	87	87
Middle	75	72
High	71	61
Availability of Tutoring		
Elementary	85	87
Middle	85	83
High	82	78
Choice Sheets-Course Selections (HS and MS only)		
Middle	91	89
High	87	84
Advanced Placement (HS and MS only)		
Middle	80	77
High	83	80
Dual Credit Courses (HS and MS only)		
Middle	66	62
High	77	71
Parent/Family Involvement Opportunities		
Elementary	*	96
Middle	*	89
High	*	81
Parent/Family Resources		
Elementary	*	90
Middle	*	76
High	*	71

Source: AISD Parent Survey, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006
Note: Asterisks indicate data were not available.

　　Table 7 shows that the majority of high school parents' responses were positive when asked if school staff provided them with graduation and post-graduation information. Parents of middle school students agreed less often than did parents of high school students. However,

these topics may be of more immediate concern to high school students and their parents than to those at the middle school level because graduation will occur sooner.

 Table 7: Percentages of Secondary Parents who Agreed that School Staff Provided Graduation

obtain a high school diploma, and 74% or more indicated having a goal for their child to obtain a bachelors degree. Between half and two-thirds of parents reported goals for their child to obtain a graduate or professional degree.

Table 10: Numbers and Percentages of Parents Reporting Specific Educational
Goals for Their Child, 2005-2006

My goals for my child include the following plans:	Elementary (n = 9,689) %	Middle (n = 1,683) %	High (n = 1,929) %
High School Diploma	94	98	97
Certificate/Associate Degree	29	24	29
Bachelors Degree	74	89	82
Graduate/Professional Degree	64	65	52
Military Service	8	5	6

Source: AISD Parent Survey, 2005-2006

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

The AISD Parent Survey is used to gather data concerning the treatment of one of AISD's most important stakeholder groups: parents. Each year at the conclusion of the survey, campus administrators receive reports describing how parents of students at their campus responded to the survey. In the spring of 2006, AISD's DPE staff developed a review kit that consisted of a parent survey review worksheet and presentation template. During an administrators' meeting, DPE staff gave the campus administrators their 2005-2006 reports and provided training regarding use of the kit. The goal for providing this kit to administrators is to help them to use the survey results and to communicate the findings to staff for campus improvement planning.
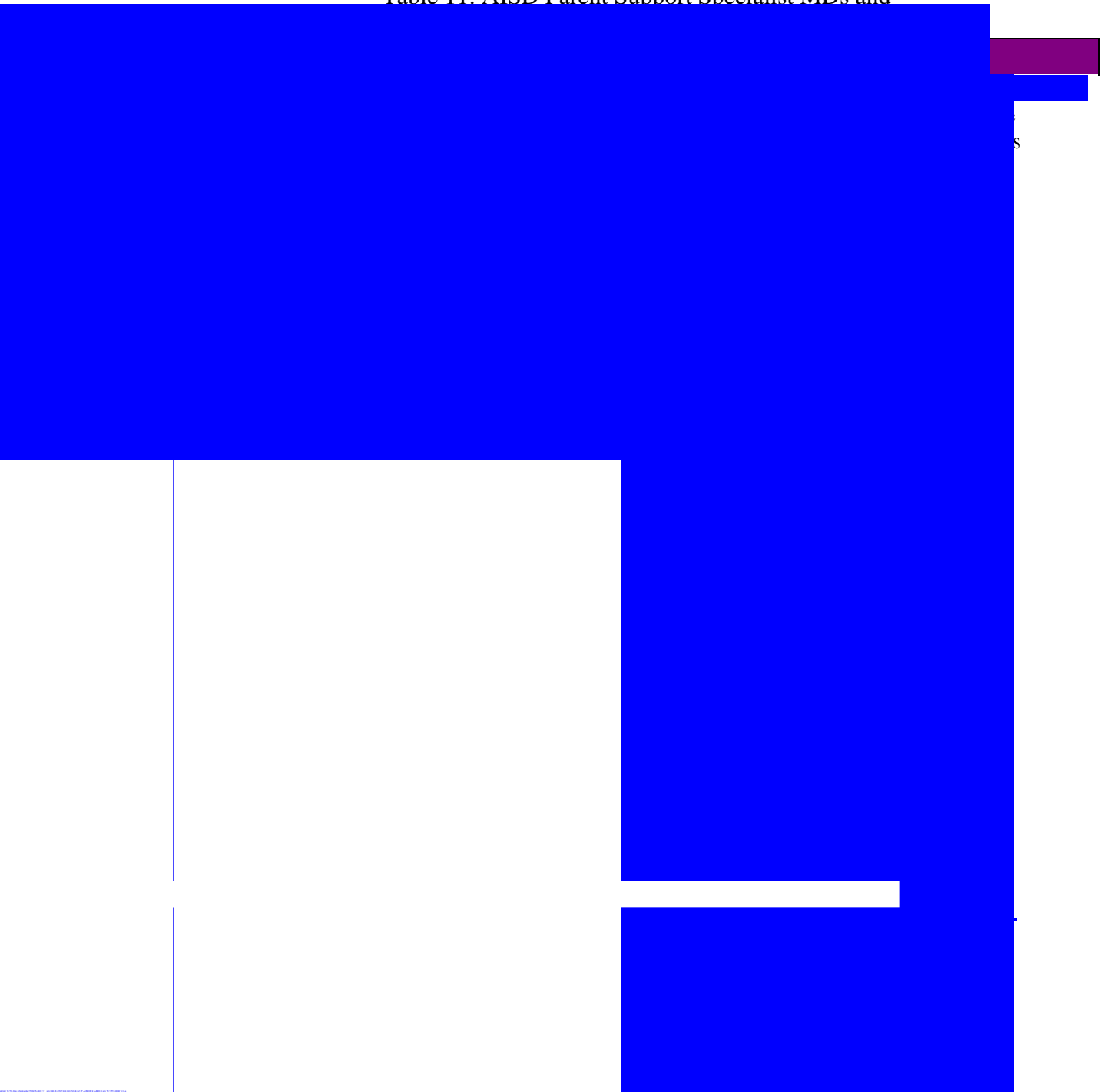
As part of AISD's core values for a community with shared ownership, purposes, and commitment, campus administrators must find ways to meet the responsibilities outlined in EL-3. They can do this by improving the opportunities for two-way communication between their campus staff and parents, the involvement of parents in their child's education, and the process by which administrators receive parents' input about academic decisions.

Although the overwhelming majority of parents' responses regarding all staff (e.g., principal, assistant principal, counselor, office staff, and teachers) were positive for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, secondary school parents generally reported having positive experiences with staff less frequently than did elementary school parents. These results raise concern because many school staff, such as office employees, may be the first or only contact parents encounter upon entering the school building. In addition, principals, assistant principals, and/or counselors are key decision makers in matters regarding the welfare of students at their school.

PARENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent support staff who work directly with parents and other school staff were held accountable for provision of parent support services through their time and effort; documentation concerning the numbers of hours worked; accomplished tasks; and numbers of parents, students, and staff served. In addition, parent support specialists' activities were examined to ensure they were aligned with MDs and KPIs, as defined by the adopted accountability model. The MDs and KPIs were updated in fall 2006, prior to the writing of this report, to be more inclusive and descriptive of the parent support specialists' activities. Table 11 shows how the parent support specialists' MDs were aligned with KPIs.

Table 11: AISD Parent Support Specialist MDs and

two (fall and end-of-year) reports and an annual questionnaire. The relevant MDs and KPIs were listed at the end of each question to assist the parent support specialists in completing the questionnaire. In the fall 2005 report, 60 parent support specialists and 1 parent program specialist were asked to submit a summary of parent involvement activities (and parent attendance at those activities) held at their schools between August 2005 and December 2005. Of the 61 interim reports sent out, 54 (89%) were returned. Six parent support specialists (9.8%) did not return the interim report for unknown reasons, and 1 (0.2%) was on sick leave. On the spring 2006 end-of-year questionnaire, additional data were gathered from the parent support specialists about activities from January through May 2006, as well as some specific parent support issues. The questionnaire wa

specialists, comprehensive education director, assistant principals); 70% (n = 38) said they worked with their PTA/PTO president; and 59% (n = 32) worked with community agencies and organizations. Some of the organizations that partnered with the parent support specialists included Austin Community College, Insure-A-Kid, Austin Police Department Council of At Risk Youth, Child INC, Family Forward-Next Step, 21st Century, Communities In Schools, Medicaider Program (online search

- Setting up and participating in IMPACT meetings, Operation School Bell activities, or immunizations projects
- Providing professional development sessions to school staff
- Implementing district initiative programs (e.g., Read and Rise Circles) and student transition
- Planning and implementing joint ventures (e.g., Parent Involvement Week) and grade-level transition
- Assisting school staff whenever necessary (e.g., translation, clerical, filling in for absent staff)

Of all these activities, 98% were categorized within the district-mandated MDs. Several of these activities (e.g., providing information to parents, making home visits or calling parents, and conducting assemblies) spanned the regular school year and summer school activities. These activities support MD 1 and 4, and KPI 1 and 3.

By the end of school year 2005-2006, 37% (n = 20) of the responding parent support specialists had provided three or more professional development training sessions to campus staff; and 30% (n = 16) had provided at least two professional development training sessions for staff on their campuses. These activities support MD 5 and KPI 2. However, 11% (n = 6) provided only one professional development session to campus staff, 18% (n = 10) reported they had not provided training sessions to campus staff, and 4% (n = 2) did not answer the question. Thus, this represents an area that needs improvement for parent support specialists. Providing workshTj0.0lPthi 1212 .0oTw 12 0 0 12 405.85346.2907 345.5999 Tmiessions

Table 14: Number of Hurricane Evacuees Receiving AISD IMPACT Services
from Parent Support Specialists between January and May 2006

Hurricanes	Parents	Students	

Support Team (LST) meetings, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act hearings. Other activities reported (60%, n = 31) included set up and participation in academic/progress, grade placement, TAKS, and/or grade-level conferences or meetings; Youth and Family Advocacy Center meetings; Explore UT family field trips; PTA meetings; and securing outside counseling services for parents of delinquent youths. These activities support MD 1 and KPI 3.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Some parent support specialists participated in activities that extended beyond their regular duties. For instance, when asked if they supplemented their APIE program with additional personally recruited volunteers, 72% (n = 39) of the parent support specialists reported recruiting a total of 2,014 parents, who volunteered 41,662 hours of service in their schools. In addition, they reported that a total of 470 business organizations donated 7,327 hours of volunteer service as mentors or buddies, or in other roles. Finally, they reported that 453 other individuals and groups (e.g., university students, school campus staff, and community members other than parents) volunteered 14,253 hours of service as mentors or tutors. These activities support MD 6 and KPI 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 they can assist their children in succeeding academically. Based on questionnaire results, 61% (n = 33) of parent support specialists held adult literacy classes on their campuses during the 2005-2006 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 1,342 adults were enrolled in these classes between August 2005 and May 2006. Forty-two percent (n = 566) of the enrolled adults completed the classes by May 2006, and 10% (n = 138) entered the workforce for the first time. This activity supports MD 2 and 4, and KPI 1.

USE OF DISTRICT PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Sixty-seven percent (n = 36) of the parent support specialists responded that they used the district parent survey results from 2004-2005 in developing their campus improvement plans for the 2005-2006 school year. Eleven percent (n = 6) said they did not use the district parent survey results in developing their campus improvement plans; 2% (n = 1) said their campuses did not participate in the 2004-2005 survey; 11% (n = 6) said they did not know whether their campuses used the survey data or not; and 9% (n = 5) did not respond to the question. Ninety-one percent (n = 49) of the parent support specialists said they would use

results from the 2005-2006 parent survey in planning their 2006-2007 campus improvement plans' goals and activities for parent involvement if the data were applicable to their programs. Nine percent (n = 6) did not respond to the question. This activity supports MD 1, 2, and 3, and KPI 1.

BEST PRACTICE

        Parent support specialists were asked to choose one parent involvement activity from a list of five (i.e., presentation, seminar, workshop, writing a grant, or other) that had occurred at their campuses and was a success or best practice, based on factors such as attendance, parent and/or community feedback, number of students served, amount of funding (or in-kind contributions), and terms of the grant. Thirty-seven percent (n = 20) of parent support specialists reported educational workshops, such as the following:

- Parents' TAKS Night
- Book Bear Buddy, a reading program for students in grades K-2
- RIF Parent Book Club
- Texas Extension Expanded Nutrition program
- Weekly Wednesday Specials, a program that rewarded parents with home libraries for perfect attendance
- Positive Defining Moment, workshops for parent of secondary students
- School-wide attendance roundup workshop, a combined 5-week, 2-hour workshop that included literacy facts
- Leyendo A-Z and ESL for expanding English vocabulary
- Strengthening Families, a 10-week family program

Twenty-six percent (n = 14) reported other activities; such as the following:

- Summer Camp Surprises, a district-wide event that provided information for parents of all grade levels regarding summer school activities
- Bring your Parent or Guardian to School Day, a secondary activity that invites students to bring parents, guardians, relatives, and community members to the campus for a school day
- Parent Lunch days
- Dis-it Days Campus Beautification Project
- Travis Community Education Foundation (TCEF) pilot mentoring program for children with incarcerated parents

Twenty-two percent (n = 12) reported presentations on such topics as solutions for challenging behaviors, domestic violence, building a bridge between home and school, saving for the future, how to talk to your child, and an environmental walk. Eight percent (n = 4)

reported two seminars and two grant-writing projects each. Seven percent (n = 4) did not respond to the question. These activities support MD 2 and KPI 1.

THE READ AND RISE CIRCLE Eiep3oted j9.48 0 0 9.4 gsl Tm

Additional responses showed that parent support specialists conducted 201 Read and Rise Circles program workshops with 3,228 parents in attendance. Of these workshops, 58% (n = 18) of parent support specialists reported using English and Spanish languages in their presentations, 32% (n = 10) used Spanish only, and 10% (n = 3) used English only. A variety of handouts and materials were used in these workshops, such as TAKS and TEKS workbooks, literacy books, dictionaries, reading outlines and charts, vocabulary lists to translate from English to Spanish, word find lists, benchmark test information, flash cards, PBS videos, cameras to record activities, poems, English/Spanish nursery rhymes, vocabulary lists, *Make It/ Take It* booklets, building blocks, and behavior modification marfantastic,9(terials Tm(t/)Tj0.0009 Tc 5.417m

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PARENT SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

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 can provide parents with academic training opportunities or information to support student learning (e.g., TAKS and other assessments; curriculum and programs). Thus, these staff can assist the district in its efforts to close the academic achievement gap between student groups by using skills and knowledge for promoting parent involvement.

The data summarized in this report indicate that AISD parent support specialists performed their MDs and met their campus goals in providing workshops and other services to parents and community members to enhance, empower, and encourage parent participation in the education of children. However, other evidence indicates room for parent support specialists to improve their performance and for campus administrators to improve their use of these specialists. For instance, in the past 4 years of AISD's Employee Coordinated Survey, many campus staff reported the need for training about how to work with parents to support student learning. In addition, parent support specialists found a need to refresh themselves regarding the basic elements of parent involvement when serving hurricane evacuees. Thus, campus administrators should (a) promote parent specialists' ability to provide professional staff development training sessions to teachers and other campus staff and (b) provide parent support specialists with professional training about the basic elements of parent involvement. Then, campus staff, including parent support specialists, can gain improved skills and knowledge about how to work with parents toward the goal of student academic success. Parent support specialists must continue to enhance parents' and staff's awareness of AISD support services and co

AISD COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

AISD has access to many local business and community volunteers and resources through APIE. Both monetary donations and volunteer hours are given to support Austin schools through APIE. According to APIE staff, APIE also partners with the QZABP, a bond program that allows school districts to receive a waiver with respect to repaying interest on school bonds that are sold. Each campus included in the bond package must show 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 16 describes community partnership information provided by APIE for the past 4 years. Decreases were observed in 2005-2006 from 2004-2005 for all categories except cash. APIE's records show that schools with parent support staff accounted for 49% of in-kind contributions, 56% of cash donations, 60% of volunteer services, and 47% of volunteer hours. APIE staff's computed cash value of volunteered services provided by the reporting schools totaled $3,783,293.

Table 16: Summary of Austin Community Monetary and Volunteer Contributions through Austin Partners in Education, 2002-2003 through 2005-2006

Type of Donation	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
In-Kind Contributions	$2,434,112	$2,402,459	$2,511,687	$922,425
Cash Donations	$967,175	$268,156	$277,256	$468,897
Number of Volunteers	10,606	14,906	12,615	6,790
Number of Volunteer Hours	220,072	180,622	186,315	119,019

Source: Austin Partners in Education records, 2002-2003 through 2005-2006

RECOMMENDATION FOR APIE

AISD realizes financial savings through a community partnership with APIE and the QZABP. AISD was selected again for participation in the bond program for fiscal year 2006. Donations from 2006 will save Austin taxpayers approximately $8 million.

Although APIE's records show that all schools submitted their annual reports, 20 schools did not report information regarding in-kind or cash contributions. Sometimes the schools' staff reported one but not the other category, and at other times information for both categories was left out. Thus, the substantial decreases that occurred in the reports of in-kind contributions, number of volunteers, and number of volunteer hours for 2005-2006 are causes for concern. Because this information allows the opportunity to save district monies, provides information about community support, and assists AISD in grant acquisitions, it is

recommended that campus leaders pay closer attention to accessing and reporting APIE in-kind and cash support from the community to enhance future savings.

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