

GETTING AHEAD OF THE NEED: COMPREHENSIVE COUNSELING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

YEAR THREE EVALUATION REPORT, 2003-2004



**AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Department of Program Evaluation
December 2004**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Getting Ahead of the Need: Comprehensive Counseling for Elementary Schools* grant was awarded to Austin Independent School District (AISD) by the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program through the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education for a period of three years, beginning June 2001. The primary goal of the grant was to create an environment that is more conducive to learning by improving elementary school counseling prevention and intervention services offered in AISD. This goal was to be met through further development and full implementation of AISD's *Live This!* guidance and counseling curriculum at 14 high-need campuses. Specifically, the grant supported seven additional counselors, each of whom worked with two high-need elementary campuses, and through training provided support to all AISD elementary school counselors. To understand and quantify progress toward this goal, three project objectives were established:

Objective 1: Increase the number of students receiving preventative guidance and counseling services;

Objective 2: Decrease the need for crisis intervention; and

Objective 3: Create an environment conducive to learning through increased perceptions of safety on campuses.

Extensive data were gathered from the 14 target schools and 4 comparison schools. The findings for each objective are highlighted.

Objective 1

- Approximately three times as many guidance lessons, on average per week, were delivered at target schools than at comparison schools. On average, almost three times as many students were exposed to guidance lessons weekly at target than at comparison schools.
- Together, the two groups of counselors at the target schools conducted 50% more group counseling sessions, serving twice as many students, and 83% more individual counseling sessions, on average weekly, than did the counselors at the comparison schools.

Providing an additional half-time counselor at each of the target schools resulted in considerably more lessons being delivered than at comparison schools and provided resources for a greater number of students to be exposed to preventative guidance lessons.

In addition, while counseling services also were supplied to a greater extent at target schools, these campuses showed considerable growth toward meeting the larger goal of being prevention- rather than reaction-oriented in the delivery of services for students. Namely, target schools increased preventative services, i.e., classroom guidance lessons, while reducing intermediate and intensive services, i.e., group and individual counseling, respectively.

Objective 2

- The average number of formal disciplinary actions, i.e., referrals to the Alternative Center for Elementary Students (ACES) and students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression and for all offenses, was found to be higher at target than comparison campuses at the start of the grant in 2001. Referrals and disciplinary actions were slightly decreased or stable over time at target campuses and considerably increased over time at comparison campuses. Over the period of the grant, there was an increased need for crisis intervention at comparison schools that was not similarly experienced at target schools.
- A relationship was found between the total number of Responsible Behavior lessons conducted and the mean student Responsible Behavior competency, suggesting that students at schools where more guidance lessons are delivered demonstrate greater competency in the area of Responsible Behavior.

Objective 3

- Based on analyses of specific items contained in the districtwide 2003-2004 Student Climate Survey, student perceptions of the school environment or safety were the same, whether students attended a target or comparison school.
- Overall, students reported positive perceptions about respect among students and about school safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate the value of increasing counseling staff at schools, and moreover, of allowing counselors to focus on the provision of direct, preventative, guidance services rather than on administrative or peripheral tasks. Furthermore, although target school staff provided counseling services to a greater extent than did comparison

school staff, target campuses showed a reduction in the provision of group and individual counseling. In this manner, target schools evidenced growth towards meeting the 2001-2002 recommendation that most students should be reached via classroom guidance services, and that fewer students, or only those with the greatest need, should receive intermediate level or intensive services. Providing dedicated counselor time so that all schools can advance in this area continues to be a recommendation. Effective guidance lessons, in turn, can contribute to positive changes in student behavior, which also can be essential for creating a school environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW AND STATUS

OVERVIEW

The *Getting Ahead of the Need: Comprehensive Counseling for Elementary Schools* grant was awarded to Austin Independent School District (AISD) by the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program through the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education for a period of three years, beginning June 2001. The primary goal of the grant was to create an environment that is more conducive to learning by improving elementary school counseling prevention and intervention services offered in AISD. This goal was to be met through further development and full implementation of AISD's *Live This!* guidance and counseling curriculum at 14 high-need campuses. To understand and quantify progress toward this goal, three project objectives were established:

- Increase the number of students receiving preventative guidance and counseling services;
- Decrease the need for crisis intervention; and
- Create an environment conducive to learning through increased perceptions of safety on campuses.

The grant supported these objectives by funding seven supplemental counselors, each of whom worked with two high-need elementary campuses, and through training provided to all AISD elementary school counselors. The additional counselors were charged with focusing on the provision of direct, preventative guidance services to students, as opposed to being responsible for administrative or peripheral tasks such as testing and scheduling. In addition, training elementary counselors and staff at grant schools contributed to the quality of services districtwide. Evidence to substantiate this is contained in subsequent sections of this report.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Year Three Accomplishments

During Year 3 of the grant, numerous activities were accomplished toward meeting project goals and objectives. Grant-funded counselors implemented programs targeting responsible behavior and conflict resolution on their campuses. Some counselors coordinated Peer Mediation and PALS (Peer Assisted Leadership) programs on their campuses in addition to classroom guidance lessons from curricula such as *Second Step*, *Bully Proofing Your Elementary School*, the *Bully Free Classroom*, and *Let's Get Real*

About Violence. Grant staff met in Fall 2003 to discuss implementation strategies and issues, and evaluation reporting and results.

In addition, grant-funded counselors participated in training sessions on various topics such as stress, ethics, campus crises, and legislative updates. Training sessions related to terrorism and Safe Schools also were offered. Counselors attended the conference for Texas school counselors, provided by the Texas Education Agency, that offered opportunities for participation in a number of sessions about counseling students and families. The intent of providing such supplemental training sessions to grant-funded counselors was to support the program goals of making schools safer and creating an environment that is conducive to learning.

A large training project to implement the Expect Respect bully proofing program developed by Safe Place has been under way at all grant-funded campuses. This project included faculty training sessions for 240 staff, curriculum materials for faculty, materials for parent education, and ongoing technical assistance for schools to develop their programs. Equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills is intended to enable them to reinforce guidance lessons in their own classrooms and effect desired long-term changes in student behavior. Implementation of the program at target schools also responds to recommendations from the year two evaluation, to provide supplemental staff training and to fully implement the guidance program at target schools (Irani & Christian, 2002).

BUDGET INFORMATION

Actual cumulative expenditures as of March 31, 2004 were \$ 931,522. Payroll for staff salaries through the end of this year is estimated to be \$100,828. Thus, the total projected expenditure through the end of the present grant year is \$1,032,350, which represents 93.5% of the total grant funds (i.e., \$1,104,350) appropriated over the three-year grant period. An extension of the project period and the use of the remaining grant funds was requested to meet the following grant obligations: production of the AISD Counselor Brochure; extension of the roles of the Program Evaluator (to complete the final evaluation) and Program Specialist (to complete the project); and purchase of Bully Proofing curriculum materials. This request was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in May 2004.

EVALUATION OF PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The grant funded seven counselors, each of whom worked with two high-need elementary campuses. These counselors constituted a part-time supplemental resource, in addition to the locally funded counselors, at the 14 target schools. Data were gathered from both groups of counselors at the target campuses as well as from counselors at 4 comparison schools (Appendix A). Counselors furnished data for their activities throughout the three years of the grant, including 2003-2004. Those data were compared and analyzed across all three groups of counselors for the 6-week periods in Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 that were common to all the counselors. The data included detailed accounts of how counselors spent their time, including the extent of classroom guidance delivery and the numbers of group and individual counseling sessions conducted. Data also were gathered from teachers regarding their experiences with classroom guidance lessons that counselors provided, referrals of students to counseling, and frequency of classroom disruptions. In addition, teachers rated a random selection of students on their skill levels in the areas of conflict resolution and responsible behavior. Archival data (e.g., discipline records, alternative learning center placements, student climate survey, etc.) also were examined for both target and comparison schools.

OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING PREVENTATIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

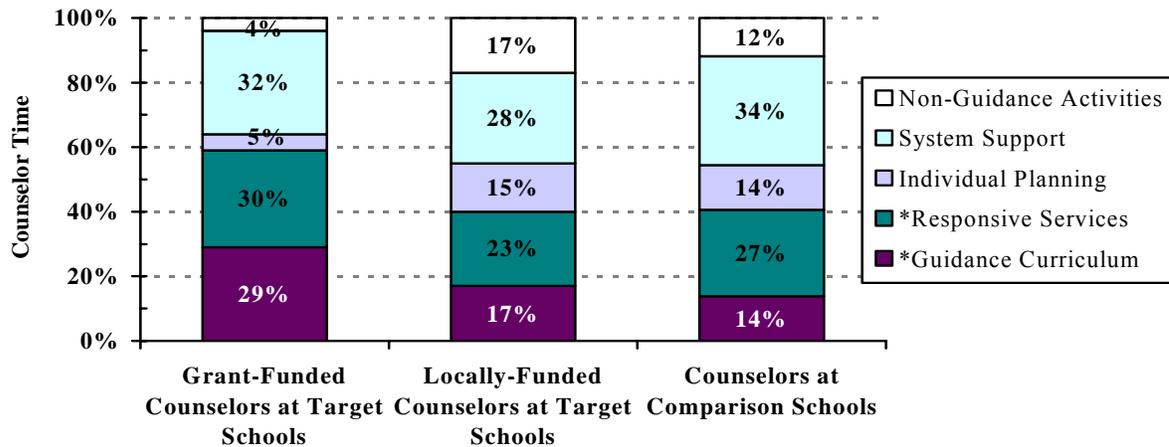
One of the grant objectives was to increase the number of students receiving preventative guidance and counseling services. Consequently, grant-funded counselors at target schools were limited to performing activities related to providing direct services to students and their families, and were to have minimum involvement with administrative or non-guidance tasks. Data from the counselors' Time and Task Analysis Logs (Appendix B) were analyzed, and the findings presented here are based on weekly averages for the data collection periods that were common to all three groups of counselors during the 2003-2004 school year.

Analyses revealed that, similar to findings from the previous two years of the grant (Christian, 2003; Irani & Christian, 2003), grant-funded counselors at target schools spent the greatest portion of their time (59%) on direct service activities, i.e., guidance curriculum delivery and responsive services combined (Figure 1). While the locally funded counselors at target schools, and the counselors at comparison schools, also spent

the greatest portion of their time conducting direct service activities, the proportion of time they spent delivering direct services was much less (40% and 41%, respectively).

Moreover, grant-funded counselors spent only 4% of their time on non-guidance activities, less than a quarter of that spent by locally funded counselors at target schools (17%) and a third of that spent by counselors at comparison schools (12%).

Figure 1: Relative Use of Counselor Time Across Service Categories by Counselor Group and School, 2003-2004



* Direct service activities

Source: *Guidance and Counseling Time and Task Analysis Logs, 2003-2004*

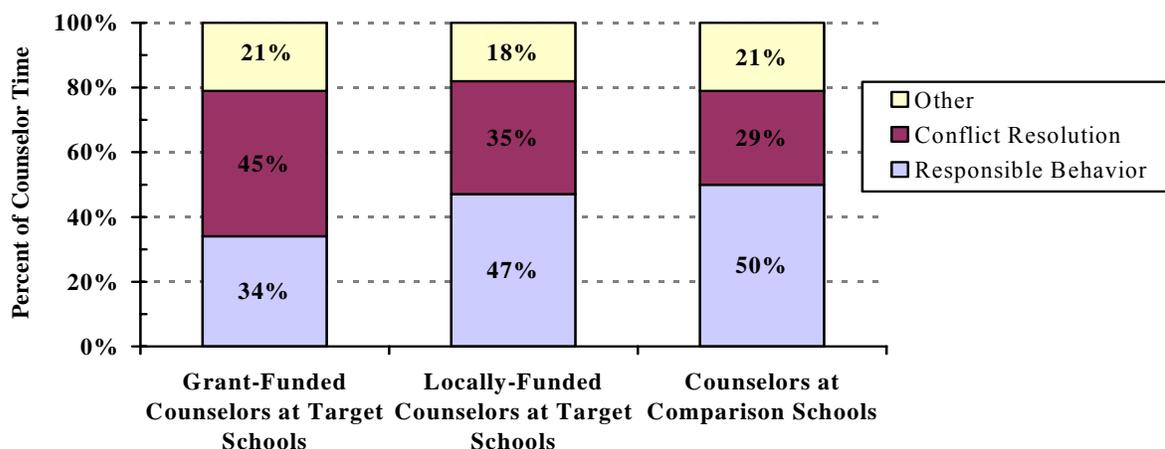
System support was an area in which all three groups of counselors spent a relatively large portion of their time (from 28% to 34%). Findings about time spent on direct service and individual planning were almost identical for locally funded counselors at target schools, and counselors at comparison schools.

One general observation, based on findings from the first year of the project (2001-2002) and this last year, is that both locally funded counselors at target schools and counselors at comparison schools are now engaging in relatively fewer non-guidance activities. For locally funded counselors at target schools, the percentage of time on non-guidance tasks decreased by 43% (from 30% to 17%), while for comparison school counselors, it was reduced by approximately two-thirds (from 39% to 12%). As for grant-funded counselors at target schools, the percentage of time spent on non-guidance activities was the same, 4% both years. In addition, all three groups of counselors spent 79%-82% of their total guidance curriculum delivery time on lessons from the Responsible Behavior

and Conflict Resolution strands (Figure 2), the two targeted strands that most closely fit the Title IV funding source objectives. Together, this suggests that provision of direct service was given greater emphasis over time and that similar priorities exist in the counseling curriculum across target and comparison schools.

Data analyses showed that the half-time grant-funded counselors at target schools delivered the same number of guidance lessons and were responsible for almost the same number of students being exposed to guidance lessons, on average per week, as the locally funded counselors at target schools who were full-time (Table 1). Collectively, the target

Figure 2: Relative Use of Guidance Curriculum Delivery Time by Strand - by Counselor Group and School, 2003-2004



Source: Guidance and Counseling Time and Task Analysis Logs, 2003-2004

Table 1: Guidance Lesson Delivery by Counselor Group and School, 2003-2004

Weekly Average Number of...	Target Schools			Counselors at Comparison Schools
	Grant-Funded Counselors	Locally Funded Counselors	Total	
Conflict Resolution Guidance Lessons	4	3	7	1
Responsible Behavior Guidance Lessons	3	4	7	3
Other Guidance Lessons	1	1	2	1
Sum of all Lessons	8	8	16	5
Students Exposed to Guidance Lessons at Each School	140	149	289	99

Source: Guidance and Counseling Time and Task Analysis Logs, 2003-2004

school counselors delivered approximately three times as many guidance lessons (n = 16) as the comparison school counselors (n = 5) on average weekly, resulting in almost three times as many students (289 versus 99) being reached.

Specific to the weekly average number of group counseling sessions and students receiving group counseling services, the findings were very similar for all three groups of counselors (Table 2). However, although the numbers are similar, grant-funded counselors were only employed half-time at each target school, compared to the other two groups of counselors who were employed full time. Combined, the grant-funded and locally funded counselors conducted a weekly average of 83% more individual counseling sessions and 50% more group counseling sessions, resulting in twice as many students receiving group counseling services at target schools. This, again, shows the benefit of allowing counselors dedicated time for direct service.

Table 2: Student Exposure to Responsive Services
by Counselor Group and School, 2003-2004

Weekly Average Number of...	Target Schools			Counselors at Comparison Schools
	Grant-Funded Counselors	Locally Funded Counselors	Total	
Individual Counseling Sessions	4	7	11	6
Group Counseling Sessions	3	3	6	4
Students Exposed to Groups	4	4	8	4
Total students receiving responsive services	8	11	19	10

Source: *Guidance and Counseling Time and Task Analysis Logs, 2003-2004*

It should be noted that 1 of 4 comparison school counselors in Fall 2003 and 2 of 4 comparison school counselors in Spring 2004 focused solely on providing responsive services to meet the unique needs of their campuses, influencing the number of guidance lessons conducted and students reached during the data collection period. One of these counselors was responsible for handling the needs of a large population of students receiving special education services, participating in related meetings, responding to teacher requests, handling student referrals, coordinating testing related activities, and engaging in a great deal of parent contact. Due to the considerably limited resources and time available to meet the unique needs of this school, provision of guidance lessons was given a lower priority. This situation highlights the need to provide additional counseling

resources to elementary schools to enable counselors to provide direct, preventative services to students in addition to meeting specific campus needs.

One of the 2001-2002 recommendations for continuing progress on grant goals was to provide classroom guidance to as many students as possible, and furthermore, to reach most students via preventative guidance services and fewer students via intermediate level services (e.g., group counseling) or intensive services (e.g., individual counseling). To this end, it was observed that from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004, the grant-funded and locally funded counselors, combined, increased the average weekly number of students exposed to guidance lessons by 7% (from 269 to 289) at target schools (Table 3); in contrast, there was a 51% decrease (from 204 to 99) at comparison schools. Also, although the decline in the number of individual counseling sessions at target schools was largest between 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, a decline of 27% (from 15 to 11, see Table 3) was maintained between 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. In contrast, the number of individual counseling sessions at comparison schools increased by 20% (from 5 to 6) over the same period.

Table 3: Guidance Curriculum and Counseling Services
by Type of School, 2001-2002 Through 2003-2004

Weekly average # of...	Services Provided at Target Schools*			Services Provided at Comparison Schools		
	01-02	02-03	03-04	01-02	02-03	03-04
All guidance lessons	21	16	16	4	12	5
Students exposed to guidance lessons	N/A	269	289	N/A	204	99
Individual counseling sessions	15	4	11	5	3	6
Group counseling sessions	9	5	6	1	3	4
Students exposed to group counseling	N/A	7	8	N/A	3	4
Total students exposed to responsive services	N/A	11	19	N/A	6	10

* Includes services provided by both grant- and locally funded counselors

Source: *Source: Guidance and Counseling Time and Task Analysis Logs, 2003-2004*

Overall, the number of students exposed to guidance lessons as well as the number of individual and group counseling sessions conducted were still greater at target than

comparison schools, likely due to the greater counseling resources available at target campuses. Target schools were particularly strong in terms of meeting the goal of reaching the most students via guidance services, and moving towards less utilization of individual and group counseling to serve students.

To summarize, the first objective, of increasing the number of students receiving preventative guidance and counseling services, appears to have been met. The following outcomes for delivery of services were observed in regard to the provision of a supplemental half-time counselor:

- Combined, the grant-funded and locally funded counselors delivered approximately three times more guidance lessons, on average per week, at target schools than did the counselors at comparison schools.
- On average, almost three times as many students were exposed to guidance lessons weekly at target schools as were exposed at comparison schools.
- The two groups of counselors together at the target schools conducted 50% more group counseling sessions, serving twice as many students, and 83% more individual counseling sessions, on average weekly, than did the counselors at comparison schools.
- Target schools were especially effective with respect to reaching the most students via guidance lessons, and moving towards less reliance on intermediate level (group counseling) or intensive services (individual counseling) for students.

OBJECTIVE 2: DECREASE THE NEED FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION

The second grant objective was to show a decreased need for crisis intervention as a result of increased direct services. Formal disciplinary actions served as a measure of crisis intervention, and student competency data in the Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution guidance curriculum strands also provided insights about the need for crisis intervention.

Formal Discipline Data

The mean number of students disciplined, as reported in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), for the subset of verbal and physical

aggression¹ as well as all offenses, was greater at target than comparison schools each year of the grant (Table 4). The mean number of students referred to the district's Alternative Center for Elementary Students (ACES) from target schools was greater as well. This suggests either that incidents requiring crisis intervention occurred to a greater extent at target than comparison schools, or that the target schools were more likely to handle their discipline incidents in a formal manner, or that some combination of the two existed.

Table 4: Number of Students Disciplined and ACES Referrals
by Type of School, 2001-2002 Through 2003-2004

Mean Number of Students...	Target Schools			Comparison Schools		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Disciplined for Verbal and Physical Aggression¹	31	26	33	6	9	20
Disciplined for All Offenses	53	43	51	11	16	33
Referred to ACES	45	32	28	9	13	13

Note: Only schools that remained in the study for all three years, in the same category (i.e., target or comparison school), are included (see Appendix A).

Source: AISD Student Discipline Aggregate Report 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 (PEIMS 425)

Overall, 2001-2002 through 2003-2004 data showed a 38% decline in the mean number of ACES referrals at target schools in contrast to a 44% gain at comparison schools. The mean number of students disciplined at target schools was relatively stable in contrast to a notable increase (233% for verbal and physical aggression, 200% for all) in

¹ *Verbal and physical aggression* reporting categories include: rude to student, threat or harassment of student, physical aggression against student, fighting/mutual combat, assault of student, aggravated assault of student, school-related gang violence, rude to adult, threat or harassment of adult, physical aggression against adult, assault against adult, aggravated assault against adult, retaliation against school employee, terroristic threat, aggravated kidnapping, murder, sexual assault of adult, and sexual assault of student.

Students are unique within reporting categories, but not between reporting categories. Therefore, a student who repeat offends within a category will be represented only once; however, a student who commits multiple offenses across reporting categories will be repeated more than once.

the mean number of students disciplined at comparison schools. Regardless of possible differences in philosophies regarding disciplinary procedures, the overall longitudinal picture is much more positive for target schools. While there was only a slight decline in the need for crisis intervention at target schools, there was a considerable increase in the need for crisis intervention at comparison schools.

In addition to data about formal disciplinary actions, information was gathered about informal disciplinary actions using a teacher survey (Appendix D). Specifically, teachers were asked how many times in an average week they experienced a disruption in their classroom that was serious enough to interrupt their lesson and/or disrupt the learning of students. In 2003-2004, 61% of the teachers reported a range of 3 or fewer disruptions per week. In regard to number of disruptions per week, 34% reported less than 1, 27% reported 1-3, 16% reported 4-6, 6% reported 7-9, and 17% reported 10 or more. This represents a decline in the number of disruptions reported by teachers from a mean of 5.4 per week reported on a free response item in 2002-2003. Perhaps the decrease from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004 can be attributed to a positive classroom climate or more effective classroom management. Teachers also were surveyed regarding the number of times, during the school year, that they had sent a student to the principal or assistant principal's office for discipline issues. The average number of such instances reported in 2002-2003 was 6.6 and in 2003-2004 was 6.7; thus, it was found to be stable over time.

In summary, the findings for informal disciplinary actions were encouraging on one indicator and stable on the other, suggesting an overall positive outlook for the crisis intervention needs at both types of schools over time. At the same time, it is likely that the findings are most representative of target campuses. Although the response rates at target versus comparison schools could not be determined for the Teacher Survey, they were known for the Student Competency Form. Based on the Student Competency Form response rates, and certain aspects of the study design, it is possible to infer that the findings for informal disciplinary actions are most representative of target campuses.

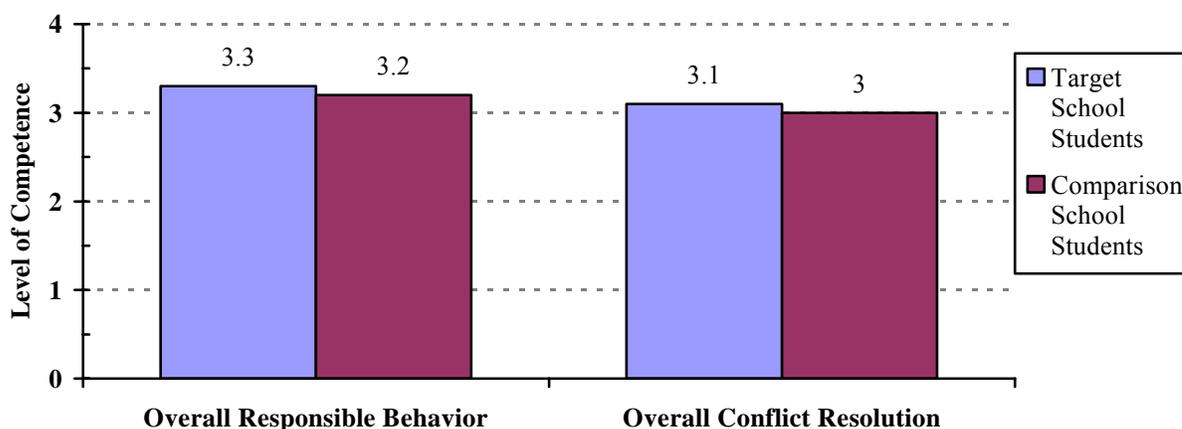
Student Evaluation Data

Evaluating student competencies in the areas of Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution also helps to measure the need for crisis intervention, because student efficacy in these areas is related to their ability to deal with events or issues that provoke crisis and can therefore influence the need for crisis intervention. Target and comparison school

teachers were asked to use the online 2004 *Live This!* Student Competency Form (Appendix C) to rate student competence on skills associated with the two curriculum strands. Teachers were instructed to provide information based on their familiarity with the students throughout the school year. Kindergarten through 6th grade teachers completed this form for randomly selected students. Ratings were obtained for a total of 261 students, 218 from the 14 target schools and 43 from the 4 comparison schools. Students were rated on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = not at all, 2 = occasionally, 3 = most of the time, and 4 = consistently) on their ability to exhibit a variety of skills that make up Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution.

The differences between student competencies at target and comparison schools were not found to be significant in any of these skill areas. Ratings seemed to be slightly higher on the skills connected with Responsible Behavior than on those related to Conflict Resolution at both types of campuses, which are reflected in the “overall” rating (scaled score) for each strand (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Mean Student Competence on Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution at Target and Comparison Schools, 2003-2004



Source: 2004 *Live This!* Student Competency Form

A significant correlation was found between the total number of Responsible Behavior lessons conducted during the comparison period at each school, and the mean student Responsible Behavior rating at each school. Although only moderate ($r = .46$, $p < .05$), this correlation suggests a significant relationship between classroom guidance lessons and student competency in the Responsible Behavior curriculum strand.

It is possible that the 2004 *Live This!* Student Competency Form was not adequately sensitive to subtle or small changes in student competencies on the Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution strands, explaining why significant differences were not seen between student efficacy at target and comparison schools. It may also be that bringing about detectable changes in the abilities or behaviors under consideration takes more time than that afforded by the duration of this grant.

In summary, no differences were found regarding teacher ratings of student skills. The average number of formal disciplinary actions, i.e., ACES referrals and students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression and for all offenses, was found to be higher at target than comparison schools, but these actions decreased slightly or were stable over time at target campuses while they increased over time at the comparison campuses. This indicates that the increased need for crisis intervention at comparison schools over the space of the grant period was not similarly experienced at the target schools. Also, a statistically significant, moderate correlation, indicative of a direct relationship, was obtained between the number of guidance lessons conducted in the Responsible Behavior curriculum strand and student competency in the same strand.

OBJECTIVE 3: CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING THROUGH INCREASED PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY ON CAMPUSES.

The third grant objective was to create an environment conducive to learning through increased perceptions of safety on campuses. Data obtained via the districtwide 2003-2004 Student Climate Survey were available for the 14 target and 3 comparison elementary schools in relation to student perceptions of safety (data were not received from one comparison campus). Students in grades 3 through 6 completed the survey.

Of the survey items designed to assess overall school climate, five items were selected for data analysis purposes that were most relevant to the emphases of the grant; specifically, they concern respect between students and the degree to which students feel safe at school (Table 5). Between 2151 and 2468 students at the 17 elementary schools in the study responded to each item. Mean response ratings (range = 2.6 – 3.3) on each of the five items suggest a positive student response or experience in the areas of respect between students and views about safety at school. Also, while students seemed to be leaning towards agreement with the statements concerning respect, their agreement was more firmly established (i.e., between “agree” and “strongly agree”) for the items about safety.

However, no significant differences were found between the mean response ratings of students at target versus comparison schools for any of the five items.

Table 5: Results for Selected Items from the 2003-2004 Student Climate Survey

Survey Item	Target Schools		Comparison Schools	
	n of Responses	Mean Response	n of Responses	Mean Response
1. Students in my school respect each other. (Total n = 2193)	1811	2.6	382	2.6
2. Students at my school respect other students who are different than they are. (Total n = 2151)	1778	2.7	373	2.6
3. I am happy with the way students treat me at school. (Total n = 2468)	2025	2.9	443	3.0
4. I feel safe at my school. (Total n = 2456)	2024	3.3	432	3.4
5. I feel safe on the school property. (Total n = 2407)	1979	3.3	428	3.3

Note: Each item was rated on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Responses of “Don’t Know” were excluded from the analyses.

Source: *Student Climate Survey 2004*

Effective guidance lessons that contribute to changes in student behavior are an important element of creating a school environment that is safe and conducive to learning. Teachers were surveyed to determine the changes that they observed in most of the students’ behavior following the guidance lessons. Although it was not possible to determine whether the teachers who responded to the survey (n = 123) were at target or comparison schools, they overwhelmingly (79.5%) reported temporary or lasting positive changes in student behavior following the guidance lessons; in 2002-2003 as well, the vast majority of teachers reported temporary or lasting positive changes. Most teachers (78%) also responded that the guidance lessons presented to their classes contributed to a safe school environment to a moderate or great extent. That large percentages of teachers, over time, viewed the guidance lessons as effective suggests that they placed a high value on the guidance curriculum. This is consistent with the premise that adding supplemental counseling staff, who can concentrate on the provision of direct, preventative, guidance services to students, will help to create a school environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

To summarize, students who participated in the districtwide 2003-2004 Student Climate Survey reported an overall positive experience in terms of respect between

students and safety at school. In addition, when Teacher Survey data were examined in regard to changes in student behavior that are instrumental in creating a safe school environment conducive to learning, again, the findings were largely positive.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The availability of additional counseling staff at target schools demonstrated benefits and success towards fulfilling the grant objectives. Increasing counseling staff and the provision of dedicated time for counselors to focus on their area of specialty, rather than administrative tasks, is tied to the delivery of more guidance lessons, which in turn, shows some evidence of decreased need for crisis intervention. This, in turn, should provide (or allow) teachers and students more time on task and hence facilitate the greater Austin Independent School District mission of educating all students.

PROGRESS TOWARD EACH OBJECTIVE

Objective 1: Increase the number of students receiving preventative guidance and counseling services

Providing an extra half-time counselor at each of the target schools resulted in considerably more guidance lessons being delivered than at comparison schools and provided resources for a greater number of students to be exposed to preventative guidance. The services provided relative to the counselors' time were of such a level that with only 50% more counselor time available, 220% extra guidance lessons were provided and 90% more students received responsive services at target than at comparison schools. In addition, target campuses made great strides toward accomplishing a greater, districtwide goal of moving toward a prevention-based, rather than reaction-based, model. Target campuses reduced the amount of intermediate and intensive services, i.e., group and individual counseling, respectively, while increasing preventative services, i.e., classroom guidance lessons. Unfortunately, this was not the case at comparison schools, where less dedicated counselor time was available for prevention.

Objective 2: Decrease the need for crisis intervention

Crisis intervention was measured in terms of student competency data in the Responsible Behavior and Conflict Resolution guidance curriculum strands and formal disciplinary actions. Formal discipline data consisted of the mean number of students disciplined for the subset of verbal and physical aggression as well as all offenses, as reported in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), and the mean number of students referred to ACES.

To summarize, although no significant differences were found regarding student competencies at target and comparison schools, the mean number of formal disciplinary

actions, i.e., ACES referrals and students disciplined for verbal and physical aggression and for all offenses, was found to be higher at target than comparison schools. However, trends in occurrence rates were in opposite directions for target and comparison schools: occurrences decreased or were stable over time at target campuses, but increased considerably over time at the comparison campuses. The increased need for crisis intervention seen at comparison schools over the span of the grant was not similarly encountered at target campuses.

Objective 3: Create an environment conducive to learning through increased perceptions of safety on campuses.

Data analyses for specific items on the districtwide 2003-2004 Student Climate Survey did not indicate significant differences in student perceptions of the school environment or safety depending on whether the students attended a target or comparison school. Overall, students reported a positive experience in terms of respect between students and school safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The extent of services provided and students reached were considerably greater at target schools, where an additional part-time counselor was available, than at comparison schools. With only 50% more counselor time available at target campuses, 220% extra guidance lessons were provided, 192% more students were exposed to guidance lessons, 70% extra counseling sessions (individual and group combined) were provided, and 90% more students received responsive services. These findings point clearly and strongly to the value of increasing counseling staff at schools, by making it possible for counselors to concentrate on the provision of direct, preventative, guidance services rather than have their time taken away from counseling by administrative or peripheral tasks. Also, although counseling services were provided to a greater extent at target than comparison schools, target campuses made progress towards reducing the provision of more intensive group and individual counseling services. Thus, target schools showed progress toward meeting the 2001-2002 recommendation as well as the districtwide counseling goal that more students be reached via preventative classroom guidance services, and fewer students, or only those with the greatest need, be reached via crisis intervention, intermediate level services (group counseling), or intensive services (individual counseling). Providing dedicated counselor time to enable all schools to make progress in this area continues to be a recommendation.

In addition to the specific findings derived from this evaluation study, feedback from counselors who participated in the evaluation as well as from other AISD counseling staff and educators suggested that the following general, best practice considerations also are very important:

- Move toward school-wide enforcement of discipline and empowerment of teachers to deal with discipline issues, and away from reliance on referrals to counselors;
- Sustain long-term desired behaviors in students and consistency between what teachers and counselors communicate to and practice with students by equipping teachers with the necessary counseling-related knowledge and skills to reinforce guidance lessons in their own classrooms; and
- Further develop the *Live This!* curriculum. For example, explore and adopt more targeted tools for teaching each curriculum strand, better link curriculum objectives and student competencies, and align the Guidance and Counseling curriculum with the full academic curriculum.

AISD has begun making strides with respect to certain best practices listed above. In particular, a districtwide character education curriculum is in the process of being developed, and Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is being implemented at 16 AISD schools starting in 2004-2005. PBS involves creating and maintaining a positive school climate and disciplinary strategies that are school wide and proactive. It stresses integrated, team-based approaches to prevent, reduce, and replace difficult behavior, and to develop, maintain, and strengthen socially desirable behaviors. The emphases of PBS to be preventative and proactive in supporting appropriate behavior on a school wide basis appear similar to the objectives of the *Getting Ahead of the Need: Comprehensive Counseling for Elementary Schools* grant.

Although specific elements of the present grant will continue to be reinforced at certain AISD schools through PBS, PBS is only one avenue for sustaining the present grant's philosophy and is not a means for carrying on the effort or activities associated with the grant. One of the recommendations to emerge from this evaluation is that, if funding is available, the district should consider supporting the hiring of additional counselors. However, if funding is not available, it is recommended that more ways be explored to help campuses "offload" some tasks from counselors so that they can be

allowed more dedicated counseling time. Perhaps administrative tasks could be “offloaded” from counselors to lower-paid, administrative staff, thus allowing the counselors to focus on providing direct, preventative, guidance services, reaching the most students via this channel, and the district can continue to advance towards the goal of reaching fewer students via crisis intervention or more intensive services. Effective guidance services, in turn, can bring about positive changes in student behavior, as shown in this evaluation, which is essential for creating a school environment that is safe and fosters learning.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
SCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN GRANT

Participated in Grant as a Target School	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Allan Elementary	√	√	√
Allison Elementary	√	√	√
Blackshear Elementary	√	√	√
Campbell Elementary	√	√	√
Metz Elementary	√	√	√
Ortega Elementary	√	√	√
Rodriguez Elementary	√	√	√
Sanchez Elementary	√	√	√
Sims Elementary	√	√	√
Winn Elementary	√	√	√
*Oak Springs Elementary		√	√
*Govalle Elementary		√	√
*Zavala Elementary		√	√
*Becker Elementary		√	√
*Wooten Elementary	√		
*St. Elmo Elementary	√		
Participated in Grant as a Comparison School	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Dawson Elementary	√	√	√
Hart Elementary	√	√	√
Joslin Elementary	√	√	√
Reilly Elementary	√	√	√
*Wooten Elementary		√	■
*Becker Elementary	√		

*These schools did not participate as target schools all 3 years, or as comparison schools all 3 years, and were, therefore, not included in the longitudinal data set.

■ One comparison school dropped out of the study; data were not collected there because there was only a half-time counselor position allocated to the school, intensifying the need to devote the limited counselor time to the provision of services for students.

**APPENDIX B:
COUNSELOR TIME AND TASK ANALYSIS LOGS**

AISD Guidance & Counseling Daily Time and Task Analysis Log

Counselor Name _____ School Name _____ Date _____

Time	Activity	Guidance Curriculum			Responsive Services		Individual Planning	System Support	Non-Guidance Activities	# of parents involved
		RB	CR	Other	Group	Individual				
7:30-8:00										
8:00-8:30										
8:30-9:00										
9:00-9:30										
9:30-10:00										
10:00-10:30										
10:30-11:00										
11:00-11:30										
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1:00-1:30										
1:30-2:00										
2:00-2:30										
2:30-3:00										
3:00-3:30										
3:30-4:00										
4:00-4:30										
4:30-5:00										
5:00-5:30										
Daily TOTAL:										

**APPENDIX C:
2004 LIVE THIS! STUDENT COMPETENCY FORM**

Student Name: _____ Student ID #: _____ Grade: _____

Date: _____ School: _____ Teacher Name: _____

Instructions: Please indicate the response that best describes this student's abilities. Do your best to be as objective as possible. Some of the earlier skills may be necessary before a student will be able to master those further down the list in each area. It is NOT expected that children of all ages should be competent at all of these skills. Please use the following criteria:

Not at All: This student does not demonstrate this skill.

Occasionally: This student can sometimes perform this skill.

Most of the Time: This student performs this skill most, but not all, of the time.

Consistently: This student consistently performs this skill without prompting.

N/A: I have not had any opportunity to observe this skill in this student.

	Not at All	Occasionally	Most of the Time	Consistently	N/A
Responsible Behavior/Personal Responsibility					
1. Demonstrates age-appropriate understanding of rules:	1	2	3	4	N/A
1a. Can identify the rules he or she follows at school	1	2	3	4	N/A
1b. Can describe the necessity of having school rules	1	2	3	4	N/A
1c. Can relate the impact of following rules to group effectiveness	1	2	3	4	N/A
1d. Can relate the impact of following rules to personal success	1	2	3	4	N/A
1e. Can use knowledge of school rules and expectations when faced with choices that could interfere with learning	1	2	3	4	N/A
1f. Can evaluate rules in the school	1	2	3	4	N/A
2. Demonstrates age-appropriate personal responsibility:					
2a. Can describe ways he or she takes care of him/herself	1	2	3	4	N/A
2b. Can describe the responsibilities he or she has at school	1	2	3	4	N/A
2c. Can describe necessary daily activities carried out by him/herself	1	2	3	4	N/A
2d. Can describe necessary daily activities carried out by others	1	2	3	4	N/A
2e. Can recognize that people have varying roles	1	2	3	4	N/A
2f. Can describe his/her own roles	1	2	3	4	N/A
2g. Knows his/her responsibilities	1	2	3	4	N/A
2h. Can be trusted to do his/her responsibilities	1	2	3	4	N/A

	Not at All	Occasionally	Most of the Time	Consistently	N/A
3. Demonstrates age-appropriate understanding of consequences for behavior:					
3a. Can state positive consequences of behavior	1	2	3	4	N/A
3b. Can state negative consequences of behavior	1	2	3	4	N/A
3c. Can predict consequences for various behavior choices	1	2	3	4	N/A
3d. Can evaluate the effect of his/her responsibilities on him/herself	1	2	3	4	N/A
3e. Can evaluate the effect of his/her responsibilities on others	1	2	3	4	N/A
4. Demonstrates age-appropriate self-awareness:					
4a. Can describe situations where he or she has no control, some control, or almost total control over him/herself	1	2	3	4	N/A
4b. Can use behavior that demonstrates respect for the feelings of others	1	2	3	4	N/A
4c. Can use behavior that demonstrates respect for the property of others	1	2	3	4	N/A
4d. Can use behavior that demonstrates respect for the interests of others	1	2	3	4	N/A
4e. Can demonstrate effective self-control	1	2	3	4	N/A
4f. Can analyze how growing up requires more self control	1	2	3	4	N/A

Additional comments regarding this student's Responsible Behavior/Personal Responsibility:

	Not at All	Occasionally	Most of the Time	Consistently	N/A
Conflict Resolution					
5. Demonstrates age-appropriate respect for others:					
5a. Interacts with others in ways that show caring for them	1	2	3	4	N/A
5b. Interacts with others in ways that show respect for them	1	2	3	4	N/A
5c. Can give compliments	1	2	3	4	N/A
5d. Can receive compliments	1	2	3	4	N/A
5e. Can encourage others	1	2	3	4	N/A
5f. Can predict how his/her behavior affects relationships	1	2	3	4	N/A
5g. Is aware of issues involved with trust	1	2	3	4	N/A
5h. Is aware of issues involved with neutrality	1	2	3	4	N/A
5i. Is aware of issues involved with confidentiality	1	2	3	4	N/A
6. Demonstrates age-appropriate ability to identify conflicts:					
6a. Can describe the elements of a conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
6b. Can identify feelings associated with conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
6c. Can give reasons for conflicts	1	2	3	4	N/A
6d. Can identify behaviors that make a conflict escalate	1	2	3	4	N/A
6e. Can identify behaviors that make a conflict de-escalate	1	2	3	4	N/A
6f. Can identify “win-win” results of conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
6g. Can identify “win-lose” results of conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
6h. Can identify “lose-lose” results of conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
6i. Can identify different points of view	1	2	3	4	N/A
7. Demonstrates age-appropriate ability to resolve conflicts:					
7a. Can listen while another student describes a conflict	1	2	3	4	N/A
7b. Can brainstorm possible solutions for conflicts	1	2	3	4	N/A
7c. Can evaluate possible solutions for conflicts	1	2	3	4	N/A
7d. Can demonstrate active listening skills	1	2	3	4	N/A
7e. Can distinguish when to ask for help in resolving conflicts	1	2	3	4	N/A

Additional comments regarding this student’s Conflict Resolution competencies:

**APPENDIX D:
2004 ELEMENTARY GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY**

Instructions: The information you provide on this survey is anonymous and will be used to assess campus needs and make guidance program improvements. Please answer the questions in reference to the 2003-2004 school year, i.e., beginning August 2003. Thank you very much for your valuable time and input.

Name of school you are at:

1. How many students (if any) have you referred to a school counselor for individual counseling? _____

2. How many students (if any) have you referred to a school counselor for small group participation? _____

3. How many classroom guidance lessons (if any) have been conducted by a school counselor with your whole class as a group this year?
 - _____ a. 0 lessons
 - _____ b. 1-5
 - _____ c. 6-10
 - _____ d. 11-15
 - _____ e. 16-20
 - _____ f. 21-25
 - _____ g. 26-30
 - _____ h. 31-35
 - _____ i. 36-40
 - _____ j. 40+ lessons

4. How many guidance lessons conducted with your class did you observe? _____

5. To what extent did the guidance lessons presented to your class contribute to a safe school environment?
 - _____ a. Great extent
 - _____ b. Moderate extent
 - _____ c. Small extent
 - _____ d. Not at all

6. Overall, describe the changes you observed in most of the students' behaviors following the guidance lessons. (Check the answer that fits best.)
- a. I noticed lasting positive changes in student behavior.
 - b. I noticed temporary positive changes in student behavior.
 - c. I noticed negative changes in student behavior.
 - d. None; student behavior did not change.
7. How often have you reinforced, reinstated, or repeated in your class, the concepts that the counselor presented during guidance lessons?
- a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Never referred to guidance lessons presented by counselor
8. How many times in an average week do you experience a disruption in your classroom that is serious enough to interrupt your lesson and/or disrupt the learning of students that are not directly involved in the disruption?
- a. Less than once a week
 - b. 1-3 times a week
 - c. 4-6 times a week
 - d. 7-9 times a week
 - e. 10 or more times a week
9. How many times this year have you sent a student to the principal or assistant principal's office for discipline issues? (Please provide your best estimate if you do not know the exact number.) _____
10. Did you participate in a Bully Proofing training conducted by Safe Place for your school during the 2003-2004 school year?
- a. Yes
 - b. No, my school/I did not participate in such a training
11. The Bully Proofing training conducted by Safe Place in which I participated was useful.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. I don't know

12. To what extent have you used the information from the Bully Proofing training by Safe Place in your classroom?
- _____ a. Not at all
 - _____ b. Small extent
 - _____ c. Moderate extent
 - _____ d. Great extent
 - _____ e. I don't know
13. What did you like best or find most useful in the Bully Proofing training conducted by Safe Place for your school?
14. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions about the effectiveness of the Bully Proofing training conducted by Safe Place for your school or its implementation in your school/classroom?
15. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions about the effectiveness of the Guidance and Counseling Program at your school?

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey! We value your input.

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Austin Independent School District

Office of Accountability

Maria Whitsett, Ph.D.

Department of Program Evaluation

Holly Williams, Ph.D.

Authors

Behroze Irani, Ph.D.

Cinda L. Christian, Ph.D.



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