

PARENT AND COMMUNITY

I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parent involvement is a key element of AISD's efforts to enhance students' academic and social success. Every AISD campus has a Campus Advisory Council (CAC), Parent Teacher Association/Parent Teacher Organization (PTA/PTO), and other groups with parent representation. Schools are required by state and federal law to include parents on campus and district advisory councils. These laws, local district policies, and several district programs support efforts to build partnerships that benefit students, parents, schools, and communities.

Because district staff, especially teachers, are the gatekeepers to communication with parents about their children's academic progress, examining these staff members' knowledge about and experience with parent involvement is important. AISD's 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey data revealed concerns about staff members' self-reported awareness of parent involvement issues and about staff needs for training. As in prior years, a relatively high percentage of teachers (53%) reported that parent involvement was one of the areas in which they needed training. Among classified staff who responded to the survey, inclusive of campus-based parent support specialists, 67% reported needing professional training for working with and advising parents about various school-related issues.

Important information was gathered from the district-wide 2007–2008 AISD Parent Survey. Parents were asked if they had received information regarding specific AISD school and district policies. Parents' responses across grade levels showed that most agreed that staff had provided them with adequate information about AISD's parental involvement policy. However, at least 25% of both middle school and high school parents disagreed when asked if school staff provided them with adequate information about personal graduation plans, financial aid/scholarships, college opportunities, or career opportunities. In keeping with AISD's guidelines for model customer service, these percentages of disagreement must be addressed if the district is to provide effective services to customers (e.g., parents, community members).

The majority of parents across all grade levels 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 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or TAKS; and whether the child was at risk for failing a grade). However, parents of high school students agreed less often than did parents of students at other school levels with respect to these items.

Parents' responses across all grade levels showed that most (98% at elementary, 92% at middle, and 86% at high school) had positive experiences with teachers (as compared with other campus staff) on topics such as being treated with respect and having opportunities for

involvement in their child's education. When asked about their involvement in campus activities as well as their child's schoolwork (i.e., hom

phones) or of transportation, and as a way to initiate the paperwork for special services, verify addresses, and follow up on projects begun. The repetitive nature of these visits revealed in the annual parent support specialists' questionnaire suggests that district and campus administrators should better embrace the slogan of "working smarter, not harder" by developing district-wide criteria that campus staff can use

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A strong component of community involvement at AISD is the APIE program, which represents a partnership between AISD and the Texas Uniform Unincorporated Nonprofit Association (TUUNA) foundation and 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 2008 Employee Coordinated Survey was distributed to a sample of AISD employees through e-mail in Spring 2008. The survey was a coordinated effort among AISD's offices and departments to gather information from employees district wide. The coordinated survey included questions about parent involvement issues and was sent to a sample of principals and assistant principals (administrators), elementary counselors (non-teaching professionals), teachers (professionals), and parent support specialists (classified). The items regarding parent involvement issues were e-mailed to 9,596 employees. These staff responded to survey items regarding staff development needs, district-wide testing, classroom and campus requirements, school staff expectations, support services, and community resources. The majority of these survey items were offered in four prior employee coordinated surveys, and response outcomes were similar to those in previous years. Thus, tables show multiple years of data when available.

PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT CAMPUS EXPECTATIONS TO PARENTS

On the employee survey, elementary and secondary assistant principals, K–12 teachers, and parent support specialists worked to identify the type of information they most often provided or did not provide to parents about campus expectations, student attendance, and discipline policies. A total of 4,956 valid campus staff responses was counted for the survey. Table 1 shows that, in the 2007–2008 school year, a greater percentage of the teaching staff (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school teachers), compared with non-teaching staff, reported providing information to parents about parent involvement expectations (e.g., working with their child at home on school-related tasks, attending and participating in meetings and the school's PTA, advocating for their child, providing input in decision making, advocating for their child's school, and working with district initiatives). The 2007–2008 data for teachers showed dramatic increases from the year with respect to the percentages of teachers providing information to parents regarding advocating for their child's school (67%) and working with their child at home on school-related tasks (75%). However, four items

showed slight decreases from the prior year with respect to the percentages of teachers providing information to parents (e.g., attending and participating in meetings, workshops, and other events; working toward parent/campus expectations; providing input in decision making; and advocating for their child’s school). Non-teaching staff showed decreases from the prior year with respect to the percentages of non-teaching staff providing information to parents about 6 items. It is important for non-teaching and teaching staff to be as vigilant as possible in providing parents with information regarding campus expectations. On the 2007–2008 survey, 36% of the non-teaching (n = 153) and 9% of the teaching staff (n = 62) reported they did not provide parents of students at their campuses with information about requirements or expectations for their child. Further study is warranted to investigate year-to-year differences in response patterns.

Table 1: AISD Staff Providing Information About Parental Involvement Expectations, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

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AISD PARENT SURVEY 2007–2008

The AISD Parent Survey, available in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, was distributed to 115 AISD campuses in Spring 2007. Staff at each campus distributed surveys to parents of students at their school. Parents were asked to complete one survey per child per campus to provide information regarding their unique experiences with the respective campuses. According to Schmitt and Bush-Hard (2008), the survey was designed to monitor the relationships between campus staff and parents.

The total number of surveys returned was 16,106 (12,493 elementary, 1,831 middle, and 1,731 high), which represented approximately 20% of the district's student population. Note that only 14,572 parents (11,812 elementary, 1,354 middle, and 1,426 high) returned surveys in 2006–2007. The survey gathered detailed information from parents about their child. In addition, one open-ended item asked parents about what their child's school had done well and what could be improved. The survey gathered opinions from parents about treatment of parents and students by campus staff; provision of information to parents about programs; campus requirements and expectations; school district policies; individual student information (e.g., positive feedback, behavior, preparedness for TAKS, academic progress); provision of information to parents about financial aid, scholarships, graduation requirements, college and career opportunities, and parental involvement opportunities or resources; and frequency of parents helping children with homework or participating in various activities at their child's school. Comparison data from the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 surveys are presented in Tables 4 through 10.

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Most parents reported having had positive experiences and interactions with campus staff. Table 4 shows the following results from the 2007–2008 parent survey:

- x As in previous years, the majority of parents expressed higher levels of agreement regarding positive experiences with teachers than with other staff.
- x Parents of elementary school students tended more often than did parents of secondary school students that experiences with school staff were positive.

From 2006–2007 to 2007–2008, the percentage of secondary school parents reporting positive experiences with staff decreased for the majority of survey items (e.g., involvement in students education, input in academic decisions, opportunities for two-way communication). When asked how school staff treated their child, percentages of parents at all grade levels agreeing their experiences were positive showed decreases from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 for all staff, with the exception of elementary teachers.

Table 4: Parents Having Positive Experiences With Various School Staff,
2006–2007 and 2007–2008

As shown in Table 5, when parents were asked if schools provided them individual student information, the majority of parents reported this as the case in both 2006–2007 and 2007–2008. Elementary school parents showed the highest percentage of agreement on all items. The percentages of parents agree with these items increased from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008, with most exceptions at the high school level (where decreases occurred on all items, except academic plans and goals). These results indicate the need for school staff to be more vigilant about dissemination of academic progress information to parents of high school students, especially in light of the state’s rigorous graduation requirements.

Table 5: Parents Receiving Information From School Staff About Their Child, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

Parents are provided the following information about their child:	2006–2007 %
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Table 6 shows that although most parents who responded to the survey agreed that school staff (e.g., teachers, counselors, office staff, and parent support specialists) provided them with information about most academic programs/services, the percentages of parents who agreed on these items decreased from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008. These results indicate a need to improve school staff’s dissemination of information regarding programs/services (e.g., availability of tutoring, AISD support services and community resources in Austin, parent family involvement opportunities, and parent family resources).

Table 6: Parents Receiving Information from School Staff Regarding Specific AISD Academic Programs/Services, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

School staff provided me enough information about the following programs and resources:	2006–2007 %	2007–2008 %
Availability of Tutoring		
Elementary	84	73
Middle	84	81
High	80	69
AISD support services and community resources in Austin		
Elementary		
Middle	82	69
High	69	55
	56	

Table 7: Parents Receiving Graduation and Post-Graduation Information From School Staff, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

School staff provided me with useful information about the following graduation and post-graduation topics:	2006–2007 %	2007–2008 %
High school graduation requirements and plans		
Elementary	61	83
Middle	59	71
High	64	81
Personal graduation plans (PGPs)		
Elementary	73	89
Middle	65	62
High	83	64
Financial aid and scholarship		
Elementary	71	80
Middle	60	57
High	65	69

policies, and in their home language. However, when asked whether staff had provided information about the process for handling complaints and concerns, the percentages of parents of middle and high school students who agreed were slightly in comparison with the results from the prior year.

Table 9: Parents Receiving Information From School Staff Regarding Specific AISD School and District Policies, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

School staff provided me with enough information about the following school and district policies: in my home language	2006–2007 %	2007–2008 %
Student behavior expectations		
Elementary	94	97
Middle	92	94
High	90	92
Process for handling complaints and concerns		
Elementary		

Sizeable declines occurred from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 with respect to the percentages of parents reporting positive experiences with the treatment of their child by all staff, except elementary school teachers. Therefore, campus administrators must make a concerted effort to secure training for themselves and for their school staff about customer service and about methods for displaying firmness and fairness with respect to staffs' interactions with students. This training will assist staff in keeping with AISD's executive limitation regarding the responsibility for providing respectful and dignified treatment of parents and students.

Another area of concern noted in responses from parents of students at the high school level pertained to schools' provision of adequate information regarding a child's academic progress, risk of failing a grade, graduation requirements, availability of financial aid, and college and career opportunities. Campus administrators need to improve the ways they provide parents with individualized information about their child. Frequent communication to parents about individual student academic performance and attendance is extremely important because of TAKS-related promotion and graduation requirements.

Most parents indicated that school staff provided them with information about school

- x Provided parent support specialists with 13 Technology Training Support classes about access and use of on-line reporting forms; 9 monthly staff development training sessions; 9 novice support sessions (aimed at new support staff who are newly hired); and 12 other training and facilitation activities (e.g., Austin Voices, KLRU, Family Connections, Austin Interfaith House meetings, middle school principal meetings, Positive Behavior Support Office, High School Redesign)

When asked to report on other activities staff provided on off site during the school year, the PSO staff indicated they had done the following:

- x Conducted 351 school visits, which included mentoring parent support specialists, observing training sessions and providing feedback, planning and goal setting, providing support for novice parent support specialists, and occasionally acting as liaison during resolution of campus issues
- x Provided 144 Adult Literacy classes through Casa Marienella
- x Hosted, sponsored, or assisted with 64 off-site activities, including 43 presentations, 9 school fairs, 6 parent recognition events, 5 Title I Parent Advisory Council meetings, 1 AISD African American Heritage ceremony, and 20 parenting classes through AVANCE (a Spanish word meaning “to advance” or “to progress”)

PSO staff reported partnering with 9 non-AISD agencies, organizations, or foundations. Five of the non-AISD contacts provided services that directly affected the parent support specialists and/or the families they served:

- x OSB, a non-profit organization, provided clothing for 2,982 students during the school year.
- x Texas Department of Health and Human Services provided access to or resources for acquiring medical, dental, and mental health services.
- x Austin EastSide Story, a City of Austin project that serves as a catalyst for growth and development by bringing together people, money, and resources, provided technology training for children and their families who live in the 1st and 12th Street Corridor and for people who live, work, and/or attend school in the East and Northeast sectors of Austin.
- x AmeriGROUP, an organization that manages health care services for the public sector, provided information and resources (cash and in-kind donations) to assist parent support specialists in securing health-care coverage for low-income families.

- x Austin Public Libraries provided assistance in planning cultural events, conducted summer reading programs, and coordinated a parent sign-up for library cards campaign.

Three other organizations contributed the following:

- x Austin Community College Eastview campus hosted monthly staff development training sessions for parent support specialists.
- x Capital IDEA assisted with the organization of the Teacher Pipeline, a project devoted to addressing the teacher shortage in Austin by providing AISD paraprofessionals with the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree and become certified teachers.
- x Parent Family Involvement Advisory Council planned parent involvement and parent recognition events.

Lastly, the PSO partnered with The Community Foundation Agency (TCFA) to provide free income tax services for 661 families, who collectively received \$827,482 (3.96%) of the \$20,911,623 in 2007 refunds and back refunds in Central Texas. Of the dollar amount received, \$344,587 was Earned Income Credit (EIC).

The staff reported 14 one-of-a-kind activities which they provided information to or partnered with an AISD department office, such as Dropout Prevention, Counseling, Bilingual/English as a Second Language, Outreach, Program Evaluation, and Special Education. PSO's program manager also provided weekly staff meetings and 8 strategic planning meetings (6 on site and 2 off site) for PSO staff.

PARENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent support staff who work directly with parents and other school staff were held accountable for the provision of parent support services through their time and effort. They provided documentation concerning the number of hours worked; tasks accomplished; 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 revised in Fall 2007 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 Key Performance Indicators Accountability Model

MDs (1–6)	KPIs (1–6)
1. Conduct outreach and be a liaison to families	1a. Provide outreach to parents of students at Level I (school wide), Level II (high needs or at risk), and Level III (crisis), and families at all levels in the event of a disaster (e.g., flood, fire, chemical) 1b. Make personal connections 1c. Conduct neighborhood walks 1d. Serve as a member of the campus IMPACT team
2. Organize and/or conduct training sessions for families and school staff	2a. Organize/conduct 25 yearly family trainings for Level I, Level II, and Level III families 2b. Provide support for district initiatives (e.g., character education program, grade transition, AISD wellness initiative, adult literacy classes, Principles of learning) 2c. Provide staff development training to campus staff
3. Provide opportunities for parents to build and use leadership skills	3a. Recruit and support membership to AISD's partnerships (e.g., District Advisory Council, PTA, CAC) 3b. Assist in facilitating parent-teacher conferences 3c. Work with civic groups (e.g., neighborhood associations, faith-based institutions, universities)
4. Engage volunteers, mentors, and parents who are not already paired with APIE	4. Provide scho

To document parent support specialists' MDs and KPIs, along

2008 activities, were returned by 69 (97%) of the parent support and parent program specialists. Two parent support specialists did not complete the questionnaire. Thus, only fall 2007 data from the Interim Report (August 2007–December 2007) were available for these 2 parent support specialists when finalizing final results for parent involvement activities and attendance for 2007-2008.

STAFF COLLABORATION AND TRAINING

Of the parent support and parent program specialists (n = 69) who completed the questionnaire, 97% (n = 67) reported that they worked with their principal. Ninety-six percent (n = 66) worked with other school staff (e.g., counselors, reading specialists, comprehensive education director, assistant principals); 90% (n = 62) said they worked with their PTA/PTO president; and 73% (n = 50) worked with community agencies and organizations. Some of the organizations that partnered with the parent support specialists included Austin Community College, Insure-A-Kid, Child INC, Family Forward-Next Step, 21st Century, Communities In Schools, Medicaid Program (online search engine determining an applicant's eligibility for children's Medicaid and CHIP), River City Youth Foundation, and Amerigroup. These activities supported MDs 2 and 5.

The parent support specialists reported participating in a variety of professional development activities during the year. Sixty percent (n = 45) reported attending the Parent Leader Network Retreat (offered in partnership by AISD, the Connections Resource Center, and the Family Forward project). Review of the conference sign-in sheet showed that 20 parents attended the conference with their respective parent support staff member. The monthly 4-hour parent support specialists' professional development meetings, offered by the AISD PSO, were attended by 95% (n = 65) of the parent support specialists. Seventy-eight percent (n = 54) reported attending a variety of AISD professional development activities; 44% (n = 30) reported attending novice training provided for support staff who are newly hired; and 41% (n = 28) reported attending other local and state sponsored activities. These activities supported MD 2 and 5.

Ninety-seven percent (n = 67) the parent support specialists reported working with their vertical team schools regularly on following projects: transitioning students from elementary school to middle school to high school, Celebration of Families, Parent Involvement Week, Parent United seminar and Dreams Conference, Learning Walks, City of Austin Health fair, monthly planning meetings, KLRU series, and other activities. These activities supported MD 2 and 5.

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support specialists indicated they had provided a variety of services to these families during the school year. The services included the following:

- x General school-wide services to families of Level I students (e.g., immunization, book bags, and toothbrushes)
- x Emergency service to Level II families for whom preventive intervention was not an option (i.e., students and families thrust into homelessness, families losing their only source of income, and families facing major medical problems or disasters)
- x Level III intervention services for parents of at-risk students (e.g., assisted with obtaining clothing, tutoring, mentoring, medical services, family literacy classes, student enrollment for free or reduced-price lunch, and registration for judge-ordered parenting classes) through the campus IMPACT team, or as a follow-up service after an IMPACT team decision regarding a court action. All three levels of activities supported MDs 1 and 2.

Table 12: AISD Parents and Students Served by Parent Support Specialists Through IMPACT Team Efforts, by Intervention Level, 2007–2008

Reporting period	Level I parents	Level I students	Level II parents	Level II students	Level III parents	Level III students
Fall	8,270	6,462	1,515	1,753	1,359	1,438
End-of-year	4,950	4,430	1,437	1,692	846	941
	13,220	10,892	2,952	3,445	2,205	2,379

Table 13: Parents in Attendance, by Activity Category, as Reported by AISD Parent Support Specialists, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008

Activity	Parent participants reported in 2006–2007
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- x Invited 10,449 parents to PTA meetings, where they were given information

parents through self-improvement so they can assist their children in succeeding academically. Based on questionnaire results, 55 parent support specialists enrolled parents in adult literacy activities during 2007–2008. Of that number (n = 55), 29 reported holding classes on their campuses and sending parents to other sites where they could no longer accommodate them physically or academically, 16 enrolled parents in activities on their campuses only, and 10 enrolled parents at other sites because they do not provide adult literacy activities on their campuses. A total of 4,440 adults were enrolled in these classes between August 2007 and May 2008. Thirty-nine percent (n = 1,751) of the enrolled adults completed the classes by May

- x A variety of one-time events (542)

Seven of 14 reported valid attendance data (413) on presentation activities, such as

- x Movin, Groovin Workout with TAKS (430)
- x African American Men and Boys conference (312)
- x Health smart conference (150)
- x TAKS rally (108)
- x Baby Bear Book Club (89)
- x Middle school transition meeting (14)
- x Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (10)

Another 10 of 20 reported valid attendance data (429) for serial workshops. These included math and reading workshops held in the morning and evenings series, a Hope and Dreams day-long workshop, grade-level parent sessions, bilingual basic computer training, a session about developing an expanded role for PTAs, and a 6-week Healthy Marriage/Healthy Living course. Two of three reported valid attendance data (79) about two seminars regarding parent leadership and youth advocacy program. Another reported 150 parents in attendance at the Shoes for Austin presentation that supports walking, running, and exercise in general.

Reported attendance totals at these activities have been higher at the district level if all of the parent support specialists had included their attendance data along with the description of their best practice activity. Because parental attendance is one factor that has an impact on the effectiveness of the district's parent involvement activities and initiatives, it is important to ensure that staff provide complete and accurate attendance data.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

In the Spring 2008 questionnaire, parent support specialists were asked to indicate whether they had started a district initiative for the first time in 2007–2008 or were continuing from the previous school year (7e9 >>BDC /TT000ayputer nt s the ojfe f/6cr(t)-from7e9 >>BDC , 36

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Thirteen of the parent support specialists reported they continued working with their vertical teams/schools on the student-training project (elementary to middle to high school) and attendance. Thirty-six campuses reported projects that were inclusive of their vertical teams. Examples of these new projects included a series of 10 weekly workshops about strengthening the family; a citywide, twice per week pre-K and K Read-A-Thon; vertical team parent seminars; monthly African American Men and Boys Conferences; bilingual workshops for school staff, taught by volunteer parents; Hope and Dreams conferences; Hispanic Young Men's Leadership Conference; and core subject literacy workshops (e.g., in math, reading, and science).

In the case of parent support specialists working with their vertical teams, middle schools usually coordinated the events with their elementary feeder schools and receiving high schools to acquaint parents and students with campus layout, buildings, and staff. Parent support specialists used a variety of materials (e.g., Title I materials, TAKS information, school maps, class schedules, lunch prices, books, students' expectations list, and arranged learning walks) at receiving campuses. The parent support specialists also provided on-site transition classes/camps for parents and students, either in the month of May or during the first week in June. Collectively, these campuses provided 367 workshops and engaged 4,141 parents and 5,430 students in district initiatives during 2007–2008. These activities supported MD 2.

SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Two district family support staff (i.e., the refugee family support specialist and the Vietnamese parent representative) assisted special populations (i.e., refugees and Vietnamese) in AISD. These support staff returned the email surveys in May 2008. The refugee family support specialist, housed at the Baker Center, reported the provision of support services to political refugee students, their parents, the hosts of attendance, and resettlement agencies during the 2007–2008 school year. During the year, the refugee specialist

- x assisted 143 refugee students with school enrollment;
- x provided two-way orientation at the time of enrollment (i.e., school staff [n = 43] to parent and parent to school [n = 60]);
- x provided an additional orientation class for parents (n = 37) who came after the general orientation session;
- x arranged for an interpreter during parent/school staff conferences and orientation events;
- x monitored students' grades and attendance; and

- x referred students for assistance with academic or behavioral issues.

The Vietnamese parent representative at Walnut Creek Elementary School, also worked as a part-time parent representative to assist the Vietnamese students and parents (a collective count of 200) during the 2007–2008 school year. During 2007–2008, the representative

- x assisted parents and students with school registration;
- x provided academic diagnostic testing and language assessment;
- x made parent contacts;
- x provided interpretation during Local Support Team, ARD, and PTA meetings, and during coffee chats and parent teacher conferences;
- x attended CAC and cadre (citywide/community Vietnamese) meetings with parents;
- x worked with Walnut Creek's parent support specialist and assisted other AISD schools with Vietnamese parents and students;
- x organized positive parenting classes;
- x published the monthly Vietnamese bilingual program newsletter;
- x provided translations for the school monthly newsletter, regular communiqués to parents, and teachers' monthly newsletters;
- x assisted parents in completing CHIP, Medicaid, medical, and legal forms (e.g., child support papers and Child Protective Service documents); and
- x worked with parents to organize fundraising activities, such as the New Year Tet show, Mid Autumn Festival, end-of-year picnic, and Back to School Day.

The services and support provided by the Vietnamese parent representative were more extensive than those provided by the refugee support specialist and more similar to the regular parent support specialist because the roles of teacher and parent representative were rolled into one, eliminating a number of rungs in the chain of communication and action. As a teacher, the Vietnamese parent support specialist set the expectations for student behavior and success in the classroom and on campus, and collaborated with the campus administrator on appropriate follow-up actions when these expectations were not met. Also, as a teacher, the parent representative had worked with the regular campus support specialist after families transitioned into the school and community.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PARENT SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

Parent support specialists are vital links between parents, communities, and schools because they often live in the communities which they work, communicate in the language

common to the community and school, and 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 the campus goals in providing workshops and other services to parents and community members to enhance parent involvement, and encourage parent participation in the education of children. However, evidence from the questionnaire and other surveys included in this report indicated room for parent support specialists to improve their performance in the area of providing professional development opportunities to school staff. Similarly, campus administrators can improve the use of these specialists. For instance, in the past 6 years of AISD's Employee Coordination Survey, many campus staff reported the need for training about how to work with parents to support student learning. Also, parent support specialists expressed a need for training to help them work with and advise parents about various school-related issues.

Second, the AISD Parent Survey data indicate a strong need at all grade levels for school staff, inclusive of parent support specialists, to improve the dissemination of information regarding the availability of specific services or resources. Campus administrators must arrange with the parent support coordinator from the PSO for whole-school staff training about the availability of these services. With this help, 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.

Results from the parent support staff questionnaire showed a sharp decline in parent and family attendance at literary and curriculum activities, compared with the previous year. This is cause for concern because literary and curriculum events are key elements in helping parents and community members become familiar with a school's academic program. Therefore, campus administrators must (a) provide guidance about planning activities of this nature, especially if their parent support specialists are recent hires and (b) include all applicable staff (e.g., teachers, counselors, librarians, and others) in planning and delivery of these events. The questionnaire results also raised concern regarding the repetitive nature of home visits made by parent support staff and the amount of time spent on them. Following a model of "working smarter, not harder," district and campus administrators must develop district-wide criteria that campus staff can use in making decisions

Lastly, some parent support specialists fail to respond to items or omitted data that were supported by their MDs and KPIs. The reasons for these non-responses or omissions of data are unclear. However, not having this information prevents decision makers, auditing agencies (e.g., TEA and the United States Department of Education), the City of Austin, AISD grant writers, and benefactors from having a complete picture of the district’s parent support services. In order to enhance the AISD districtwide picture of parent involvement, parent support specialists must (a) pay greater attention to documenting activities and events in quantitative terms (e.g., numbers, amount and duration), as well as through qualitative descriptions and (b) complete and submit all documentation required by program managers and other AISD staff in a timely manner.

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 QZABP, a bond program that allows school districts to receive a waiver with respect to repaying interest on school bonds that are sold on campus included in the bond package must make a contribution for community support that is 10% of its total budget in its participating fiscal year. This partnership consistently has resulted in savings for the district.

Table 14 describes community partnership information provided by APIE for the past 4 years. Decreases were observed from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 in in-kind and cash donations. However, the number of volunteers and volunteer hours increased during this same period. APIE’s records show that schools with parent support staff accounted for 76% of in-kind contributions, 50% of cash donations, 49% of volunteer services, and 44% of volunteer hours. APIE staff’s computed cash value of volunteer services provided by the reporting schools totaled \$2,825,635.

Table 14: Austin Community Monetary and Volunteer Contributions Through APIE, 2004–2005 Through 2007–2008

Type of donation	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
In-kind contributions	\$2,511,687	\$922,425	\$3,432,601	\$1,324,328
Cash donations	\$277,256	\$468,897	\$626,896	\$626,5g6ho/MCID1n /CS

SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Studies (e.g., Henderson & Berla, 1994; Pi, 1997; Turnbull, 2001) have addressed the importance of parent involvement in student learning. For example, achievement improved

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