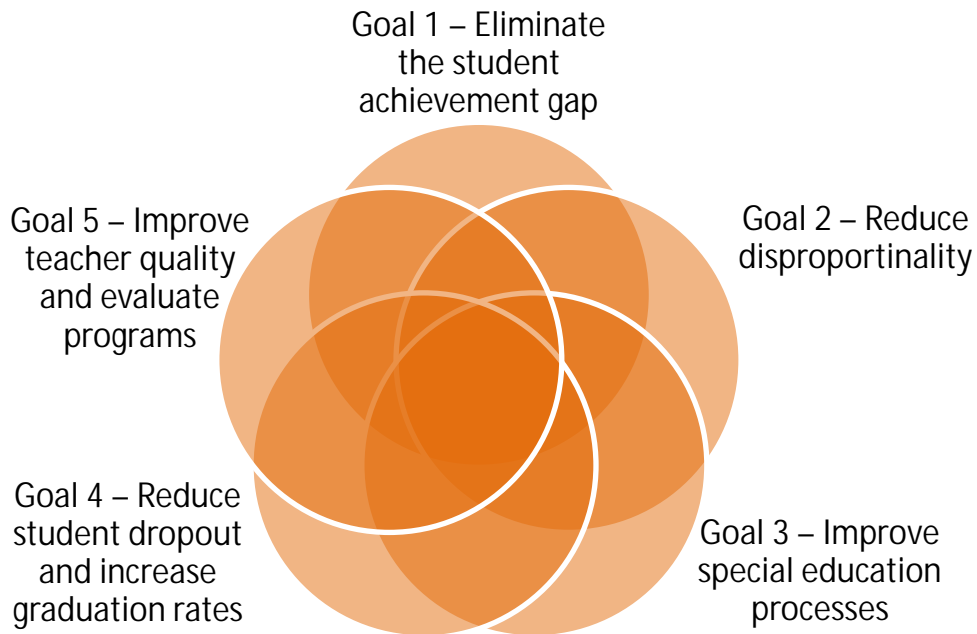




# American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA), 2009–2010 Summary



## Overview

Austin Independent School District (AISD) received more than \$17 million for initiatives from 2009–2010 through 2010–2011 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA). AISD invited community partners, school staff, parents, and representatives from nonprofit organizations in Central Texas to participate in ARRA IDEA planning during Spring 2009. This input, along with a data review and the guidance of the district's board of trustees, the superintendent, and AISD staff, directed the district's use of \$17.3 million in ARRA IDEA funds. These funds are being used for approximately 25 projects that target one or more of the

and evaluate programs

achievement gap, 11 projects are helping to reduce and eliminate the special education students. Examples of some of these activities include

and classroom instruction modeling of best practices to teachers

- Ensuring students with autism or significant cognitive disabilities are fully supported in the classroom
- Providing intensive instructional interventions to students who are struggling in reading and mathematics (math)
- Increasing vocational opportunities for students with disabilities
- Providing pre-literacy in-home family training for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Ensuring students with disabilities are receiving specialized services at or close to their home campus

For goal 2, reducing disproportionate representation of students with disabilities in special education

### Program Expenditures

AISD received \$17.3 million in ARRA IDEA funds for the 2-year period, 2009–2010 through 2010–2011. Of the total allocation, 38% (\$6.2 million) was spent from July 2009 through June 2010 on 24 of the 25 ARRA IDEA projects, which began implementing services for students, staff, and families. One project was combined with other ongoing projects offering professional development opportunities, and a new project that focuses on compliance replaced it and started in July 2010.

*Source.* AISD ARRA IDEA financial documentation, July 2010

### Jobs Saved and Created

A primary aim of ARRA IDEA, signed into federal law in February 2009, was to create and sustain jobs, while addressing critical needs in the American educational system. For year 1 of the grant, 92.2 jobs were created in AISD (Table 1). In addition, five jobs were saved through the use of ARRA monies to retain positions set aside for critical programs; that is, the ARRA grant funded these positions, for which previous funding sources were no longer available.

Table 1. Jobs Created or Saved Through the Use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA) Funding, July 2009 Through June 2010

	Number of jobs
Jobs created through new AISD positions	92.2
Jobs saved	



Figure 2. 2009 and 2010 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing and Commended Percentages in Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Math) for Special Education Students Who Participated in 2009–





these services at the home campus and that services benefitted students. Lesser percentages of principals agreed that improvements were made with respect to behavior (48%), transitions (47%), and available instructional time (39%). Principals also were asked whether parents of special education students were more satisfied this year than last year with the services their students had received, and 45% agreed that this was true, while 41% were not sure, and 14% disagreed. More than three-fourths of principals who responded provided comments about the benefits their special education students received from having special education services on or near their campus. The most commonly mentioned benefit was that the students could be served on their home campus with siblings and friends from their neighborhood, and that they could remain in their vertical school team ( $n = 18$ ). Three-fourths of principals who responded provided comments about some problems their special education students had experienced with receiving special education services. The most commonly mentioned problem was staffing limitations ( $n = 14$ ); principals indicated their campuses did not have enough teachers and/or teaching assistants to serve the growing numbers of students needing special education services, and the number of district special education coordinators was not adequate to serve all campuses.

## **Projects to Improve Special Education Processes**

### **ARD/IEP Facilitation Project**

An ARD/IEP facilitator team was created, with the goal of developing training modules accessible by each campus and training at least one person at each campus in basic IEP facilitation, consensus building, and questioning skills. The facilitator teams provided support in development, implementation, and progress monitoring of IEPs; provided training to campus teams about effective ARD processes; and coached and supported campus staff with sensitive student/parent situations. Fourteen trainings were completed; topics included the ARD process, writing goals and objectives, general education participation at ARDs, handling difficult ARDs, team collaboration, ARD process/transitions, pre-ARD planning, ARD basics, individual coaching, and tools to reduce conflict. Elementary department chairs were paid stipends to attend trainings. Teams presented to parents at the Rosedale Evening Co-op and presented at new teacher training during the summer of 2010.

Overall, case managers reported learning a great deal from the trainings. One case manager said, "I can't believe how much I have learned about crafting an IEP since last October." Another reported, "AndmTd[(the)



**Parent Relations Liaison and Facilitation Project**

Parent relation liaisons/IEP facilitators were assigned to support high-need situations and to provide training to campus teams. The focus was district

applications. Development feedback meetings were held with the administrative supervisor of speech and language services and the administrative supervisor of special education evaluation services.

## **Projects to Improve Teacher Quality**

### **Improve Inclusion Practices**

A teacher supervisor and two inclusion specialists were employed to support development of model campus programs and to provide district-wide training. Initial and follow-up trainings were provided to 88 campus teams to support capacity for inclusive educational services to students with disabilities. More than 600 administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers were trained in *Stetson Model Inclusion Us+!* toward the end of the 2009–2010 school year. This training will continue in 2010–2011 and will be aimed at staff from remaining campuses until all are trained.

### **Autism Support**

More than 200 staff members attended 13 training sessions to support data-driven service delivery to students with autism. Training sessions included the Social Communication Resources and Services (SCORES) Institute and SCORES support meetings, Michelle Garcia Winner Social Skills Curriculum, Monthly Autism Essentials, and

of the curriculum. In addition, professional development activities were provided to create cohorts of elementary and secondary teachers who could serve as literacy leaders. Participating teachers reported a 20% increase in their knowledge of literacy practices with students with significant cognitive disabilities. This extra training and support may have contributed to the increase from 2009 to 2010 in the percentages of AISD life skills students passing the alternate form of the TAKS assessment in all subject areas.<sup>1</sup> As shown in Table 4, the largest gains on the alternate assessment for these students from 2009 to 2010 were in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading (from 66% to 90% passing) and 9<sup>th</sup>-grade math (from 73% to 98% passing).

Table 4. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Alternative Passing Rates 2009 and 2010 for Special Education Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities, 2009–2010

TAKS subject	% Passing 2009	% Passing 2010	Percentage point gain
Reading/English language arts	82	94	12
Mathematics	85	93	8
Writing	86	92	6
Science	86	92	6
Social studies	86	97	11

Source. AISD TAKS records, 2009 and 2010

### Improving Measurable Goal Writing; Implementing TAKS-M Benchmarks

One hundred ninety-four special education teachers participated in IEP Best Practice, an eLearning course through the Region XIII Service Center that focused on writing measurable IEP goals. In addition, stipends were paid to teachers for creating standards for modified curriculum, and supplemental aids. The completed work was presented at Special Education Department Chair events, and a group of nine teachers are working on developing a mid-year TAKS M benchmark assessment to be available for use during 2010–2011.

### Dual Certification

Staff were supported in obtaining dual certification in special education and in specialized areas. For example, supervision was provided for an autism specialist to earn a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) certification. The specialist, in turn, trained members of AISD's autism team. A second BCBA will be added in 2010–2011. In addition, funding was provided for Spanish assessment and coursework for five existing therapists to increase the number of bilingual speech pathologists in AISD. The five speech pathologists completed 48 hours of Spanish training over the summer of 2010 and will continue to be supported during 2010–2011 in their learning through use of Rosetta Stone software and regular meetings with their supervisor. They will need to complete a post-assessment to ensure their fluency in Spanish at the end of the 2010–2011 school year. Upon successful completion, they will be able to conduct bilingual speech therapy in Fall 2011.

<sup>1</sup> TAKS Alternative assessment is a test for students with significant cognitive disabilities, based on the TEKS, and linked to grade-level student expectations through prerequisite skills. It is not a traditional paper-and-pencil test, but rather the test consists of teachers observing and documenting a student's performance on state-developed tasks.

## Projects to Improve Home-School Connections

### Pre-Literacy, In-Home Parent Training

Twenty-seven in-home training sessions were provided to 14 parents of 12 children between the ages of 3 and 4 years who were enrolled in two preschool programs for children with disabilities in AISD. The purpose of the sessions was to share strategies that help develop language and pre-literacy skills at home, and to help parents provide a language- and literacy-rich environment. The sessions, provided twice per week, offered parents practical, hands-on strategies to meet the unique needs of their children. In addition, a family orientation and staff training sessions were held. Seventy-eight percent of parents who responded to a survey administered by teachers



## Summary

In the first year of ARRA IDEA, projects across AISD created or saved 97.2 jobs, benefiting 9,268 students, staff, and families. The number of people who benefit from ARRA IDEA project services will increase in the second year of the grant as projects achieve full implementation or completion. The district's projects funded by ARRA IDEA have made progress toward meeting the goals of eliminating the student achievement gap, improving special education processes, reducing student dropout and increasing graduation rates, and improving teacher quality and evaluating programs. Project staff have maintained transparency with stakeholders, set measurable goals, and monitored their own progress. Despite challenges along the way and yet to come, project staff are preparing for the future by planning ways to sustain critical and required activities to support and educate students with disabilities through capacity building of staff and by

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Implementation and Scope of Services for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA), 2009–2010

Initiative	Students served*	Staff trained*	Families supported*	
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Initiative	Students served*	Staff trained*	Families supported*	Two-year ARRA funds allocated	Results from year 1
Increase staff capacity to support access to general curriculum	0	239	0	\$1,150,000	More than 200 administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers trained in <i>Stetson Model Inclusion Us+!</i>
Evaluate ARRA IDEA initiatives	0	11	0	\$140,000	Mid-year and end-of-year reports completed; other report briefs completed as needed
Create web-based IEP monitoring system	186	33	0	\$100,000	System piloted during the extended school year (ESY, summer) session 2010
Support teachers to obtain dual certification	0	7	0	\$50,000	Board Certified Behavior Analyst certification costs paid to support an autism specialist, who then trained members of the AISD's autism team; Spanish assessment and coursework provided for five existing therapists.
Provide professional development for effective practices	0	0	0	\$10,000	Program combined with other preexisting professional development projects
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,919</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>\$16,422,010</b>	