

State Compensatory Education 2003-2004 Evaluation Report



AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

NOVEMBER 2004

State Compensatory Education, 2003-2004 Evaluation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Compensatory Education (SCE) is a supplemental program with two aims: (a) to reduce the dropout rate and (b) to increase the academic performance of students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. SCE is described in Subchapter C, Chapter 29 of the Texas Education Code. The purpose of SCE is to design and implement an appropriate compensatory, intensive, or accelerated instruction program that increases the achievement of at-risk students. According to the Texas Education Code §29.081, districts must evaluate the effectiveness of SCE programs using two measures, student performance on assessment instruments and rates of high school completion, to show the reduction of any disparity in performances between students at risk of dropping out of school and all other district students.

SCE funds must be used for programs or services that are supplemental to the regular education program. Also, funds must be allocated such that the indirect cost allotment does not exceed 15%, and no more than 18% is used to fund Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs. SCE funds may be used to support a program eligible under Title I guidelines at campuses where at least 50% of the students are educationally disadvantaged. Austin ISD allocated a total of \$26.1 million for the 2003-04 school year to support a variety of programs and services, and 385.58 full time equivalent positions (FTEs) for staff. This allocation amounts to an approximate cost of \$666 per student identified as at-risk.

The most current school completion data from the Texas Education Agency show that the graduation rate for the grade 9 longitudinal cohort of the Class of 2003 increased for all students, by 3.1 percentage points, from that of the Class of 2002. The rates for successive classes of at-risk students decreased slightly, by a percentage point of 0.9. The disparity in longitudinal graduation rates between the at-risk and “all students” groups increased from 0.9 percentage points to 4.9 percentage points. Longitudinal dropout rates among at-risk students increased from 6.0% in 2002 to 6.7% in 2003, but decreased among all students, from 8.9% to 6.2% in the same period. Consequently, the disparity in the longitudinal dropout rate between at-risk students and all students

decreased from 2.9 percentage points for the Class of 2002 cohort to 0.5 percentage points for the Class of 2003 cohort. At-risk students from the Class of 2003 continued school at higher rates than all students, suggesting that at-risk students are taking longer to graduate.

Analyses of TAKS performance showed decreased disparities from 2003 to 2004 in performance between students who are at-risk and those who are not, as measured by passing rates in reading and language arts, mathematics, writing, and social studies. Results from the TAKS in science, though, showed that the disparity in passing rates between at-risk and non-at-risk groups of students increased from 22 percentage points in 2003 to 32 percentage points in 2004. However, the data show that students not considered at-risk passed the TAKS in all language arts, mathematics, writing, and social studies at *lower* rates in 2004 compared to 2003, while at-risk students improved their passing rates on these subjects in the same period. Passing rates on the science TAKS decreased among those students considered at-risk and increased among non-at-risk students.

In addition to providing program descriptions, findings regarding the students served, and general recommendations for all SCE funded services, the Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) evaluated three State Compensatory Education programs exclusively during the 2003-04 school year. Others were assessed without DPE's support. Evaluation results and specific recommendations for Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, & Academics (DELTA), Visiting Teachers, and the Virtual School Pilot (VSP) are provided in this report. Brief summaries of evaluation findings for each are provided below:

- The 2,590 students in the DELTA program in traditional high schools, ALC, and La Fuente Learning Center earned a total of 2,132 credits in 2003-04.¹ The total number of participating students, and accordingly, credits earned, in 03-04 was lower than in 02-03, probably because the number of courses offered was reduced. Nevertheless, a greater percentage of DELTA students graduated in 2004 (34%, compared with 28% in 2003).

¹ Data from Garza Independence High School and the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center were not available from the DELTA database that tracks enrollment and earned credits.

- In 2003-04, 27 students participated in the Virtual School Program (VSP), nine of whom were continuing students from 2002-03, and 12 graduated. Of the credits started by VSP students in 2003-04, 82% were completed, compared with 70% in 2002-03. By the end of 2003-04, nine VSP students withdrew or transferred to a regular campus, and 10 students were still enrolled.
- Records indicate that 2,046 referrals were made for students to Visiting Teachers (VTs) in 2003-04, compared with 1,875 referrals in 2002-03. In a satisfaction survey in which 121 administrators responded, 86% agreed that services provided by their school's VT helped reduce student problems that affect students' school success. Among 126 administrators, 91% agreed that their school's VT responds to campus needs in a timely manner. Results from campus professionals to these same survey questions suggest that there may be a lack of awareness about the VT program as another resource available to their school's student body.

Problems in tracking students served by some SCE-funded programs remain (see for example, Schmitt, 2003), but the district's data systems have improved enough to gather and report new information about the students served by programs such as DELTA and Visiting Teachers. For other programs or services, progress in reducing the achievement gap between identified at-risk students served and others cannot be measured because participating students are not tracked individually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- One legislative goal of SCE is to help at-risk students perform at grade level by the end of the next regular school term. To better evaluate individual programs funded by SCE against this standard, district staff should consider maintaining lists of at-risk students, with their local ID numbers, who are served by each of the SCE-funded programs and services. For example, district staff may want to explore the capacity of SASI (the district's student records system) to incorporate additional data elements on services received. If this cannot be done within SASI, then district staff should consider alternative means of tracking service delivery electronically that will link to SASI data for ease of tracking and subsequent analysis. In this way, the effectiveness of particular programs and services may be monitored in terms of student achievement and school completion outcomes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
Recommendations	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
LIST OF TABLES	VI
PART 1: INTRODUCTION	1
STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION	1
AT-RISK POPULATION IN AUSTIN ISD, 2003-04	4
TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TAKS) PERFORMANCE	5
SCHOOL COMPLETION	8
STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAM EVALUATION, 2003-04	9
PART 2: SPECIFIC PROGRAMS EVALUATED BY THE AISD DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION IN 2003-04	10
DIVERSIFIED EDUCATION THROUGH LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, & ACADEMICS (DELTA)10	
Students Served	11
Credits Earned and Performance on the Exit Level TAKS	14
Garza Independence High School DELTA Students	16
Data Quality Improvements	17
Recommendations	18
VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM	18
Students Served and Credits Earned	19
Recommendation	20
VISITING TEACHERS	21
Clients Served	22
Staff Survey	23
Conclusions	25
Recommendations	25
PART 3: ADDITIONAL AISD STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS	27
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS	27
Alternative Center for Elementary Students (ACES)	27
Alternative Learning Center (ALC)	27
Gonzalo Garza Independence High School (Garza)	28
ADDITIONAL DISTRICT AND CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS	28
Account for Learning	28
Curriculum Specialists	29
Bilingual Services for Immigrants	29
Communities in Schools (CIS)	29
Dropout Prevention and Intervention	30
Elementary School Counselors	30
Leadership Academy & Travis County Juvenile Detention Center	31
Elementary School Literacy Teachers & Middle School Reading Initiative	31
Secondary Tutorials	31
Secondary Transition Programs	31
Seton Nurse Contract	31
Student Discipline & After School Detention	32

Summer Programs	32
OTHER PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS	32
RECOMMENDATIONS	32
APPENDICES	34
APPENDIX A: DELTA	35
APPENDIX B: VISITING TEACHERS PROGRAM	37
REFERENCE LIST	38

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Ratings of the Statement: “ <i>Services Provided by the Visiting Teacher Assigned to my School Help to Reduce Student Problems that Affect their School Success</i> ” by Campus Administrators and Campus Professionals	24
Figure 2.2: Ratings of the Statement: “ <i>The Visiting Teacher Responds to Campus Needs in a Timely Manner</i> ” by Campus Administrators and Campus Professionals	25

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Austin ISD State Compensatory Education Budget, 2003-04	2
Table 1.2: At-Risk Indicators.....	4
Table 1.3: Percentage and Number of AISD Students in Each Ethnic Group Identified as At-Risk and the Overall Ethnic Profile of AISD Students in 2003-04.....	5
Table 1.4: Percentage and Number of AISD Students by At-Risk Status who Met the Passing Standard* in Each Content-Area of the English TAKS in 2003 and 2004...6	6
Table 1.5: Percentage of AISD Students who Met the Passing Standard* and Number Tested by Grade Level in Each Content Area of the Spanish TAKS in 2004	7
Table 1.6: Graduation, Dropout and Continuation Rates Among At-Risk and All Students in AISD for the Classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003	8
Table 2.1: Number of Students Served and Number and Percentage of DELTA Students who Graduated, 1995-2004.....	12
Table 2.2: Number and Percentage of DELTA Students by Grade Level Since 1997-98..13	13
Table 2.3: Percentage and Number of DELTA Students Identified as Limited English Proficient or Economically Disadvantaged According to PEIMS Since 1997-98...14	14
Table 2.4: DELTA Credits Earned at Traditional High Schools and the La Fuente Center at Cristo Rey Church, 2002-03 and 2001-02.....	15
Table 2.5: Percentage and Number of DELTA, At-Risk, and All Exit Level TAKS Takers from 2004 who Met the Passing Standard, by Content Area.....	16
Table 2.6: 2002-03 Garza Independence High School Graduates Utilizing the DELTA Curriculum	17
Table 2.7: Number of Credits Earned through the VSP in 2003-04.....	20
Table 2.8: Demographic Profile of Students Served by Visiting Teachers, 2003-04.....	23
Table A1: Percentage and Number of DELTA Students Served by Ethnicity, 1997-2004	35
Table A2: DELTA Course Credits Earned, 2003-04, 2002-03, and 2001-02	36
Table B1: Student and Family Issues Addressed by Visiting Teachers	37

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

State Compensatory Education (SCE) is a supplemental program designed to eliminate disparities in: (a) student performance on assessment instruments administered under Subchapter C, Chapter 29 of the Texas Education Code, and (b) the rates of high school completion between students at risk of dropping out of school, as defined by Texas Education Code §29.081, and all other students. SCE funds are designated for implementing appropriate compensatory, intensive, or accelerated instruction programs that enable at-risk students to improve their academic achievement and graduate. Districts therefore must identify the needs of at-risk students and examine student performance data resulting from the state assessment instruments. Using this needs assessment, district and campus staff design appropriate strategies to help at-risk students and must include these strategies in the district and/or campus improvement plans.

The district's allotment for SCE is determined in accordance with guidelines from the state's Foundation School Program (Texas Education Code §42.152). The allotment is based on the average of the highest six months' enrollment of students that qualify for the federal free or reduced price school lunch program during the preceding school year. Districts receive an additional allotment for each student who is educationally disadvantaged and for students without disabilities who reside in residential placement facilities in a district in which the students' parents or guardians do not reside. Districts are also entitled to receive an allotment for each student who is in a remedial and support program because the student is pregnant or a parent. The district budgeted \$26,100,000 for SCE, which supported a variety of programs and 385.58 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for staff in the 2003-04 school year. In comparison, \$25,500,000 was budgeted and 369.53 FTEs for staff were funded in the 2002-03 school year. The district's expenditures on SCE-funded programs in 2003-04 amounted to an approximate cost of \$666 per student identified as at-risk, compared with \$707 in 2002-03. Table 1.1 lists the programs and services implemented in the district that were partially or fully supported through SCE in 2003-04.

Table 1.1 Austin ISD State Compensatory Education Budget, 2003-04

Program/Service	Budgeted (millions)	FTEs
<u>Alternative Education</u>		
Alternative Learning Center	\$1.71 M	41.00
Garza Alternative High School	\$.67 M	12.00
Alternative Center for Elementary Students	\$.31 M	6.50
<u>Dropout Prevention</u>		
DELTA (dropout recovery)	\$1.62 M	32.00
Dropout Prevention	\$1.01 M	7.50
Truancy Master	\$.09 M	0.00
Child Care Program	\$.05 M	1.00
<u>Reading</u>		
Reading Recovery	\$3.68 M	74.00
Summer Services	\$1.91 M	0.00
Middle School Reading Initiative	\$1.49 M	4.00
Bilingual Allocation for Immigrants	\$.91 M	15.00
<u>Social Services</u>		
Elementary School Counselors	\$3.27 M	62.00
Seton Nurse Contract	\$1.81 M	0.00
Phoenix Academy	\$.08 M	3.00
Shoal Creek Hospital	\$.08 M	2.00
Communities in Schools	\$.54 M	0.00
Visiting Teachers	\$.55 M	8.00
PAL Program	\$.02 M	0.00
<u>Campus Allocations</u>		
Account for Learning	\$2.33 M	56.00
Curriculum Specialists	\$1.38 M	21.50
9 th Grade Initiatives	\$.03 M	0.00
Secondary Transition Programs	\$.46 M	0.00
Secondary Tutorials	\$.28 M	0.00
Homebound	\$.05 M	1.00

(continued from previous page) AISD State Compensatory Education Budget, 2003-04

Program/Service	Budgeted (millions)	FTEs
Blueprint Schools	\$.04 M	0.00
<i>Discipline Programs</i>		
Student Discipline	\$.35 M	8.00
Travis County Detention Center	\$.29 M	5.00
After School Detention	\$.22 M	0.00
Leadership Academy	\$.19 M	1.00
<i>Other</i>	\$.65 M	23.88
TOTAL	\$26.1 M	385.58

Data Source: AISD Office of Budget and Planning

SCE funds must be used for programs or services that are supplemental to the regular education program. They must be allocated such that the indirect cost allotment does not exceed 15%, and no more than 18% of the total allocation is used to fund Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs. SCE funds may be used to support a program eligible under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and as provided by Public Law 107-110 at campuses where at least 40% of the students are educationally disadvantaged. (Before the 78th Legislature in 2003, the threshold for schoolwide support by SCE was 50%.) For schoolwide programs funded by SCE, a comprehensive description must be provided in each relevant Campus Improvement Plan.

SCE legislation requires schools to develop programs that will meet the needs of at-risk students to close the achievement gap between at-risk and non-at-risk students. Although these funds are intended to help close the achievement gap between at-risk and non-at-risk students, it is difficult to measure the progress toward this goal for students served by SCE-funded programs. The extent to which these funds serve at-risk students for the purpose of reducing the achievement gap has become more clear in those programs where it is possible to track individual students who were served. Efforts are underway to develop tracking systems for most, but not all of these programs, which would improve the capacity to evaluate program success.

AT-RISK POPULATION IN AUSTIN ISD, 2003-04

In 2003-04, 49.7% of AISD students ($n=39,260$) were identified as at-risk on the Public Education Information Management System's snapshot date report to the Texas Education Agency. In 2002-03, 46% of AISD students ($n=36,060$) were identified as at-risk, and in 2000-01, this figure was at 52% of students ($n=39,685$). Students may be identified as at-risk for any one or more of the indicators listed in Table 1.2. The most frequent reasons for at-risk identification were related to performance on the state assessment, LEP status, and retention, the same as those for 2002-03 and 2001-02. In examining statistics related to the at-risk criteria, it is important to note that most students identified as at-risk meet multiple criteria. Also, the percentage of students identified as at-risk increases with each grade level, due to the increased opportunities for meeting the at-risk criteria.

Table 1.2: At-Risk Indicators

At-Risk Indicators*	
Most Frequent	• Assessment Related (TAKS or TAAS)
	• Student identified as LEP
	• Retained in one or more grades
Less Frequent	• Currently failing two or more courses (grades 7-12)
	• Failed two or more courses in preceding school year (grades 7-12)
	• Placement in an Alternative Education program
	• Did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness assessment (Pre-K, K, or grades 1, 2, 3)
	• Previously reported to have dropped out of school
	• Student was homeless in accordance with federal law
	• Student is pregnant or is a parent
	• Student resides in a residential treatment facility
	• In custody or care of DPRS/ referred to DPRS in the current school year
	• Parole, probation, or conditional release
	• Expelled under Chapter 37 in preceding or current year

*Note: A student may meet the criteria for at-risk status under more than one indicator.

Source: AISD Lead Analyst/PEIMS coordinator, Office of Accountability

Table 1.3 shows that American Indian, Asian, African American, and Hispanic students more often met criteria for being identified as at-risk than would be expected from their overall group representation in the AISD student population. Also, among those students identified as at-risk in 2003-04, 70% were Hispanic. As in 2002-03, Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic group among at-risk students, and Anglo students comprised the smallest, at 14% of all at-risk students in 2003-04.

Table 1.3: Percentage and Number of AISD Students in Each Ethnic Group Identified as At-Risk and the Overall Ethnic Profile of AISD Students in 2003-04

		American Indian	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Students Within Each Ethnic Group Identified as At-Risk	%	40%	45%	49%	65%	23%
	<i>n</i>	(78)	(976)	(5,244)	(27,454)	(5363)
All AISD Students by Ethnic Group	%	.25%	3%	14%	53%	30%
	<i>n</i>	(197)	(2,168)	(10,706)	(42,014)	(23,769)

Source: 2003 PEIMS Snapshot Data

TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TAKS) PERFORMANCE

Under the legislative requirements of State Compensatory Education, an evaluation must measure the district's progress in decreasing any disparity in performance on achievement assessments between at-risk and all other students. Results from the 2003 and 2004 English TAKS were examined and compared across these two student groups. Table 1.4 shows the percentage of at-risk and non-at-risk students who met the standard for passing each content area of the English TAKS in 2002-03 and 2003-04. Results from students who took the Spanish TAKS are presented separately in Table 1.5.

Several important caveats are necessary for interpreting the data in Table 1.4 across the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. First, in Table 1.4, the number and percentage of students who met the minimum passing standards in 2003 and 2004 reflect the different passing standards established for each year. For 2003, the passing standard was established with a standard error of measurement (SEM) of 2 below the State Board of Education's panel recommendation, and an SEM of 1 below the panel recommendation for 2004, except at the exit level, where the passing standard remained at an SEM of 2 below the panel recommendation. Different passing standards were established to help

school staff and students better prepare and transition to the rigors of the TAKS, which, along with adding science and social studies as content areas, was designed to be more challenging than the TAAS.

Table 1.4: Percentage and Number of AISD Students by At-Risk Status who Met the Passing Standard* in Each Content-Area of the English TAKS in 2003 and 2004

Subjects and Grade Levels Tested ^{††}		2004					2003**				
		At-Risk		Not At-Risk		Δ^{\dagger}	At-Risk		Not At-Risk		Δ^{\dagger}
		%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>		%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	
Reading; Eng. Lang. Arts	3-9; 10-11	36	13,394	64	23,481	28	30	10,390	70	24,676	40
Mathematics	3-11	31	10,600	69	23,164	38	26	8,394	74	23,323	48
Writing	4,7	29	4,138	71	10,360	42	25	3,672	75	10,870	50
Science	5,10,11	34	4,496	66	8,631	32	39	2,466	61	3,903	22
Social Studies	8,10,11	49	8,271	51	8,566	2	34	4,798	66	9,258	32

*Results for each school year reflect the passing standard established for each year, which in 2003, was two SEMs (Standard Error of Measurement) below the state's panel recommendation, and one SEM below the panel recommendation for 2004, except at the exit level.

**Results for 2002-03 reflect data for students in grades 3 through 10 because 11th graders that year were required to pass the TAAS for graduation. In addition, 02-03 results were re-analyzed to be consistent with 03-04 data where at-risk status was verified against the PEIMS snapshot data for each year.

[†]The symbol Δ refers to the percentage point difference (disparity) between at-risk and not at-risk students for each content area TAKS.

^{††}Spanish language TAKS data are not included in this table; by definition, all Spanish TAKS takers are LEP, and therefore meet at-risk criteria.

Source: Austin ISD TAKS student records; 2002 and 2003 PEIMS snapshot data

Second, in Table 1.4, it is also important to note that 2003-04 was the first school year in which 11th graders were required to take and pass the TAKS to graduate. Data from 11th graders are therefore not reflected in the 2002-03 section of Table 1.4. In 2002-03 however, it is possible that some high school students who were required to pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skill (TAAS) as a graduation requirement may have taken the TAKS, and their results are reflected in Table 1.4. Although 10th graders were required to take the TAKS in 2002-03, the exit exam required for most *repeating* 10th graders (i.e., those off-level) in that school year was the TAAS. Finally, the data in Table 1.4 do not reflect scores on the Spanish language version of TAKS. All Spanish test takers are

designated limited English proficient and therefore meet at-risk criteria. Consequently, no comparison group of Spanish test takers who are not at-risk exists that would permit an evaluative comparison in the manner described in Texas Education Code §29.081.

Because the Spanish TAKS is administered only for students in grades 3-6, most of whom participate in the district's bilingual or ESL programs, performance by students who took the Spanish TAKS in Spring 2004 is shown on Table 1.5. For more information about student achievement among English Language Learners, see Gonzalez (2004).

Table 1.5: Percentage of AISD Students who Met the Passing Standard* and Number Tested by Grade Level in Each Content Area of the Spanish TAKS in 2004

Subjects Tested	Grade Levels Tested							
	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6**	
	%	Number Tested	%	Number Tested	%	Number Tested	%	Number Tested
Reading	93	1,056	71	575	67	218	58	74
Mathematics	73	1,022	68	524	52	195	33	63
Writing	<i>not tested</i>		88	651	<i>not tested</i>		<i>not tested</i>	
Science	<i>not tested</i>		<i>not tested</i>		20	139	<i>not tested</i>	

*For 2004, the passing standard was established at one SEM below the state panel recommendation.

**Students in grade 6 who took the Spanish TAKS are in one of two different instructional programs, depending on the grade levels served by particular campuses. A majority are in middle school ESL programs, rather than elementary level bilingual programs. Also, many of these students are recent immigrants.

Source: Texas Education Agency Spanish TAKS District Summary Reports, March and May 2004

To summarize, Table 1.4 shows that despite the higher passing standard in 2004, there were decreased disparities from 2003 to 2004 in performance between students who are at-risk and those who are not, as measured by passing rates in reading and language arts, mathematics, writing, and social studies. The largest decrease in passing rate disparities between these two groups of students occurred in social studies. On the TAKS in science, however, the disparity in passing rates between at-risk and not at-risk groups of students increased from 22 percentage points in 2003 to 32 percentage points in 2004. Nevertheless, the data in Table 1.4 also show that a lesser percentage of students *not* considered at-risk passed the TAKS in reading and language arts, mathematics, writing, and social studies in 2004 compared to 2003. Students considered at-risk passed these same four content area TAKS exams at higher rates in 2004 than in 2003. Passing rates

on the TAKS in science increased, however, among students not at-risk from 2003 to 2004 and decreased among those at-risk in the same period.

SCHOOL COMPLETION

Another major legislative requirement under State Compensatory Education is that an evaluation measure the district's progress in reducing any disparity in the rates of high school completion between students at risk of dropping out of school and all other district students. Data from the Texas Education Agency's publication, *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools: Supplemental District Data* from 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03 were used to make this assessment of progress. Data from 2003-04 will not be available until Summer, 2005. At-risk students' graduation, dropout, and school continuation rates in the grade 9 longitudinal cohorts of the Classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003 are shown in Table 1.6, and are compared with the group, all students, in each cohort.

Table 1.6: Graduation, Dropout and Continuation Rates Among At-Risk and All Students in AISD for the Classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003

Class of:		Percentages of Students who:		
		Graduated	Dropped Out	Continued High School
2001	At-Risk	71.6	8.4	17.1
	All Students	72.3	10.7	13.4
	<i>Disparity</i>	<i>-0.7</i>	<i>-2.3</i>	<i>3.7</i>
2002	At-Risk	74.8	6.0	15.9
	All Students	75.7	8.9	12.1
	<i>Disparity</i>	<i>-0.9</i>	<i>-2.9</i>	<i>3.8</i>
2003	At-Risk	73.9	6.7	16.0
	All Students	78.8	6.2	11.9
	<i>Disparity</i>	<i>-4.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>4.1</i>

Source: Texas Education Agency: *Secondary school completion and dropouts in Texas public schools, 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03*

From 2002 to 2003, graduation rates for all students increased, while rates for at-risk students decreased slightly, by 0.9 percentage points. The disparity in graduation rates between at-risk and all students increased from 2002 (0.9 percentage point

difference) to 2003 (4.9 percentage point difference). Dropout rates decreased at a faster rate among all students, from 8.9% among the Class of 2002 to 6.2% for the Class of 2003, than did rates for at-risk students. For the Class of 2003, at-risk students dropped out more often (6.7%) than did their peers in the Class of 2002 (6.0%). The disparity in dropout rates for the two groups decreased over the two cohorts, however, from a percentage point difference of 2.9 in 2002 to a percentage point difference of 0.5 in 2003. As in 2002, a greater percentage of at-risk students in 2003 continued high school than did all students. This finding suggests that at-risk students may be taking more than four years to graduate.

STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAM EVALUATION, 2003-04

In addition to providing program descriptions and general recommendations for all SCE-funded services, the Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) evaluated three State Compensatory Education programs that were not evaluated by other departments in AISD during the 2003-04 school year. Evaluation results and specific recommendations for the Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, & Academics (DELTA) program, the Virtual Schools Program, and services provided by Visiting Teachers are reported here.

PART 2: SPECIFIC PROGRAMS EVALUATED BY THE AISD DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION IN 2003-04

DIVERSIFIED EDUCATION THROUGH LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, & ACADEMICS (DELTA)

DELTA is a dropout prevention and course credit recovery program in AISD high schools that began in 1995. It is an open-entry, open-exit program that employs individualized and self-paced instruction through the use of NovaNET computer software to deliver a TEKS-aligned curriculum. The purpose of DELTA is to assist students in earning credits and completing high school. DELTA is targeted at students aged 14-21 who have already dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school. Through computer-based coursework supplemented by a variety of assignments and projects, students may complete high school courses and earn credits, thereby allowing students a route to graduation that fits the scheduling requirements of those who might otherwise drop out of school. Students may pace themselves and work a maximum of 20 hours per week in the DELTA lab. DELTA also affords students the option of accelerating course completion and earning multiple credits in a short amount of time. DELTA has served an increasing number of students most years and has helped more than 5,500 students earn high school diplomas. In 2003-04, DELTA received a State Compensatory Education allocation of \$1,624,053, compared with \$1,581,652 in 2002-03 and \$1,710,000 in 2001-02. For 2003-04, an expenditure of approximately \$398,000 was approved by the Board for the purchase of the course materials and connections for 463 computers across the district, plus six days of technical support and services for district staff provided by the publisher of NovaNET.

Teachers and computer lab assistants receive NovaNET training and meet regularly with program managers to ensure the delivery of a quality curriculum. Program managers, with feedback from district administrators and teachers, review the curriculum to ensure that it meets state and local requirements each year. For 2003-04, in order to help ensure the DELTA curriculum was aligned with district efforts to increase academic rigor, program administrators reduced the number of courses available to students through DELTA, such as physical education, child development, and keyboarding. Additionally, to comply with state education standards regarding required lab hours in science courses,

biology and chemistry courses were removed as course options for students unless there were extenuating circumstances and the student had already passed the appropriate state exit exam (TAAS or TAKS).

DELTA is available at every traditional AISD high school campus, Gonzalo Garza Independence High School, the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), and the Gardner-Betts Leadership Academy at the Travis County Juvenile Justice Center. At the La Fuente Learning Center at Cristo Rey Catholic Church, students have an additional option for earning course credits through DELTA. The DELTA program at La Fuente is open four evenings per week during the school year and days and evenings during the summer, and it is facilitated by two AISD teachers who communicate with students' home campuses to help ensure course credit records are kept current. Since 2001-02, the DELTA curriculum also has been used to serve a small number of students at home through the Virtual School Program (VSP), as described below in this report. This evaluation describes the progress of students served through high school DELTA labs, ALC, and the La Fuente Learning Center. Findings from the program at Garza High School are discussed separately below and in the section entitled Alternative Education Programs.

STUDENTS SERVED

According to teacher records, DELTA served 2,546 students in the 11 traditional high schools and the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), plus 44 students at La Fuente Learning Center for a total of 2,590 students served during the 2003-04 school year and Summer of 2004. This total represents an unduplicated count of students served by DELTA; teachers' records of student identification numbers were cross-checked with the district's student records database. Of the students who participated in 2003-04, 91% met at least one of the state's indicators for at-risk status, according to the PEIMS snapshot data from 2003-04.

A review of the data showed that at least 5% of students worked on courses in the DELTA curriculum at more than one campus during the school year and summer. Students frequently transferred to another campus, were placed at the ALC (and subsequently returned to the home campus), or did their summer coursework at a school or center (La Fuente) other than the home campus. The enrollment in 2003-04 represents a 14% decrease from enrollment in 2002-03. The reason for decreased enrollment numbers in DELTA may be related to the reduced number of courses available through

DELTA, as explained above. Table 2.1 shows that a total of 876 DELTA students graduated during the 2003-04 school year, comprising 34% of all 2003-04 plus summer DELTA students. In 2002-03, 858 DELTA students graduated during the school year, comprising 28% of all 2002-03 DELTA students. Of the seniors served in DELTA during the 2003-04 school year, 73% graduated during the school year or during Summer 2004. During the 2002-03 school year, 64% of DELTA seniors graduated from high school.

Table 2.1: Number of Students Served and Number and Percentage of DELTA Students who Graduated, 1995-2004

Year	Number of Students Served Aug. - May	High School Graduates	% of DELTA Graduates Aug.-June
2003-2004*	2,590	876	34%
2002-2003	3,025	858	28%
2001-2002	2,706	827	31%
2000-2001	2,313	602	26%
1999-2000	1,946	601	31%
1998-99	1,711	523	30%
1997-98	1,624	568	35%
1996-97	1,518	403	27%
1995-96	987	310	31%

*2003-04 school year numbers include students and graduates from Summer 2004.

Note: Number of graduates does not include students at Garza Independence High School due to inadequate identification methods for DELTA students at Garza.

Sources: 2002-03 and 2003-04 Teacher reports, 2001-02 SCE Evaluation (Schmitt, 2003), 2002-03 SCE Evaluation (Carrejo, 2003), and DELTA Fifth Year Implementation report (Keswick, 2000)

In Spring 2004, all seniors in Austin ISD had the opportunity to respond to the districtwide exit survey. Although DELTA was not the subject of any specific survey questions, seven students elected to comment about DELTA on an open-ended prompt. Five wrote positive comments about the program, a teacher, or simply DELTA's helpfulness to them, for example, "I would like to let them [district administrators] know that I appreciate the programs to help seniors graduate like DELTA" and, "DELTA is a life saver..." One student posed a question about why it is possible to finish a semester-long course in DELTA in three weeks and what that means for the amount of learning in a

regular semester. Finally, another student characterized NovaNET materials as “outdated” and “restrictive.”

Table 2.2 shows that over the past six years, the percentages of freshmen served has decreased (five percentage points since 1997-98), while the percentages of sophomores and juniors served has increased by three and four percentage points, respectively, since 1997-98. Overall, the profile of DELTA students in terms of grade levels served has remained stable since 2001-02.

Table 2.2: Number and Percentage of DELTA Students by Grade Level Since 1997-98

Grade Level	School Year*					
	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
9 th Grade	18% (299)	16% (273)	16% (310)	12% (299)	14% (425)	13% (340)
10 th Grade	15% (237)	17% (296)	17% (325)	19% (466)	18% (550)	18% (473)
11 th Grade	18% (297)	20% (351)	23% (430)	22% (524)	22% (663)	22% (570)
12 th Grade	49% (791)	45% (783)	43% (828)	47% (1127)	45% (1351)	47% (1204)

*2000-01 data are not available due to changes in data collection for DELTA that year.

Note: The number of students served by grade are as of the end of the school year. Due to reporting errors, the sums for each school year do not match total number of students served as reported in Table 2.1.

Sources: 2002-03, 2003-04 AISD Student Records, 2001-02 SCE Evaluation (Schmitt, 2003) 2002-03 SCE Evaluation (Carrejo, 2003), and DELTA Fifth Year Implementation report (Keswick, 2000)

Table 2.3 shows that from 1997-98 to 2003-04, the percentage of DELTA students who were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) grew from 4% in 1997-98 to 14% in 2003-04. The percentage of LEP students in the districtwide high school population was 11% overall but ranged from 14% at the 9th grade level to 6% at the 12th grade level. The percentage of DELTA students who met criteria for participation in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program increased overall from 43% in 2002-03 to 49% in 2003-04. The percentages for DELTA students were higher than those for the districtwide high school population, in which 36% and 40% of students qualified for the free or reduced price lunch program in 2002-03 and 2003-04, respectively. Appendix A1

shows longitudinal ethnicity data for DELTA students from 1997-98 through 2003-04. From 2002-03 to 2003-04, the percentage of DELTA students who were African American dropped by three percentage points to 20%, while those who were Hispanic grew by two percentage points, to 56%. The percentages of White and Asian/Pacific Islander students in DELTA during 2003-04 were 21% and 2%, respectively.

Table 2.3: Percentage and Number of DELTA Students Identified as Limited English Proficient or Economically Disadvantaged According to PEIMS Since 1997-98

Identification	School Year*					
	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Limited English Proficient	4% (66)	3% (51)	5% (91)	11% (271)	12% (349)	14% (319)
Economically Disadvantaged	36% (584)	35% (600)	25% (479)	38% [†] (746)	43% (1288)	49% (1149)

*2000-01 data are not available due to changes in data collection for DELTA that year.

[†] This figure was recalculated from that reported by Schmitt, 2003.

Note: The number of LEP and economically disadvantaged students are as of the end of the school year.

Sources: 2002-03 AISD Student Records, 2001-02 SCE Evaluation (Schmitt, 2003), 2002-03 SCE Evaluation (Carrejo, 2003), and DELTA Fifth Year Implementation report (Keswick, 2000)

CREDITS EARNED AND PERFORMANCE ON THE EXIT LEVEL TAKS

Table 2.4 shows that students in traditional high schools, ALC, and La Fuente Learning Center earned a total of 2132 credits through DELTA, 85% of which were earned in English, Mathematics, and Social Studies courses. The total number of credits earned in 2002-03 is 19% lower than the total in 2002-03, due to the reduced number of students served (14% fewer) and the reduced number of courses offered through the DELTA program. The number of DELTA credits earned per enrolled student in 2003-04 was .82, compared with .87 in 2002-03 and .72 in 2001-02. Appendix A2 shows DELTA credit information by course in more detail.

Table 2.4: DELTA Credits Earned at Traditional High Schools and the La Fuente Center at Cristo Rey Church, 2002-03 and 2001-02

Subject Area	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02	
	Number of Credits Earned	% of Total Credits	Number of Credits Earned	% of Total Credits	Number of Credits Earned	% of Total Credits
English	561.5	26%	723.5	28%	500.5	26%
Mathematics	591	28%	494	19%	434	22%
Social Studies	658	31%	769	29%	559	29%
Science/Health	185	9%	307	12%	226.5	12%
Electives	136.5	6%	334.5	13%	227	12%
Total Credits Earned	2132	100%	2628	100%	1947	100%

Source: 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 DELTA teacher reports, 2001-02 SCE Evaluation Report (Schmitt, 2003), and 2002-03 SCE Evaluation Report (Carrejo, 2003)

Starting in 2002-03, students who were in the 8th or earlier grade levels on January 1, 2001 are required to take the new state assessment, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), as part of their graduation requirements. Students above the 8th grade level on that date are required to take the TAAS, even if they are off grade level. Some DELTA students, therefore, are required to take and pass the TAAS to graduate. Given that the TAKS was administered for the first time in 2002-03, longitudinal comparisons of DELTA students are not possible. More significantly, none of the high school students in 2002-03 were under the requirement to pass the exit level TAKS that year in order to graduate. For this reason, 2003-04 provides the first opportunity to examine passing rates on the exit level TAKS. Table 2.5 shows the performance of DELTA, at-risk, and all AISD students on the content areas of the exit level TAKS.

Table 2.5: Percentage and Number of DELTA, At-Risk, and All Exit Level TAKS Takers from 2004 who Met the Passing Standard, by Content Area

	Exit Level TAKS Takers*					
	DELTA		At-Risk		All	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
English Language Arts	54.3	422	69.2	2399	78.0	4527
Mathematics	48.7	445	63.9	2421	76.1	4751
Social Studies	82.8	726	90.5	3335	93.5	5732
Science	53.1	442	67.5	2427	78.8	4691

*Student group categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: 2003-04 DELTA teacher reports, 2004 Austin ISD TAKS Records, and 2003-04 PEIMS data records

The performance of students in DELTA on the TAKS does not necessarily reflect the curriculum or preparation provided through the DELTA program. A student, for example, may have taken an English course in DELTA and none in mathematics, but then failed to meet the passing standard on the mathematics TAKS. A better analysis of the possible relationships between DELTA participation and TAKS performance would account for the content areas in which students earned DELTA credits and their TAKS performance on corresponding content areas. Given that DELTA is designed primarily to serve students most at risk of dropping out, performance on the TAKS may reflect these students' academically vulnerable status, which often is based on both personal (e.g., on parole, conditional release, homeless or a parent) and academic reasons (e.g., previously recorded as having dropped out, failed two or more courses in the current or previous school year, retained in the past).

GARZA INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL DELTA STUDENTS

Students served at Garza by the DELTA program are difficult for staff to identify as a separate group because students throughout the high school may use NovaNET resources as a supplement to their course work, without adhering to the full DELTA curriculum that combines NovaNET resources with supplemental instructional materials. Because of the supplemental use of DELTA materials, Garza students are not logged in the DELTA teachers' database of students and DELTA course credits cannot be systematically analyzed. Student data from Garza were therefore analyzed separately.

According to teacher and registrar records at Garza, DELTA served approximately 11% of the students who graduated in 2003-04 and Summer 2004 combined. This figure reflects a 24 percentage point decrease from the 2002-03 school year and summer, when 35% of the students who graduated utilized the DELTA curriculum. Table 2.5 shows the number and percentage of Garza High School graduates who participated in DELTA.

Table 2.6: 2002-03 Garza Independence High School Graduates Utilizing the DELTA Curriculum

Garza High School	2002-03			2003-04		
	<i>n</i>	%	Graduates	<i>n</i>	%	Graduates
School Year (Aug-May)	42	33%	129	20	13%	150
Summer	15	42%	36	2	4%	51
Total	57	35%	165	22	11%	201

Source: Garza High School Registrar and DELTA Staff

The decreasing numbers of graduating students using the DELTA curriculum in 2003-04 raise questions about student usage of DELTA resources at Garza. An overview of courses that integrate NovaNet and/or DELTA shows that five of 17 teachers at Garza integrate these resources in their courses. Out of 16 courses, nine integrate NovaNet and/or DELTA. Because utilization of the DELTA curriculum at Garza appears to be concentrated in particular courses and especially, with particular teachers, program managers may want to examine whether NovaNET computer ports need to be re-distributed within the campus to ensure access by students in these courses. Alternatively, the program manager may want to consider whether some of the 32 NovaNET connections at Garza may be more efficiently utilized at other AISD campuses.

DATA QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Although some problems related to the tracking of DELTA students and course credits earned through the program remained in 2003-04, measures are currently in place for the 2004-05 year to improve accuracy in tracking DELTA participants and their progress in earning course credits. In 2003-04, DELTA students and course credits were tracked through a database into which teachers were required to submit data on an on-going basis for each student throughout the school year. Although generally accurate, teacher reports occasionally included incorrect student ID numbers or other incomplete

information. Often, information from the districtwide DELTA database showed multiple entries for students who transferred to different schools up to three times in one school year. As mentioned above, over five percent of DELTA students in 2003-04 participated in the program at more than one school site. In addition to these issues, current DELTA data are incomplete due to the lack of information provided regarding DELTA participants at Garza, as explained above.

The new data system provides improved data management; it verifies basic student information against the district's student database, such as identification numbers and campus placement, and therefore should reduce inaccuracies arising from data entry errors. The new system also should help DELTA teachers to better track students' progress in courses and credits earned, and provide information about TAKS or TAAS requirements and the passing status for content area assessments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- An enhanced analysis of performance on the TAKS should take into account the content area that represents the DELTA course subjects in which students earned credits.
- Ensure that the distribution of NovaNET access ports is suited to classrooms and campuses where students need access most.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

As in the 2002-03 school year, Austin ISD continued to offer the Virtual School Program (VSP) during 2003-04. The program, first known as the Virtual School Pilot when established in accordance with Texas Senate bill 975, was re-authorized in 2003 under SB1108, Texas Education Code, §29.909. The objective of the VSP is to provide supplemental academic support in the form of electronic courses for students most at risk of dropping out so that they may complete high school. Austin ISD received no state funding for administering the VSP, but did receive a waiver from attendance accounting standards. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) the purpose of the Virtual Schools Program is to collect information about: a) the costs and benefits to districts and students of offering electronic courses, and b) policies that enable high-quality online learning.

The district's VSP manager and teachers notified high school campus and DELTA staff about the VSP program and the guidelines for identifying students who might benefit. Campus administrators, counselors, or visiting teachers could refer students to VSP. (See the evaluation section about Visiting Teachers below.) Students were then required to apply for entry to the program through the Department of School, Family, and Community Education. Priority was given to students who met any of the following criteria:

- currently receiving pregnancy related services;
- working full-time for economic reasons;
- having special/extenuating circumstances that prevent school attendance; or
- lacking day care (for parenting teens).

Furthermore, students must have passed the TAAS or TAKS, hold 15 or more credits and need to complete additional coursework that is available from the list of DELTA courses to graduate, and have a working telephone line. Laptop computers are lent to students, and Internet access is donated by Grande Communications. Two teachers were assigned to work with the approximately 20 students who were participating in the program at any given time. Students accessed the DELTA curriculum via computer from their homes and met with the VSP teachers at least once per week. Students were required to do at least 15 hours of schoolwork per week or risk dismissal from the VSP. VSP teachers made expectations and obligations clear for students and their parents, a feature of technology-based education that TEA cites in its initial finding as important for programs such as the VSP (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

STUDENTS SERVED AND CREDITS EARNED

From August 2002 through May 2003, 35 students from 11 campuses participated in the Virtual School Program. Of the 35 students, four graduated. In 2003-04, 27 students participated in the VSP, nine of whom also participated in 2002-03, and 12 graduated. Nine students withdrew for reasons other than graduation, and 10 students were still enrolled in the VSP at the end of Spring 2004.

Of the students who withdrew before graduating, two returned to Austin ISD high schools. Another turned 21 years of age and could no longer be assisted through VSP. The rest decided they no longer wanted to participate. In one case, this was because of another pregnancy; in others, it was because students lost motivation or felt the program

was too difficult. Students' reasons for withdrawal from the VSP are similar to those given in 2002-03, when work or family issues frequently were cited. VSP has continued to serve students who face serious challenges to school completion even though course materials and assistance were available in their homes. The program manager and VSP teachers are aware of these challenges and know that students who possess self-direction and discipline are most likely to succeed in the program. These characteristics also are cited by the TEA in a list of characteristics about students most likely to succeed in virtual courses (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

Despite these challenges, students who participate in the program tend to complete courses and earn a large percentage of credits they attempt. Table 2.7 shows the number of credits attempted and completed by students during 2003-04 and Summer 2004 in each major content area. Of the credits started by VSP students in 2003-04, 82% were completed, compared with 70% of courses attempted and completed in 2002-03. The greatest number of credits earned were in English courses, followed by electives.

Table 2.7: Number of Credits Earned through the VSP in 2003-04

Subject Area	Credits Attempted in 2003-04 School Year & Summer	Credits Earned in 2003-04 School Year & Summer
English	17.5	14.5
Social Studies	7.0	4.5
Mathematics	6.0	4.5
Electives	7.5	7.5
TOTAL	38	31

Source: VSP Teacher Data, 2002-03

RECOMMENDATION

- District staff should continue to monitor the VSP program for effectiveness in terms of credits earned and school completion. The VSP has a two-year record of helping students complete most of the courses they begin, and ultimately earn credits toward graduation. Additional data could give district administrators the information needed to advocate for definitive and effective funding of the VSP, possibly through state resources.

VISITING TEACHERS

Visiting Teachers² are a team of professionals that serve all AISD schools to help students with problems related to academic, social, and emotional adjustment. The goal of the visiting teachers' services is to minimize barriers that impact students' academic success and well-being. Visiting Teachers (VTs) serve in a social worker/counselor capacity to maintain and improve communication and relationships between families and schools and to provide a variety of services to families with children who are having difficulty at school or at home. VTs are licensed social workers or professional counselors with Masters degrees in counseling, social work, psychology, or education; many hold both an advanced degree and a professional license. As the liaison between school, home, and community resources, VTs address a range of issues in a variety of ways. VTs consult with both school and support staff regarding individual student needs, such as medical, emotional, economic, academic, and counseling needs. They provide direct, confidential crisis counseling services for students as needed and routinely make home visits to counsel families. Occasionally, VTs serve as facilitators or consultants at various parent, student, or other discussion groups and serve on community boards and in professional groups. See Table B1 in Appendix B for a list of issues that Visiting Teachers commonly address.

VTs receive referrals from a variety of sources, including students, parents, school staff, and community agencies. They are assigned to schools according to district feeder patterns to maintain consistency with students throughout their school progression. For 2003-04, district administrators decided that VTs would be housed at specific campuses and travel to the others that they served in the feeder patterns. Previously, VTs were housed in one of the district's central administration buildings. In 2003-04, the VT program received an allocation of approximately \$550,000 from the State Compensatory Education (SCE) budget. This amount reflects an increase from the 2002-03 allocation of \$530,000 from the SCE budget. In addition, \$71,812 from Title V, Part A-Innovative Programs was spent on the VT program. Of the 12 full-time and 6 part-time VTs, State Compensatory Education funds supported 8.0 FTEs. An additional 2.3 FTEs were supported by Title V, Part A funds.

² In 2004-05, Visiting Teachers will be referred to as Community to School Liaisons.

CLIENTS SERVED

Due to new data tracking procedures by the Department of Student Support Services that included tracking of student identification numbers, information about students served by VTs that was not previously available could now be obtained through cross-checking district data files. Records indicate that there were 2,046 referrals for assistance by VTs in 2003-04, compared with 1,875 referrals in 2002-03. The total number of referrals in 2003-04 included some students who were seen more than once by a VT—either in a second or third referral at the student’s school by the same VT, or at the student’s new school after the student had transferred (usually by a different VT). The total number of students served by VTs in 2003-04, therefore, was 1,983 once adjustments were made to the data file to eliminate duplicate records on the same students. Of those students served, approximately 60% were male and 40% were female.³ Table 2.8 shows demographic data of the students served based on PEIMS (Public Education Information Management System) data submitted and the district’s student information system. Note that due to the high student mobility rate and the nature of the fall PEIMS submission (the data are to be a “snapshot” of students the last Friday of October 2003), a number of student records could not be matched to those in the fall PEIMS submission.

³ Although the codes for sex were missing for 69 students on the student records file, an analysis with PEIMS snapshot data showed the same breakdown for students served by VTs.

Table 2.8: Demographic Profile of Students Served by Visiting Teachers, 2003-04

PEIMS Demographic Information	Percentage	Frequency*
At-Risk (including Limited English Proficient)	65.3%	1094
Economically Disadvantaged (i.e., eligible for free- or reduced-priced lunch)	73.9%	1238
Special Education Indicator	34.7%	581
Limited English Proficiency	17.3%	290
Grade Level		
Early Childhood, Pre-K, & Kindergarten	12.4%	207
1st-3rd	24.9%	418
4th-5th	15.0%	252
6th-8th	24.4%	409
9th-12th	23.3%	390

* $n=1,676$ students. Of the 1,983 students served by Visiting Teachers, information for 307 students was not on the PEIMS snapshot file.

Source: Visiting Teachers database; PEIMS 2003 snapshot database; AISD student information system

STAFF SURVEY

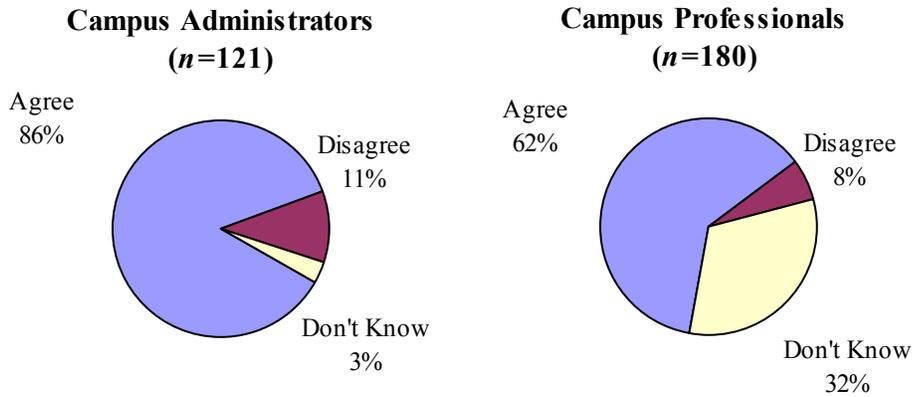
In Winter of 2004, 301 campus professionals and administrators responded to survey questions on the district's Employee Coordinated Survey about the effectiveness of services provided by VTs and the timeliness of response by VTs to the campus' needs.

Effectiveness of VT Services

Among administrators who responded ($n=121$), 86% agreed⁴ that the services provided by the school's VT help to reduce student problems that affect students' school success. This result is slightly higher than the 76% of campus administrators who indicated they agreed with a similar statement in 2003; however, the sampled group was much smaller in 2003, and only 33 administrators responded to the question that year. Among other campus professionals ($n=180$), 62% reported agreeing with this statement about VT's effectiveness.

⁴ In descriptions of the staff survey results, responses of "agree" or "strongly agree" have been collapsed as "agree," and responses of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were collapsed as "disagree."

Figure 2.1: Ratings of the Statement: “*Services Provided by the Visiting Teacher Assigned to my School Help to Reduce Student Problems that Affect their School Success*” by Campus Administrators and Campus Professionals



Source: 2004 AISD Employee Coordinated Survey

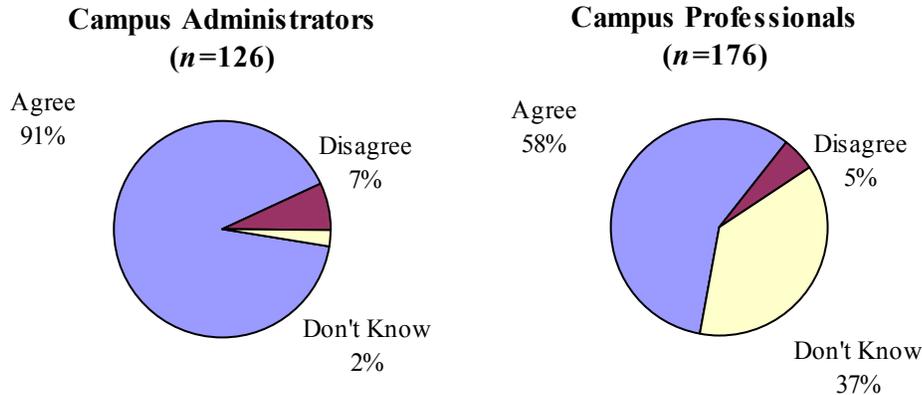
Although these results suggest that school administrators view services provided by their assigned VT as effective in addressing students' problems, results from campus professionals, which do not include teachers, suggest that many may be unfamiliar with the services of VTs, given that 32% reported “*don't know*”. In 2003, a similar question was asked of teachers on the Coordinated Survey, and 44% ($n=252$) responded “*don't know*”. As with teachers in 2003, the “*don't know*” response to this question by campus professionals could mean that they are uncertain about VT's effectiveness or about the services that VTs can provide, or both. If campus professionals do not know which students are served by VTs, or how many, they may be unable to respond knowledgeably to a survey question about the program's effectiveness. Note that in addition to counselors and social workers, the category of campus professionals includes librarians, athletic trainers, and technology specialists who may be less knowledgeable than counselors or social workers about the work of VTs.

Timeliness of Response by Visiting Teachers

Figure 2.5 shows ratings given by campus professionals and administrators on a statement about whether VTs respond in a timely manner to campus needs. Of the 126 campus administrators who responded, 91% responded in agreement with the statement about VTs' timely response to campus needs. Among campus professionals, 58% ($n=176$) responded in agreement, but as with the question about VT effectiveness, 37% reported

“don’t know”. If campus professionals are unaware of whom has been served, unfamiliar with the services available through VTs, and unable to gauge effectiveness in reducing student problems, they also may not be able to assess whether VTs respond in a timely manner to campus needs.

Figure 2.2: Ratings of the Statement: “*The Visiting Teacher Responds to Campus Needs in a Timely Manner*” by Campus Administrators and Campus Professionals



Source: 2004 AISD Employee Coordinated Survey

CONCLUSIONS

In 2003-04, the 18 full and part-time visiting teachers responded to 9% more referrals than they had in 2002-03. Because new data tracking procedures were in place, two-thirds of the students assisted by VTs were found to be at-risk under the state definition and almost three quarters qualified for the federal free or reduced price lunch program. A third of the students also qualified for special education services. Responses by campus staff to Coordinated Survey questions showed that a large majority of campus administrators believe VTs are effective at minimizing student problems that affect school success and that VTs respond to campus needs in a timely manner. The results also suggested that other campus professionals may not be knowledgeable about the work done by VTs. With continued improvements in tracking data, a more objective or direct evaluation of the program’s impact on student outcomes will be possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- As recommended in 2002-03, campus administrators should make all campus professionals, including teachers, aware of visiting teachers’ services as another resource available to their campus’ student body.

- Visiting Teachers and program staff should consider working with district programmers to further develop the district's current data system so that student identification numbers are verified for accuracy, tracking of multiple referrals for the same student is possible, and clear descriptions of services provided are given. In this way, the impact of specific VT services on student outcomes may be more accurately evaluated and program managers and staff might enhance their decisions about how best to help students in the future.
- Improve survey questions aimed at campus professional staff. To gain a better understanding of perceived program effectiveness by specific professional groups, there should be a match between the content of questions asked and the knowledge or familiarity of role groups being asked questions about VT services. For example, questions could be targeted according to specified job codes, rather than broad job categories. Also, campus staff should be asked on the Employee Coordinated Survey if they are familiar with VT services before being asked to assess the quality of services.

PART 3: ADDITIONAL AISD STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A wide variety of SCE-funded programs are described in this report section. The first section describes the district's two disciplinary alternative education placement schools and the high school level alternative education program. The next group of programs are coordinated by the district to address a particular goal (e.g., improved reading instruction, dropout prevention and reduction, or decreased student absenteeism). In some cases, these programs are administered in conjunction with outside agencies, such as Communities in Schools or the Travis County Constables. The third group of programs were funded at levels of less than \$90,000 through SCE funds and aim to improve student academic achievement and progress.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

ALTERNATIVE CENTER FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS (ACES)

The Alternative Center for Elementary Students was allocated \$306,000 from SCE monies. Similar to the ALC, ACES is a disciplinary alternative educational placement school for elementary students who have been suspended from their home campuses. Placements may be short-term (less than four days) or longer; the duration of a student's placement is made on a case-by-case basis, according to the district's Student Code of Conduct handbook. Instruction in core content areas and counseling are provided to students at ACES.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER (ALC)

In 2003-04, the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) received an SCE allocation of \$1.7 million, a decrease from the 2002-03 allocation of \$1.9 million in 2002-03. The purpose of the ALC is to provide a disciplinary alternative educational placement (DAEP) for middle or high school students assigned as a consequence of inappropriate behavior, as defined by the district's Code of Conduct, campus rules, or the Texas Education Code §37.006. Students may be sent to the ALC for a short or extended period of time.

The ALC program focuses on teaching students appropriate behavior and providing opportunities to practice this behavior in a group setting engaging in cooperative activities. Strengthening academic skills to bring students to grade-level proficiency is another major goal of the program. Student success is defined as the

successful reintegration of students into their home schools with the behaviors, knowledge, and skills necessary to succeed.

GONZALO GARZA INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL (GARZA)

In 2003-04, Gonzalo Garza Independence High School (Garza) received an SCE allocation of \$671,000, a decrease from \$776,000 in 2002-03. Garza is the district's sole non-disciplinary alternative high school and has been in operation since Spring 1997. According to the 2003 PEIMS snapshot data, 85% of Garza students ($n=345$) met at-risk criteria determined by the state. Garza's non-traditional approach to learning is characterized by an integrated, inter-disciplinary curriculum that is problem- and project-based and enhanced by access to technology. Students at Garza complete all their coursework independently and at their own pace. The school has an attendance waiver from the state that allows flexibility in scheduling. Students may attend school in four-hour blocks of time in the morning, afternoon, or evening and are given the opportunity to choose among three levels of rigor in the curriculum. Within these levels students can choose, for example, between taking a final exam or creating a portfolio of their work.

In the last available state ratings from 2002, Garza received a rating of "AE: Acceptable" from the Texas Education Agency. In 2004, however, Garza received a rating of "alternative" from the state due to its status as an alternative education campus and the state's on-going development of alternative education accountability rules. Cumulative exit level TAKS results as of July 2004 showed that the following percentages of students met the passing standards on each content area TAKS: 94% in social studies, 73% in mathematics, 71% in reading/language arts, and 65% in science.

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT AND CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

ACCOUNT FOR LEARNING

Account for Learning (AFL), which began in 1999-2000, is a local funding source designed to increase equity in the resources provided to campuses with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. AFL's primary goal is to increase student achievement in reading and mathematics. For each identified campus, AFL provides resources for parental support specialists and for tutorials to provide instructional support for students. In 2003-04, AFL received a SCE allocation of \$2,326,000, down from

\$5,888,000 in 2002-03. AFL's supplemental funding is provided to campuses with a large percentage of the student population qualifying for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. AFL elementary schools have 70% or more students meeting these criteria, while middle/junior high schools have at least 65%, and high schools have at least 50% of their populations meeting these criteria.

CURRICULUM SPECIALISTS

A total of \$1.4 million from SCE funds was allocated for the salaries of curriculum specialists. Similar to instructional coaches, curriculum specialists are assigned to schools according to academic needs (as determined by students' TAKS performance) to serve students who are struggling in specific content areas.

BILINGUAL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS

A total of \$900,000 from SCE funds was allocated to assist new immigrant students who have limited English proficiency, or are English language learners (ELLs).

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS (CIS)

In 2003-04, as in 2002-03, Communities in School (CIS) received a SCE allocation of \$540,000. In addition, CIS was able to garner additional resources from its own grants, contracts, and donations to enhance the services provided to AISD students. Each year the district works with CIS to develop an agreement regarding the school-based social services and related educational activities that will be provided to AISD students. The CIS program manager and AISD campus staff also work to develop program plans that describe the needs of students and services to be provided by CIS. With approval by the campus principal, this program plan becomes part of the Campus Improvement Plan and is updated throughout the year. At the end of each school year, CIS provides campus and districtwide reports about services provided. Specifically, these reports indicate the number of students receiving services at each campus and contain information about the academic, behavioral, and attendance improvements among the students served.

Graduation rates and improvements in reducing dropout rates also are monitored by CIS.

In 2003-04, the agreement listed 27 campuses that would be served by CIS. Many of CIS' activities are aimed at students who meet at-risk criteria. The Home Instructional Program for Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPO) program, for example, is targeted at parents of pre-kindergarten students at Allison, Langford, and Wooldridge Elementary schools. A parent educator meets once a week to help guide parents in how they can prepare their

children for school. The other programs offered by CIS enhance social services at schools to better enable at-risk students to benefit from instruction. Selected schools have high levels of risk in the following categories: percentage of students passing TAAS or TAKS, attendance, percentage of students on the free or reduced-price lunch program, and percentage of students disciplined. CIS provides each campus with a social worker who serves as a case manager and may provide additional staff, including Americorp workers, caseworkers, interns, and volunteers who help with tutoring, mentoring, and serve as class aides.

DROPOUT PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

In 2003-04, the Annual Performance Objectives in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) included a goal of reducing the annual dropout rate among all students to .7% or less. This target compares to a 2002-03 goal of reducing the annual dropout rate to 1.2% or less for all students, and an actual rate of 1.3%.

Approximately \$1.01 million in SCE funds were allocated to dropout prevention efforts in 2003-04. SCE resources for dropout intervention were used to fund dropout coordinators and a variety of programs and services during the school year and summer to reduce the number of dropouts. Services and programs included summer reading programs, DELTA, parent involvement resources and training, and the Absent Student Assistance Program (ASAP).

ASAP is a seven-year-old collaborative effort between AISD and the Travis County Constables. The purposes of the program are to improve school attendance by notifying parents when their children are absent, keep students in school, and prevent their involvement with the juvenile justice system. ASAP also is a valuable resource in preventing a student from dropping out of school. All AISD schools are expected to utilize ASAP for Grades 1 through 9.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS

A total of \$3.3 million and 62.00 FTEs were allocated from SCE funds for elementary school counselors. Counselors at the elementary level are charged with providing the following: classroom guidance in the form of lessons that teach students basic skills such as responsible behavior, conflict resolution, and goal setting; responsive services for students' personal concerns or crises; and system support, so that staff are aware of the goals of the district's guidance and counseling program and its services.

Funding for the elementary school counselors' work falls under SCE guidelines for allowable administrative costs, which are not to exceed 15% of the SCE budget.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY & TRAVIS COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

SCE allocations for the Leadership Academy (\$193,000) and the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center (\$295,000) support academic services for students at these facilities.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEACHERS & MIDDLE SCHOOL READING INITIATIVE

In 2003-04, \$3.7 million in SCE funds were allocated for literacy teachers at campuses based on students' TAKS performance. The middle school reading initiative received an allocation of approximately \$1.5 million. Funding for literacy teachers replaces previous allocations from SCE for the program known as Reading Recovery. The goal of these efforts are to implement the AISD literacy support model for helping at-risk students develop effective reading and writing strategies.

SECONDARY TUTORIALS

In 2003-04, \$282,000 was allocated for secondary-level tutorials, reflecting a \$6,000 decrease from the allocation in 2002-03. Secondary tutorials funds are distributed to all middle/junior high schools and high schools. Money may be spent on a variety of strategies including one-on-one tutoring, study groups, TAAS/TAKS workshops, study skills, and parent activities.

SECONDARY TRANSITION PROGRAMS

In 2003-04, Secondary Transition programs received a SCE allocation of \$462,000, an increase from \$275,000 in 2002-03. Secondary Transition funds are provided to each secondary campus on a per-pupil basis for use in easing the transition from elementary to middle school or from middle to high school, when at-risk students may be vulnerable to dropping out from school.

SETON NURSE CONTRACT

Austin ISD has contracted with the Seton Healthcare network to provide school nurse services at its campuses since 1996. The \$1.8 million allocated for the service from SCE funds reflects only a portion of the full contracted amount. The SCE-funded portion is an estimated cost for serving at-risk students, for example, those who are pregnant and need referral services.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE & AFTER SCHOOL DETENTION

A total of \$351,00 was allocated from SCE funds for student discipline efforts, and \$220,000 was allocated for after school detention costs.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

A total of \$1.9 million in State Compensatory Education funds were used in 2003-04 to support summer programs, down from \$2.3 million in 2002-03. Summer school programs largely targeted pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students who were eligible for bilingual/ESL instructional services.

OTHER PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

Each of the following programs were allocated less than \$90,000 in State Compensatory Education funds in 2003-04:

Truancy Master—for dropout prevention

Phoenix Academy—academic support for AISD students in an alternative education setting

Shoal Creek Hospital— academic support for AISD students in an alternative education setting

Ninth Grade Initiatives—campus allocation for supplemental academic support activities aimed at 9th grade students

Family Resource Center

Child Care Program

Homebound—academic support for AISD students with special needs

Blueprint Schools

Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL) Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

- District staff should maintain lists of all at-risk students, with their local ID numbers, who are served by each of the SCE-funded programs and services. Because SASI (the district's student records system) contains a field used to denote which students are at-risk, additional fields should be created to capture the actual services provided to at-risk students, so that SCE services can be tracked and effectiveness evaluated. In this way, the effectiveness of particular programs and services may be monitored in terms of student achievement and school completion outcomes. Additionally, individual

programs may be evaluated to determine the progress of participating at-risk students in meeting the legislative goal of performing at grade level by the end of the next regular term.

- The objectives for reducing disparities between at-risk students and those not at-risk resonate with Austin ISD's Executive Limitation 12 on Curriculum and Instruction. Therefore, district staff should address the legislative intent for all at-risk students to be performing at grade level by the conclusion of the next regular school term by including performance objectives and action plans for SCE programs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DELTA

Table A1: Percentage and Number of DELTA Students Served by Ethnicity, 1997-2004

Year*	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	White
2003-04	20% (529)	2% (40)	56% (1451)	0.4% (11)	21% (556)
2002-03	23% (686)	2% (50)	54% (1600)	0.2% (6)	22% (647)
2001-02	21% (436)	2% (48)	54% (1096)	0.1% (2)	23% (461)
1999-2000	20% (373)	1% (27)	49% (925)	0.3% (5)	30% (578)
1998-99	20% (352)	2% (37)	45% (773)	0.3% (5)	31% (544)
1997-98	20% (317)	2% (32)	47% (761)	0.3% (6)	31% (508)

*2000-01 data are not available due to changes in data collection for DELTA that year.

Note: Due to reporting errors, totals do not match total number of students served.

Sources: 2002-03 and 2003-04 AISD Student Records, 2001-02 SCE Evaluation (Schmitt, 2003), 2002-03 SCE Evaluation (Carrejo, 2003), and DELTA Fifth Year Implementation report (Keswick, 2000)

Table A2: DELTA Course Credits Earned, 2003-04, 2002-03, and 2001-02

Subject Area	DELTA Courses	Credits Earned 2003-04	Credits Earned 2002-03	Credits Earned 2001-02
English	English 1	94	132.5	88.5
	English 2	129	167.5	110
	English 3	158	222	136.5
	English 4	180.5	201.5	165.5
	<i>English Total</i>	561.5	723.5	500.5
Mathematics	Algebra 1	85.5	92	84
	Algebra 2	21.5	21.5	17
	Geometry	158	190	153
	Math Modeling 1	228	160.5	155
	Math Modeling 2	98	30	25
	<i>Mathematics Total</i>	591	494	434
Social Studies	Government	110.5	116	110.5
	US History	142.5	165.5	138
	World History	152	152.5	95.5
	World Geography	158	213.5	129
	Economics	95	121.5	86
	<i>Social Studies Total</i>	658	769	559
Science/Health	Integrated Physics & Chemistry	74.5	127	108
	Biology	76.5	120	67
	Health	34	60	51.5
	<i>Science/Health Total</i>	185	307	226.5
Electives	<i>Electives Total</i>	136.5	334.5	227
	<i>Total Credits Earned</i>	2132	2628	1947

Sources: 2002-03 and 2003-04 Teacher reports from traditional campuses, ALC, and La Fuente Learning Center at Cristo Rey Church; 2001-02 State Compensatory Education Evaluation Report (Schmitt, 2003)

APPENDIX B: VISITING TEACHERS PROGRAM

Table B1: Student and Family Issues Addressed by Visiting Teachers

	Issues Addressed
School Problems	School crises Academic adjustment School/home communication Non-attendance/truancy Delinquent student conduct Disruptive, out-of-control behavior
Home Problems	Home/school communication Catastrophic event: illness, accident, fire, death Chronic illness Domestic violence Child abuse/neglect
Personal Problems	Basic human needs: clothing, food, shelter, medical/dental care Drug/alcohol abuse Teen pregnancy/parenting Mental health issues Suicide, grief, loss Incarceration

Source: AISD Website, Student Support Services Visiting Teacher Information

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