

# TITLE IV SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES, 2004-2005

PUTTING PREVENTION PROGRAMS  
INTO THE



Austin Independent School District  
Department of Program Evaluation

February 2006



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Austin Independent School District (AISD) has received federal funding through the Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant since the 1987-1988 school year. The purpose of the SDFSC grant is to supplement state and local educational organizations' drug abuse and violence prevention efforts. During the 2004-2005 school year, AISD received a total Title IV grant of \$477,413 that was used to support substance use and violence prevention efforts at each level of the AISD Student Intervention Model.

The Student Intervention Model is designed to provide effective interventions for academic, attendance, and behavior concerns with minimal disruption to the educational process. The behavioral component of the Student Intervention Model draws heavily upon the philosophy of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and classifies interventions as universal, targeted, and intensive. Universal interventions are school-wide preventive strategies expected to be effective with about 85% of the student body. Targeted strategies are early intervention measures that are designed to meet the needs of students who do not respond to universal strategies (approximately 15% of students). Intensive strategies are required for approximately 1-5% of students who do not respond to either universal or targeted strategies.

At the universal level, Title IV supported AISD campus-based programs, private school activities, and the district's school-wide PBS initiative. All AISD secondary campuses were allotted funds with which to conduct their own prevention activities based on their individual campus needs. Although a large portion of campus expenditures was devoted to one-time activities (26%), campus expenditures also funded a variety of ongoing activities such as the purchase of substance use or violence based prevention curricula or programs (22%), Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) activities (17%), information dissemination (10%), and rewards and incentive programs (8%). Private schools located within the AISD boundaries also were eligible to receive materials and services through AISD. These schools selected activities that were similar to those chosen by the AISD campuses. In addition to the campus-based programs, Title IV funded a contract with the Region XIII Education Service Center. Under this contract, Region XIII provided technical assistance and consultation to the district and individual campuses regarding the development and implementation of PBS strategies.

At the targeted level, Title IV supported the Reality Oriented Physical Experiential Session (ROPES) program, the PAL program, and counseling and behavioral support services. During the 2004-2005 academic year the ROPES program served 2,570 students, 265 staff, and 112 parents by providing experiential learning that focuses on building leadership skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and resistance to peer pressure. The PAL mentoring program operated at all 12 AISD high schools, 20 middle schools, and 26

elementary schools. Title IV also funded counseling and behavior support services for middle school campuses and two special campuses.

At the intensive level, Title IV supported the INVEST (Involve Non-violent Values using Education, Self-control techniques, and Trust) and Positive Families programs, two programs involving parent participation that serve students who are removed from their home campuses to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). Students who are removed for a first-time drug or alcohol offense have the option of participating in INVEST and students who are removed for a first time aggression-related offense have the option of participating in Positive Families. During the 2004-2005 academic year, 376 students participated in INVEST and 142 students participated in Positive Families.

In accordance with the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Principles of Effectiveness, the AISD Department of Program Evaluation conducts an annual substance use and violence prevention needs assessment. For the 2004-2005 academic year, the needs assessment focused on describing trends in key indicators of substance use and violence and identifying patterns in these indicators among AISD schools. Below are some key findings from the needs assessment. Following these findings are recommendations that were developed by identifying gaps in the availability of Title IV-funded services to address the concerns that were identified through the needs assessment.

#### **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

1. **Tobacco Use.** The prevalence of tobacco use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students has decreased over the past 10 years, a finding that is consistent with state and national trends. This decreasing trend was not found for AISD 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Since 2000, the prevalence of tobacco use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students has been the same as or lower than that for the State sample.
2. **Alcohol Use.** The prevalence of alcohol use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students has decreased over the past 10 years, a finding that is consistent with state and national trends. The prevalence of alcohol use for each of these grade levels has tended to be at or above the prevalence of alcohol use for the State since 1996.
3. **Marijuana Use.** The prevalence of marijuana use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup> graders has decreased over the past 10 years. However, the prevalence of use has not decreased among AISD high school students. In 2005, one in five AISD high school students reported using marijuana in the past 30 days. The prevalence of marijuana use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students has been consistently higher than that of the State samples for these grade levels since 1996.

4. **Bullying.** Over half (58%) of AISD 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students reported that they experienced bullying at least one time during the 2004-2005 academic year. By comparison, only 14% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 13% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders in a national sample reported being bullied at school during the previous six months (DeVoe, Peter, Kaufman, Miller, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2004). Findings from a correlational analysis suggest that bullying and the corresponding problem of victimization are less likely to occur at the AISD schools that enforce rules against verbal and physical assaults and that create positive academic and behavioral environments for learning.
5. **Gang Activity.** Compared to other AISD secondary schools, six middle schools and four high schools stand out as having high levels of gang activity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Universal Level

1. **Provide technical assistance to support schools in identifying and addressing their substance use and violence prevention needs.** Schools must work to identify their most pressing substance use and violence problems and to select appropriate evidence-based interventions. One option for increasing schools' capacity in these areas is to provide technical assistance to the school-based PBS teams, as these responsibilities fit well with the role of these teams. In conjunction with these technical assistance efforts, AISD must work to restrict campus-based Title IV expenditures to evidence-based prevention practices. For example, AISD campuses could be offered Title IV funds with the stipulation that the funds may be used only to support their PBS program or to implement and sustain a prevention program that has been designated as effective by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) or another national organization, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
2. **Continue to work with middle schools to implement a PBS model that helps to improve school climate.** Without school-wide efforts to improve school climate, the disciplinary system will be burdened increasingly with the problems of verbal and physical aggression. It is encouraging that two of the nine schools that implemented PBS during the 2004-2005 academic year showed statistically significant decreases in reports of bullying from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005. AISD should work to ensure that middle schools receive the support that they need to fully implement PBS strategies.

### Targeted Level

3. **Support additional ROPES staff so that the program can be restored to its original format and so that it may serve more students.** ROPES staff are unable to serve all of

the groups that request services, and yet the district's ROPES course facilities are underutilized. Options for increasing the number of ROPES facilitators should be explored so that the program may be expanded to serve more students and to provide more intensive services.

4. **Ensure that substance use screening and referral services are available to high school students.** Substance use problem identification and referral services are essential to ensure that intervention occurs as early as possible. Title IV does not fund counseling services for high school students at non-alternative campuses. Although every high school campus employs high school counselors, other demands on these staff limit their availability to provide substance use screening and referral services. A resource assessment should be conducted to determine how high school students are currently accessing substance abuse services and where additional resources are needed.
5. **Support programs that are designed to reduce gang activity among targeted student populations.** Six middle schools and four high schools stood out as having high levels of student-reported gang activity. Given that the level of gang activity on an AISD campus is strongly negatively correlated with how safe students feel on the campus, it is essential for AISD to work to reduce the level of gang activity on these campuses.

#### **Intensive Level**

6. **Enhance and expand the INVEST program model.** First-time substance use offenders who participated in the INVEST program demonstrated better outcomes than first-time offenders who did not participate in the program with regard to school attendance, grade-level promotion, and academic credit earned, even when controlling for some important differences between the groups. The program outcomes are encouraging and suggest that it would be worthwhile to enhance and to expand the program model, using the information provided by the 2004-2005 formative evaluation.
7. **Develop a system for following up with students who have returned to their home campuses after a stay at the ALC.** A coordinated service delivery network is a hallmark of best practices in substance use and violence prevention. AISD should play a key role in facilitating service coordination by ensuring that ALC staff contact staff at a student's home campus after the student has completed his or her stay at the ALC, with the purpose of ensuring that any recommendations for services are being carried out. Implementing a system for following up with INVEST and Positive Families participants would provide a useful starting place for developing a more global system to follow up with all students who are removed to the ALC, and it would expand the services provided through the INVEST and Positive Families programs.

## PREFACE

Staff in the Department of Program Evaluation assess the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program in compliance with federal Title IV SDFSC legislation, state law, and district mandates. Some of the products of the evaluation include a standardized report to the Texas Education Association (TEA), the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) addendum, and this narrative report, which each help to fulfill some of the requirements of the Principles of Effectiveness (see below) mandated by the federal grant.

### SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVENESS

**Principle 1:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall base their programs on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems in the schools and communities served.

**Principle 2:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall establish measurable goals and objectives aimed at ensuring that the elementary and secondary schools and the communities to be served by the programs have safe, orderly, and drug-free learning environments, and design their programs to meet those goals and objectives.

**Principle 3:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall design and implement their programs for youth based on scientific research or evaluation that provides evidence that the programs used prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior among youth.

**Principle 4:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall base their programs on the prevalence of risk factors, including high or increasing rates of reported cases of child abuse and domestic violence; protective factors, buffers, assets, or other variables in schools and communities in the State identified through scientifically based research.

**Principle 5:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall include meaningful and ongoing consultation with and input from parents in the development of applications and administration of programs or activities.

**Principle 6:** Recipients of SDFSC funds shall evaluate their programs periodically to assess progress toward achieving goals and objectives, and use evaluation results to refine, improve, and strengthen programs, and to refine goals and objectives as appropriate.

*Source: No Child Left Behind Act (Sec. 4115.a), U.S. Department of Education, 2002*



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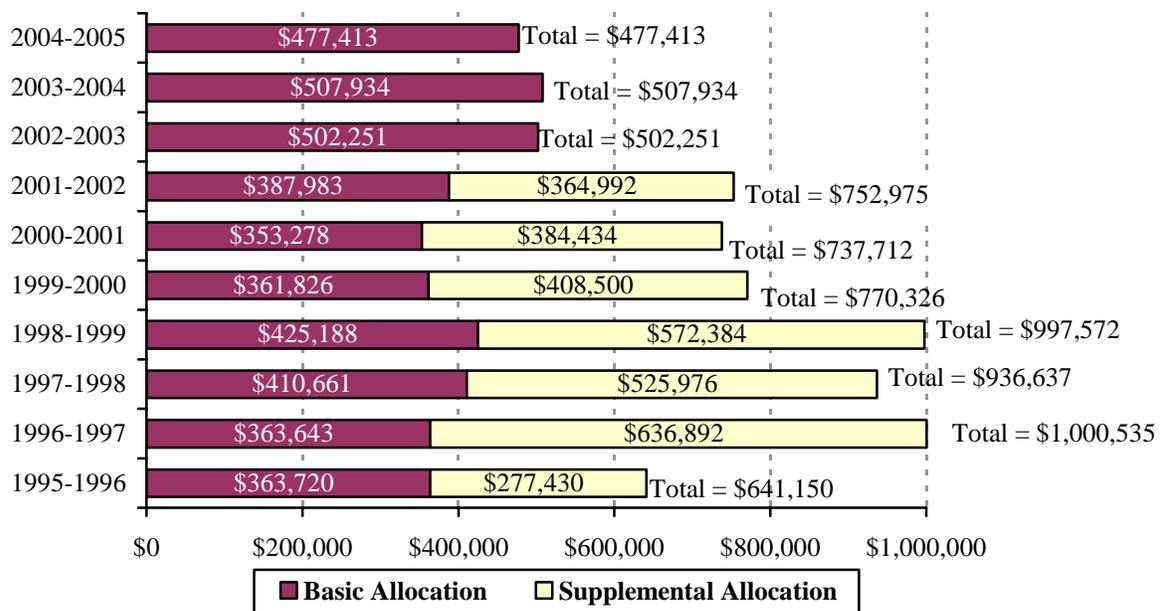
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## PART I: INTRODUCTION

Austin Independent School District (AISD) has received federal funding through the Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant since the 1987-1988 school year. The purpose of the SDFSC grant is to supplement state and local educational organizations' efforts to prevent substance use and violence. Grant funds are funneled from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), through state education agencies (e.g., the Texas Education Agency), to school districts and other entities at the local level. From the 1995-1996 funding year until 2001-2002, supplemental funds were provided to districts that showed "greatest need." However, the funding formula was changed in 2002-2003, eliminating supplemental grant allocations to districts. This change has resulted in an overall reduction in Title IV funding in AISD (Figure 1).

Figure 1: AISD Title IV SDFSC Grant Allocations, 1995-1996 through 2004-2005



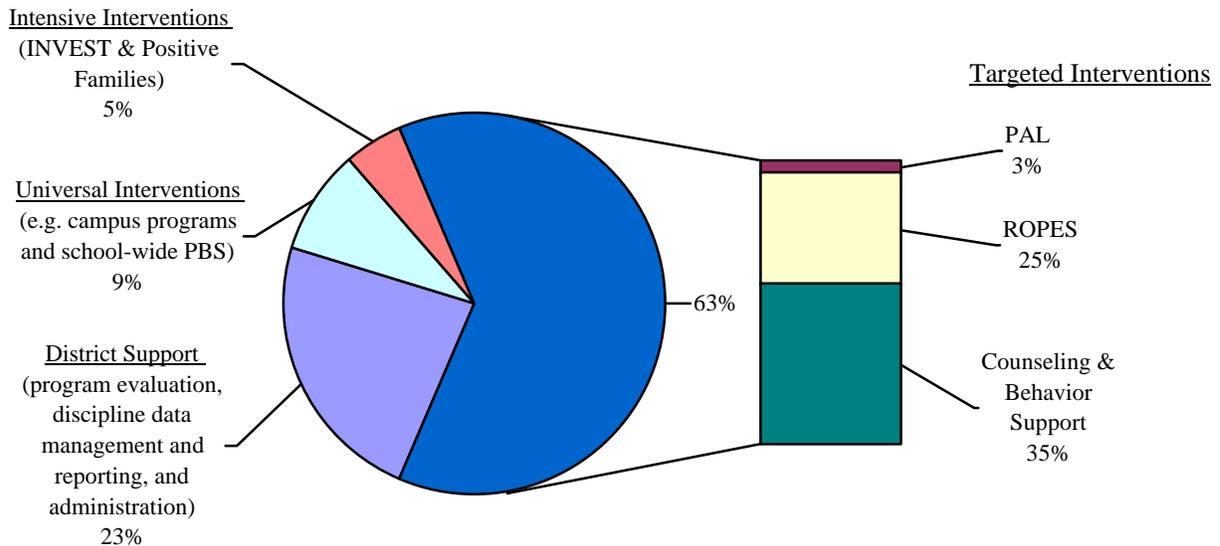
Source: 2004-2005 Title IV Notice of Grant Award, Texas Education Agency.

Note. Allocation for each year includes only monies awarded during that funding cycle. Funds rolled forward from previous funding cycles are not included.

Title IV funding is used to support programs and services that fall under the direction of the AISD Office of Educational Support Services. Since 2003-2004 the Office of Educational Support Services has been working to implement a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model across campuses. PBS now serves as the philosophy for guiding behavioral interventions throughout the district. PBS theory provided the framework for developing the

behavioral component of the district's Student Intervention Model, which outlines three levels of interventions to support positive behaviors (see Appendix A). Figure 2 shows the distribution of Title IV expenditures by level of intervention.

Figure 2: 2004-2005 Total AISD Title IV Expenditures by Level of Intervention



Source: Austin ISD Title IV program and accounting records, as of July 2005, Department of Program Evaluation.

Note. Some counseling and behavior support services operate as intensive interventions.

During the 2004-2005 school year, AISD received a total Title IV grant of \$477,413. As shown in Figure 2, the largest portion of the expenditures (63%) supported targeted interventions, including Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL), Reality Oriented Physical Experiential Sessions (ROPES), and counseling and behavior support services. Title IV funding supported two universal strategies, the campus-based programs (6% of expenditures) and consultation and support services for schools that worked to implement a school-wide PBS model on their campuses (3% of expenditures), and also supported two intensive strategies, the Involve Non-violent Values using Education, Self-control techniques, and Trust (INVEST) and Positive Families programs (a total of 5% of expenditures). In addition to these interventions, 23% of Title IV expenditures funded district support activities, such as program evaluation and discipline data management and reporting.

Although Title IV funding provides a core set of programs and services targeting substance use and violence prevention, additional federal and local grants, as well as in-kind services provided by community agencies, are essential to substance use and violence prevention efforts within AISD. Agencies including (but not limited to) Lifeworks, YMCA,

American Cancer Society, Communities in Schools, and SafePlace provide services such as curricula, counseling, mentoring, and structured group activities to students at schools across the district.

Because the Student Intervention Model serves as the core guidance for understanding and developing behavioral interventions across the district, it is essential to understand how Title IV-funded activities fall within the model and where gaps in services may exist at each level of the model. Therefore, this report will discuss each Title IV-funded program within the context of the Student Intervention Model framework (Part II) and will identify areas of need with specific attention to the most appropriate level of intervention for addressing these needs (Part III).



## **PART II: FITTING TITLE IV-FUNDED PROGRAMS INTO THE AISD POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT FRAMEWORK**

To address inappropriate behaviors effectively and to support positive behaviors, the district has organized student attendance and behavior efforts to align with the district's plan for struggling learners. The Student Intervention Model is designed to provide effective interventions for academic, attendance, and behavior concerns with minimal disruption to the educational process. As discussed in Part I, the behavioral component of the Student Intervention Model draws heavily upon the PBS philosophy, as developed at the University of Oregon (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 1999). The goal of PBS is to improve school climate through the development of systems and strategies that address individual student needs on every campus. In the Student Intervention Model, these strategies are classified into the following categories:

1. Universal Strategies are school-wide preventive strategies that are intended for all students and are expected to be effective with about 85% of the student body. These strategies include providing strategic adult supervision, clearly stating behavior expectations, and actively teaching and reinforcing expected behaviors.
2. Targeted strategies are early intervention measures that are designed to meet the needs of students who do not respond to universal strategies (approximately 15% of students). These strategies may include providing short-term problem solving, providing a mentor, developing an attendance or behavior contract, or implementing minor disciplinary interventions.
3. Intensive intervention strategies are required for the 1-5% of students who do not respond to either universal or targeted strategies. These strategies may include developing a behavior action plan, providing counseling, providing wrap-around services with community providers, or implementing major disciplinary interventions.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, Title IV funds were used to support substance use and violence prevention efforts at each level of the *Student Intervention Model*. The following sections outline the best practices in drug and violence prevention that are associated with each of these levels and provide descriptions of the Title IV-funded programs within each level.

### **UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES**

Universal strategies to prevent drug use and physical aggression include both curriculum-based prevention programs designed for implementation within a classroom or

after-school setting and discipline management efforts designed to improve the overall school climate. Curriculum-based programs have been shown to be most effective when they utilize highly structured activities that are based on a strong theoretical model, and when local initiatives are adapted from formalized external models (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2004a). Best practices designed to foster a positive school environment include:

- establishing school policies that reflect a commitment to preventing drug use and violence (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2001),
- establishing norms and expectations for behavior (DOJ, 2004b),
- providing appropriate sanctions and rewards for student behavior (DOJ, 2004a),
- improving personnel training (DOJ, 2004a), and
- improving classroom management (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2003).

During the 2004-2005 academic year, Title IV funded both universal-level curriculum-based programs and efforts to improve overall school climate. Curriculum-based programs were a component of both the AISD campus-based programs and the private school activities, and included efforts to improve overall school climate (for example, AISD's school-wide PBS initiative). Although some of the campus-based activities may fall into the category of targeted interventions (for example, ROPES or PALs activities), the vast majority of these activities are conceptualized best as universal in their approach.

#### **AISD CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS**

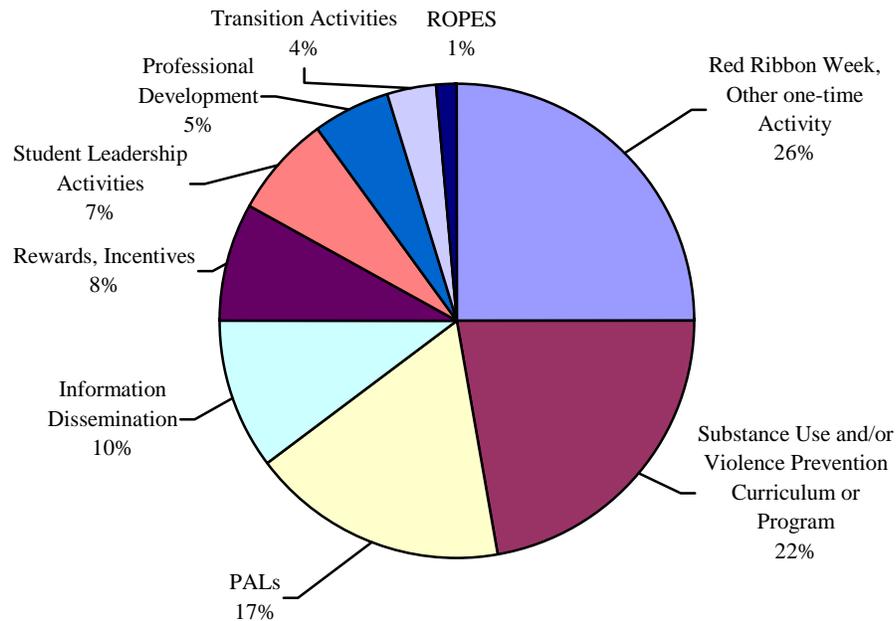
During the 2004-2005 academic year AISD middle school and high school campuses were eligible to receive a Title IV funding allocation of one dollar per student enrolled. At the beginning of the academic year, campuses received written guidance regarding how to use the funding to support research-based programs. Campuses were encouraged to use the funding to support existing prevention efforts at their schools (such as PBS) or to purchase a prevention curriculum that has been designated as effective by USDE or another national organization, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). They were discouraged from using the funding to support one-time assembly style activities, because research has shown that prevention programs must be intensive and on-going if they are to be effective (NIDA, 2003).

Twenty-two of the 28 AISD middle and high school campuses that were eligible to receive the funding completed a Title IV Plan outlining how they intended to use the funds. The grant manager and budget specialist approved all of the plans that were submitted, but only 16 of the 22 campuses ultimately used the funding to carry out Title IV activities. The

expenditures at these schools averaged \$810.82 for the ten participating middle schools and \$1,487.83 for the six participating high schools. Across the participating AISD campuses, Title IV expenditures totaled \$17,035.17 (3% of the total Title IV expenditures).

Figure 3 displays the percentage of campus-based expenditures by program category. Twenty-two percent of the expenditures went towards substance use and/or violence prevention programs and curriculums. This category of expenditures represents the type of activities that schools were encouraged to select, such as implementing Second Step, purchasing Foundations materials for PBS, or implementing Life Skills training<sup>1</sup>. An additional 52% of the expenses funded an assortment of ongoing or intensive activities shown in Figure 3, including PALs, ROPES, and information dissemination (the purchase of videos and pamphlets). The remaining 26% of campus-based Title IV expenditures supported Red Ribbon Week and other one-time activities, such as guest speakers and supervised overnight events (lock-ins). This final category of expenses represents the types of activities that campuses were discouraged from selecting.

Figure 3: 2004-2005 Program Expenditures at AISD Middle and High Schools



Source: Austin ISD SDFSC program records, as of July 2005, Department of Program Evaluation.

Note. AISD Campus expenditures totaled \$17,035.17.

<sup>1</sup> The Second Step and Life Skills programs are classroom-based social skills programs that have received the Exemplary Program designation by USDE. The Foundations program is a set of materials that guides school staff through the implementation of school-wide PBS strategies.

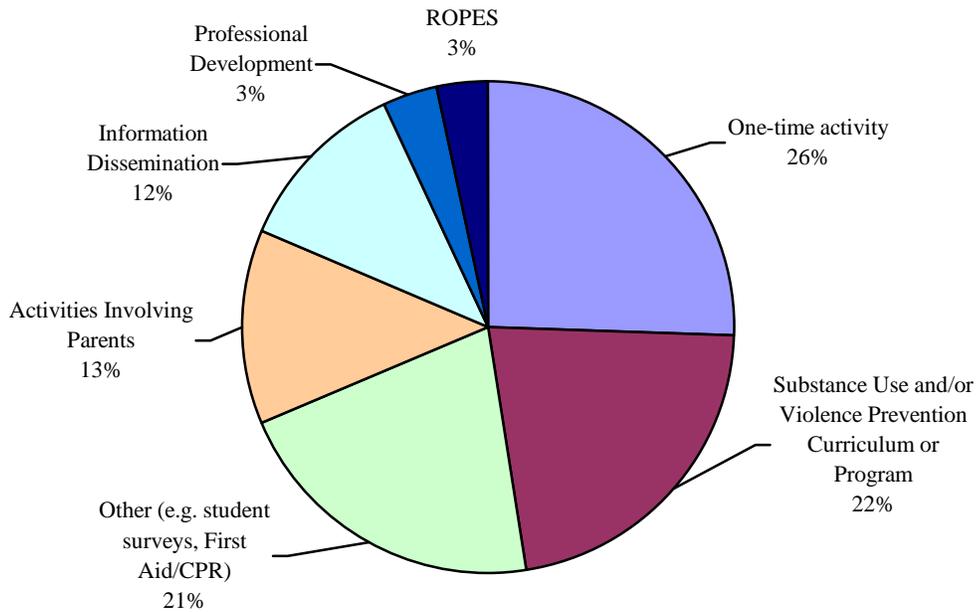
As discussed in previous Title IV reports (e.g., Christian & McCracken, 2004), dividing limited funds across campuses does not appear to be the most effective means of using Title IV funds in AISD. When used most appropriately, these funds have served to supplement and to support ongoing substance use and prevention efforts at campuses. However, despite guidance to the contrary, some schools have continued to use the funding for one-time events that do not appear to be a part of broader ongoing prevention efforts at the school. This has most likely occurred when it was difficult for school leadership to identify a broader prevention effort that could be supplemented with Title IV funds. For the campus-based programs to be effective, the district must increase control over campus-level Title IV expenditures and provide additional technical assistance to help campus staff select effective prevention activities. For example, campus staff could be required to limit their Title IV expenditures to the support of their PBS initiative or to implement and sustain a substance use or violence prevention program that has been designated as effective by USDE or another national organization, such as SAMHSA.

#### **PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

Private schools located within the AISD boundaries were eligible to receive materials and services through AISD using a funding allocation of one dollar per student enrolled. The program was administered in a manner similar to the program for AISD campuses. AISD staff distributed guidance and planning documents to private schools and the grant manager and budget specialist reviewed the plans before purchasing the requested materials and services.

Twenty-four private schools participated in the Title IV program. The expenditures at these schools ranged from \$291.43 to \$1,373.42 and totaled \$11,659.46 across all of the participating private schools (2% of the Title IV expenditures). As shown in Figure 4, private schools chose to use Title IV funding in a manner similar to the AISD campuses. The primary difference in the distribution of expenditures for private schools was the substantial percentage of expenditures devoted to activities involving parents (13%), such as meetings to inform parents about character education and bullying prevention activities.

Figure 4: 2004-2005 Private School Program Expenditures



Source: SDFSC Program Records.

Note. Private school expenditures totaled \$11,659.46.

As federally mandated, Title IV funding will continue to be allocated for private school programs in the 2005-2006 academic year. Therefore, program administrators should continue efforts to direct private school activities away from the one-time activities that accounted for 26% of the 2004-2005 expenditures. One option for doing so would be for the grant manager and/or budget specialist to provide further guidance to schools when they submit their Title IV Planning Forms. A more rigorous review of these plans also would help to ensure that Title IV funding is used in accordance with the USDE Principles of Effectiveness.

### **SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT**

PBS is a school-wide systems approach that promotes pro-social behaviors and a culture of competence, reduces chronic disruptive and destructive behaviors among students, and meets the needs of children with significant behavior challenges. The program is designed to prevent and to intervene in problem behavior, and it requires school-wide responsibility for teaching positive student behaviors. School staff are expected to develop and to implement regular and consistent methods for both teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors, as well as for dealing with misbehaviors. An essential component of PBS is the establishment of a school-based Behavior Support Team that includes representatives from all role functions within a school, including administrators, teachers, resource officers, and support staff. This

team is responsible for using data to develop, implement, and evaluate PBS activities within their school.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the PBS initiative was supported by Title IV, Title V, and local funds. The majority of the Title IV funding for PBS (\$14,000) was used to pay for a portion of the total amount of a contract with Region XIII, under which the education service center provided consultation and support for the implementation of PBS on AISD campuses. The remainder of the funding (\$375.90) was used to purchase supplies to support PBS-related activities.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, 16 schools received district support for the implementation of PBS on their campuses. PBS Support Specialists provided ongoing consultation and training to staff at these campuses to help them (a) organize and maintain behavior support teams, (b) organize school-wide student behavior support systems, and (c) improve classroom management. The PBS Support Specialists also worked with AISD Program Evaluation staff to monitor key indicators of the campuses' progress towards implementing PBS. In addition to providing training and guidance to the Support Specialists, Region XIII staff assisted in monitoring these process indicators. In the upcoming year, Title IV funding for PBS will not be used to support the contract with Region XIII. However, funding is currently allocated to support 50% of an FTE for a PBS Support Specialist.

### **TARGETED STRATEGIES**

Targeted strategies aimed at preventing drug use and violence include both curriculum-based programs that target students who are at-risk and interventions designed for early problem identification and referral (SAMHSA, 2001). The best practices for curriculum-based programs in this area are similar to those discussed with regard to universal strategies. In fact, universal programs may be an effective means of reaching students at higher risk for drug use and violence while avoiding the problems of stigmatization and negative peer influence that are associated with bringing together groups of at-risk youth (SAMHSA, 2001).

Additional best practices for programs designed specifically for youth considered to be at-risk include: (a) utilizing a life-skills focus to improve academic, social, and personal skills (SAMHSA, 2002); (b) incorporating relationship-building strategies (SAMHSA, 2002); (c) providing positive alternative environments to youth who are considered to be at-risk (SAMHSA, 2001); and (c) providing problem identification and referral services to ensure that that intervention occurs as early as possible (Loeber, Farrington, & Petechuk, May 2003).

Both the Reality Oriented Physical Experiential Session (ROPES) and the Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) programs are targeted strategies that incorporate

relationship-building to prevent substance use and physical aggression among youth considered to be at-risk. Although these programs sometimes include participants from the broader student population, they primarily act as targeted strategies. In addition to these programs, the counseling services and behavioral support specialist positions, which were funded in 2004-2005 through Title IV, are targeted strategies that provide a system for problem identification and early intervention.

## **ROPES**

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the ROPES program administrators worked to align the program goals with the district's PBS framework by reinforcing the goals of PBS and targeting activities to groups identified through PBS. The ROPES program acts as a resource to schools and school-based organizations by providing experiential learning that focuses on building leadership skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, and resistance to peer pressure. In many cases, schools and school-based organizations seek out the ROPES program for groups of students who present behavioral challenges or for groups who assume a leadership role. ROPES staff begin scheduling groups during the first week of August each year and usually are booked fully for the year by the second week of September.

During the 2004-2005 academic year 2,570 students, 265 staff, and 112 parents participated in 112 ROPES workshops that were geared toward students. In addition, 371 staff participated in seven workshops designed for staff development. The student workshops served a variety of student groups, including 16 AISD school groups, 7 PAL/PALee programs, 6 private schools, 6 school-based programs such as Project HELP or SafePlace, and 6 support programs such as the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP).

The ROPES program manager estimates that an additional 15 to 20 groups who attempted to schedule a ROPES session were turned away because staff were unavailable to facilitate the groups. The staff to participant ratio for the Low ROPES course is 1 to 15, and the staff to participant ratio for the High ROPES course is 1 to 10. Each ROPES session is designed as a full-day activity. At the current staffing level (two full-time staff), the ROPES program can serve 20 to 30 participants per day. With 14 facilitators, and operating at full capacity, the district's ROPES courses could serve up to 170 participants per day.

The ROPES program was originally conceptualized as a five-phase series of workshops, with each phase designed to be developmentally and instructionally suitable for the students and staff being served. However, the program has been operating in a scaled-back format for the past several years. Previously, ROPES facilitators were able to visit campuses before and after students participated in the course to conduct a teacher facilitator training, to

introduce the program to students, and to link the ROPES experience with students' life experiences. Due to reductions in the number of dedicated ROPES staff, the campus visits have been eliminated. As a result, teachers have been responsible for introducing the program and tying the program into students' life experiences. The ROPES program manager believes that many teachers do not adequately address these components of the program. Some groups do return to the ROPES course to complete the more advanced activities, but the majority of groups come only once.

As discussed in previous reports (e.g. Christian & McCracken, 2004), without the campus visits, the current ROPES program is no longer the intensive effort at drug and violence prevention that it once was. As such, the program does not appear to be meeting its full potential. In addition, there is clearly greater demand for ROPES than the program can meet with its current staffing level. Additional staffing would allow the ROPES program to expand both the scope of the services that are provided and the number of groups that are served. One option for expansion is to develop a cadre of teacher-facilitators. For example, two teachers from Lanier High School were trained as facilitators during the 2004-2005 summer session, so that they will be able to facilitate Lanier groups during the 2005-2006 academic year. In exploring this option, it is essential to understand the costs and benefits associated with investing in training teachers. If teachers have limited availability to conduct ROPES sessions, then it may not be worthwhile to invest in two weeks of ROPES training for a teacher-facilitator cadre.

Another option for expansion would be to fund additional ROPES staffing by opening up the ROPES program to external groups for a market-rate fee. A brief online review found that for a full-day ROPES program, prices range from \$700 to \$1200 per group. To explore the feasibility of a revenue generating model for the ROPES program, an analysis should be conducted to determine how many external groups would be needed to fund additional ROPES staff, whether there is enough market demand to achieve this number of external groups, and whether additional staff time would be available to further expand the AISD ROPES program after providing the external services. Options such as the teacher-facilitator cadre or the revenue-generating model should be explored during 2005-2006 if the ROPES program is to achieve its full potential as a substance use and violence prevention program for the AISD community.

## **PAL**

During the 2004-2005 academic year, Title IV funded a district PAL coordinator at 20% of an FTE. The PAL program is a peer-assistance program that trains students to act as peer mentors (PALs) to younger students (PALees) at their own schools or at lower level

schools in their vertical team (e.g., a high school PAL may be mentoring a middle school PALee). High school PALs also receive course credit for participating in six weeks of classroom training. The PAL program seeks to address the following goals:

1. Provide individual and group-level peer support.
2. Prevent students from dropping out of school.
3. Promote personal responsibility and decision-making.
4. Improve behavior and school attendance.
5. Promote positive interpersonal behaviors.
6. Improve academic performance via tutoring and academic mentoring.
7. Prevent substance abuse.
8. Encourage involvement in community service projects both within the school and in the community.

All 12 AISD high schools, as well as 10 middle schools and 26 elementary schools, had a PAL program during the 2004-2005 academic year. Four hundred twenty-five elementary school PALs, 175 middle school PALs, and 325 high school PALs served 1,924 PALees at all levels. In addition to mentoring PALees, PAL students participated in a combined total of 35,239 hours of community service.

### **COUNSELING SERVICES**

For the 2004-2005 academic year, two campus-based drug prevention counselors and a program specialist in the Department of Guidance and Counseling were funded through Title IV. The two drug prevention counselors served the ALC and Garza Independence High School, which are considered special campuses in AISD. These campuses have higher concentrations of students who are experiencing substance abuse problems or who are considered to be at-risk for experiencing these problems. The program specialist in the Guidance and Counseling department works with school counselors district-wide.

The ALC is a campus for middle and high school students who have been removed from their regular campuses for discipline violations. The role of the drug prevention counselor at the ALC is multifaceted. In addition to serving as the district INVEST and Positive Families program coordinator, she is responsible for student intake, crisis intervention, meeting with students individually and in weekly groups regarding drug and alcohol issues, meeting with parents, transitioning students back to their home schools, making referrals for additional services or treatment, and working with community agencies (e.g., Phoenix House and SafePlace) to coordinate additional drug and violence prevention resources coming into the school.

Garza Independence High School provides an alternative high school setting with an open enrollment policy and flexible class scheduling. Students must apply to be enrolled at Garza. These students are usually at-risk for dropping out of school for reasons such as academic failure, credit deficiency, substance use, teen parenting, or personal or family problems. During the 2004-2005 academic year, the Garza substance use counselor supported prevention efforts by (a) managing the school's Title IV campus-based programs; (b) acting as a member of the campus IMPACT Team, which is charged with targeting referral services for students; (c) providing on-going trainings to the Garza staff in the use of Solution Focused Counseling, a model from the Brief Family Therapy Center of Milwaukee; (d) facilitating weekly support groups, including two substance use groups and one gay/lesbian support group, and (e) counseling students who were referred for suspicion of substance use at school. In addition to these roles, he was the primary counselor for academic and personal counseling issues for one-third of the Garza students.

The program specialist in Guidance and Counseling, 45% funded through the grant, worked closely with middle school counselors in 2004-2005 to implement the counseling curriculum and to develop plans for students in need of targeted or intensive services. As a part of this role, she was responsible for the orientation of new counselors and for staff development for experienced counselors. The program specialist also represented AISD on various community committees and worked to coordinate community agencies and schools to provide services for students in need of assistance. For example, she coordinated with community agencies to provide information and training for the middle school counselors in the areas of bully-proofing and sexual harassment, and she attended night court for students.

### **BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST**

One behavior specialist was funded half time by Title IV to provide supplemental support at middle school campuses. The behavior specialist helped to promote and to support PBS practices by consulting with teachers, teaching assistants, and principals regarding specific students who were demonstrating severe behavior difficulties. Specifically, the behavior specialist assisted in the development and modification of student behavior intervention plans, based on data collected by campus staff regarding specific behavior concerns. The behavior specialist attended IMPACT team meetings to lend support on priority cases and helped to ensure that all possible options were implemented at the campus level prior to considering a discretionary removal of a student to the ALC. When a student was sent to the ALC, the behavior specialist coordinated with ALC staff to learn what modifications, consequences, or reinforcements were successful so that similar structures could be utilized with the student when s/he returned to the home campus.

## **INTENSIVE STRATEGIES**

Best practices for interventions with students who require intensive strategies include providing access to coordinated service delivery networks that involve police, the judicial system, mental health agencies, and other social service agencies (Loeber et al., 2003). Within AISD, the ALC plays a vital role in connecting students who have been removed from their campuses to the services that they need. When middle and high school students have been removed from their home campuses due to discipline offenses and have been placed at the ALC, they may be assigned to specialized alternative education programs in addition to classroom and behavioral instruction. These specialized programs are aimed at increasing student protective factors in an effort to prevent future campus discipline referrals. Two such programs, INVEST and Positive Families, are funded through Title IV. It is important to note that although the counseling and behavioral support services funded through Title IV are considered targeted strategies, they sometimes act as intensive strategies.

Parental involvement, which is a keystone of both the INVEST and Positive Families programs, has also been identified as an important component of prevention programs at all three levels of intervention (SAMHSA, 2001). Researchers have identified the family as an important area of influence for students, which may serve either to place students at increased risk for substance use and violence or to buffer them from other risk factors (SAMHSA, 2002). Programs that include a family component should work to improve family bonding, to educate parents regarding drug use, and to improve parenting skills (DOJ, 2004a).

### **INVEST AND POSITIVE FAMILIES**

#### **Program Descriptions**

Due to the similarity of the INVEST and Positive Families programs, they will be described together in this section. Positive Families is a school-based curriculum program for middle and high school students. It was developed by AISD staff and first implemented in the district during the 1998-1999 school year. INVEST is similar to Positive Families with an additional emphasis on drug prevention. INVEST was first implemented in the spring of 2000 and is an adaptation of the previously used SUPER I curriculum, which was implemented in 1996-1997. The INVEST curriculum was revised extensively prior to the 2004-2005 academic year.

AISD policy requires that all students who are removed to the ALC for a first-time misdemeanor level drug or alcohol use or possession offense must be offered the opportunity to participate in INVEST, and that all students who are removed to the ALC for a first-time fighting or physical aggression offense must be offered the opportunity to participate in Positive Families. Either program also may be offered for other offenses at the discretion of the campus administration. The primary incentive for participation in Positive Families and INVEST is an abbreviated term of a two-week removal to the ALC, rather than the average removal of six weeks. Once a student and his or her parents (or other significant adult) successfully complete the voluntary four-session program, arrangements may be made for the student to return to the home school.

Title IV funds supporting INVEST and Positive Families primarily contribute to facilitator compensation for sessions occurring in the evening hours, program materials, and general program support (e.g., supplies, reproduction, snacks for parents and students). The programmatic goals for Positive Families and INVEST include (a) improvement in student communication skills with other individuals, especially family members; (b) improvement in anger management strategies; (c) acquisition of positive conflict resolution methods; (d) development of effective problem-solving skills; (e) promotion of family involvement in support services; and (f) elimination of short- and long-term substance use among targeted students (INVEST only).

### **Participant Information**

Three hundred seventy-six students participated in INVEST during the 2004-2005 academic year. As shown in Table 1, a higher percentage of males (66.2%) than females was served. The ethnic distribution was largely Hispanic (47.6%) or White (41.0%), and the grade level distribution was mostly composed of 8<sup>th</sup> (17.0%), 9<sup>th</sup> (28.5%), and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students (20.7%). Participants were sent to the ALC from 24 different middle and high schools, with the greatest percentages of participants referred from Austin High School (12.5%) and Crockett High School (10.1%). Based on the group of students for whom a program exit reason was available ( $n = 357$ ), 88.2% of students completed the program. Of the remaining students, who did not complete the program, 45.2% attended only the first session.

Table 1: Demographics for INVEST and Positive Families Participants

		<b>INVEST</b>	<b>Positive Families</b>
		<b>(N = 376)</b>	<b>(N = 142)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>	33.8%	31.0%
	<b>Male</b>	66.2%	69.0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	47.6%	54.2%
	<b>White, not Hispanic</b>	41.0%	18.3%
	<b>Black, not Hispanic</b>	10.6%	26.8%
	<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	0.5%	0.0%
	<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	0.3%	0.7%
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Sixth</b>	4.5%	9.2%
	<b>Seventh</b>	5.3%	9.2%
	<b>Eighth</b>	17.0%	23.2%
	<b>Ninth</b>	28.5%	23.2%
	<b>Tenth</b>	20.7%	19.7%
	<b>Eleventh</b>	13.3%	12.0%
	<b>Twelfth</b>	10.6%	3.5%

Source: AISD student records, as of July 2005, Department of Program Evaluation.

One hundred forty-two students participated in Positive Families. As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution included more males (69.0%) than females. The ethnic distribution was largely Hispanic (54.2%) or Black (26.8%), and the grade level distribution was mostly composed of 8<sup>th</sup> (23.2%), 9<sup>th</sup> (23.2%) and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students (19.7%). Participants were sent to the ALC from 27 different middle and high schools, with the greatest percentage of participants referred from Travis High School (12.0%). Based on the group of students for whom a program exit reason was available ( $n = 135$ ), 82.2% of students completed the program. Of the remaining students, who did not complete the program, 45.8% attended only the first session.

### Parent and Student Survey Responses

After completing the INVEST or Positive Families program, both parents and students are asked to complete a survey regarding their perceptions of the program. As in past years, during the 2004-2005 academic year, both parents and students overwhelmingly reported that the programs are beneficial. The full INVEST evaluation report (McCracken, 2006) summarizes the INVEST results for 2004-2005, and the results for both the INVEST and Positive Families programs are provided in previous Title IV reports (e.g., Christian & McCracken, 2004). For the 2004-2005 group of participants, across all items, both student and parent participants indicated that the program had helped them to: better understand how their family communicates (90% of students, 92% of parents), agree on how to improve

communication (84% of students, 93% of parents), improve communication (87% of students, 94% of parents), and improve problem solving (82% of students, 93% of parents). Although most participants endorsed statements related to controlling anger (77% of students, 84% of parents) and expressing anger (76% of students, 86% of parents), these were the items with which the highest percentages of both participants expressed disagreement.

### **Highlights of the INVEST Evaluation Findings**

Each year, one of the district-wide programs funded through Title IV is selected to receive additional evaluation support. During the 2004-2005 academic year the INVEST program was the focus of these efforts. A formative evaluation, based on facilitator interviews, was conducted to understand facilitators' experiences implementing the program during the 2004-2005 academic year, and the results were summarized in a report to the program administrators. In addition to the facilitator interviews, a secondary data analysis was conducted to examine the effects of INVEST participation on key indicators related to substance use and academic performance, specifically: disciplinary recidivism, school attendance, academic promotion, and academic credit. Summaries of the formative and summative evaluation results are provided in the full INVEST evaluation report (McCracken, 2006). Brief descriptions of each of these studies are provided below, along with key findings from the studies.

**Facilitator Interviews.** A telephone survey was designed to examine the facilitators' fidelity of implementation and to identify areas in need of clarification or revision. During May and June of 2005, telephone interviews were conducted with 10 of the 15 facilitators on the 2004-2005 facilitator list. Of the remaining five facilitators, one declined the interview because she had conducted only one session in August of 2004, and the remaining four were unavailable to be interviewed. Although the survey provided some quantitative information regarding facilitators' use of various components of the curriculum, the majority of the information was qualitative. The evaluator transcribed facilitators' comments during the interviews and then conducted an analysis to identify themes within and across the survey items. Key findings regarding program implementation are summarized below.

- **Program materials and coordination.** Facilitators found the program materials to be useful, but indicated that the materials and overall program coordination could be improved by (a) developing a packet of handouts for each session, (b) translating the handouts into Spanish, and (c) establishing a standard for the ratio of participants to facilitators.
- **Most successful and least successful activities.** Facilitators identified three INVEST activities, two of which involve physical activity, that they believe are

highly effective at engaging the group and generating useful discussion. They identified five other components of the curriculum that could be improved by incorporating techniques designed to engage the group and by improving the instructions.

- **Fidelity of implementation.** Facilitators do not always implement the program according to the curriculum and they may not realize that their changes risk compromising the fidelity of the program. Facilitators tended to provide high ratings of their own fidelity but commented that they change the order of the activities, make modifications to activities, and substitute alternative activities for those provided in the curriculum. The following recommendations were made to improve fidelity of implementation: (a) require facilitators to attend an annual training, (b) provide more opportunities for facilitators to discuss the curriculum and share their ideas for improvement, and (c) determine where facilitators may and may not have flexibility in implementing the curriculum.

**Outcomes Analyses.** The outcome evaluation was conducted using data sets that are readily available from AISD administrative databases. The study sample was identified by selecting students whose first enrollment at the ALC was for a drug or alcohol offense<sup>2</sup>, based on an enrollment database maintained by the ALC. A district-wide administrative database was used to determine whether each of these students participated in the INVEST or Positive Families programs at the time of their first 2004-2005 enrollment for the drug and alcohol offense. Attendance data were extracted from the 2004-2005 attendance file that was previously compiled for submission to the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS); and recidivism, promotion, and academic credit data were extracted from the district-wide administrative database.

The final study sample included 300 INVEST participants and 279 students who did not participate in INVEST (non-participants). Statistical tests were used to examine differences between the INVEST and Non-participant groups on both demographic and discipline-related variables and on each of the outcomes of interest (recidivism, attendance, promotion, and academic credit). Key results from these analyses are summarized below.

- **Disciplinary Recidivism.** INVEST participants were not significantly less likely than non-participants to have a second removal to the ALC. Approximately eight percent of INVEST participants were removed for a subsequent drug or alcohol offense, compared with nine percent of non-participants. This suggests that

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<sup>2</sup> Drug and alcohol offenses include: Influence of alcohol, Influence of drugs (misdemeanor), Possession of alcohol, Possession of drugs (misdemeanor), Sale of alcohol, Sale of drugs (misdemeanor), Tobacco offenses, Use of alcohol, Use of drugs (misdemeanor).

approximately eight percent of students may have additional drug and alcohol offenses despite the intensive services provided by INVEST or other ALC programs.

- **Attendance.** INVEST participants were more likely than non-participants to meet the attendance criterion<sup>3</sup> in the last six weeks of the school year (48.2% and 25.2%, respectively). This effect remained when independently controlling for gender, offense type (drug or alcohol), and whether the student met the attendance criterion in the first six weeks of the academic year, but not when simultaneously controlling for these variables. Therefore, the observed difference in the attendance rates between the INVEST and non-participant groups may be due to the combined effect of differences between the groups with regard to gender, offense type, and attendance history.
- **Promotion.** INVEST participants were more likely than non-participants to be promoted to the next grade level following the 2004-2005 academic year (87.3% and 73.9%, respectively). This effect remained when simultaneously controlling for gender and a history of drug and alcohol offenses.
- **Academic Credit.** INVEST participants earned more academic credits than did non-participants. The mean number of credits earned was 4.35 credits for INVEST participants in grade 9 through 12 and 2.83 credits for non-participants in grades 9 through 12. This effect was statistically significant even when simultaneously controlling for gender, offense type (drug or alcohol), and the number of credits attempted.

It is important to interpret the results of the secondary data analysis with caution because families self-selected for participation in INVEST. As a result, the students who participated in INVEST may have had an advantage over the students who did not participate, even in the absence of their participation in the program. Nonetheless, the INVEST group showed better outcomes than the non-participant group with regard to attendance, promotion, and academic credits earned, even when controlling for important characteristics that differed between INVEST participants and non-participants. The results of the outcome analyses are encouraging and suggest that it is worthwhile to invest resources in enhancing and expanding the program model, using the information provided by the facilitator interviews. Such efforts ultimately may result in a substance use intervention model that effectively addresses the problem within the AISD population and one that may be replicated successfully elsewhere.

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<sup>3</sup> The attendance criterion for the middle school students in the sample was the mean of the 2003-2004 AISD middle school attendance rates (94.7%). The attendance criterion for the high school students in the sample was the mean of the 2003-2004 AISD high school attendance rates (89.8%).

### PART III: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first SDFSC Principle of Effectiveness requires that recipients of Title IV funds “base their programs on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems in the schools and communities served.” The purpose of this assessment is to identify areas of need and to set priorities for intervention. A comprehensive review of the nature and the extent of substance use and violence problems is an essential step in the process of targeting appropriate interventions and setting goals for improvement (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 1998).

In previous years, a major focus of the Title IV Needs Assessment has been the analysis and interpretation of risk and protective factors associated with substance use and violence within the AISD population. These analyses have resulted in key findings (Christian & McCracken, 2004) including:

1. Students who perceive substances to be at least *Somewhat Dangerous* are less likely to report that they use them at least once a month. However, of the students who report that they believe a substance to be at least *Somewhat Dangerous*, a substantial percentage still reports that they use the substance at least once a month, suggesting that simply educating students about the dangers of substance use is not sufficient to prevent substance use.
2. Students are less likely to report using a substance if they report that only a few or none of their friends use the substance.
3. Students are less likely to report using a substance monthly if they also report making A's and B's in school.
4. Students who believe that their parents approve of kids their age using substances, or whose parents have not conveyed a strong message regarding substance use, are more likely to report using substances.

This year's report will focus on understanding trends in key indicators of substance use and violence and identifying patterns in these indicators among AISD schools. It is important to note that this approach is not intended to explain the differences between schools or to use the indicators as a measure of performance among schools. Instead, the purpose of these analyses is to prioritize district-wide efforts based on the trend analysis and to identify areas in need of targeted attention, based on the comparison of schools. The indicators of substance use and violence were selected based on (a) the availability of comparison data at the state and national levels, (b) the availability of longitudinal data for the indicator, and (c) the ability to detect statistically significant differences in the indicator (it is more difficult to detect or know the meaning of differences in events that occur at very low or very high frequencies).

## DATA SOURCES

The selected indicators of substance use and violence are based on data from both an annual student survey and AISD administrative records. A self-report student survey of substance use and school safety is administered to a random sample of AISD students annually. On alternating years, the district either participates in the statewide Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) survey, as it did in the 2003-2004 academic year, or independently conducts a similar survey, as in the 2004-2005 academic year. The student survey is used to track student knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behavior over time.

During Spring 2005, a random sample of 459 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms was selected to participate in the Student Substance Use and Safety Survey (SSUSS). Of the 10,764 students enrolled in the selected classrooms, a total of 5,922 students returned valid completed surveys, yielding a response rate of 55%<sup>4</sup>. Since the spring of 2003, the sampling methodology has been designed to provide representative samples at the school level. For the 2005 survey, the response rates for the schools ranged from 30% to 75% and resulted in confidence intervals that ranged from five percent to nine percent for a 95% confidence level.

AISD administrative records provide additional information with regard to student substance use and acts of verbal and physical aggression. The discipline referral indicators discussed in this report are based on data extracted from the AISD discipline data reporting system. Schools are required to maintain student-level data on each of the disciplinary events included in this report. These indicators include disciplinary events that resulted in the following types of removals from a school: home suspension, partial day home suspension, in-school suspension (ISS), partial day ISS, removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), expulsion with a JJAEP placement, or probated expulsion with an off-campus DAEP placement. The specific disciplinary offenses included in each of the discipline-related indicators are footnoted in the discussion of the indicator.

## SUBSTANCE USE

The following substance use indicators were included in this analysis: student self-reported 30-day tobacco use, student self-reported 30-day alcohol use<sup>5</sup>, student self-reported

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<sup>4</sup> The response rates provided in this report do not include surveys that were excluded from the analysis due to invalid responses or exaggeration (e.g., when a participant indicates that s/he used a non-existent (made-up) substance).

<sup>5</sup> The 30-day alcohol use indicator is based on an item that differs slightly on the AISD SSUSS and the TCADA surveys. The TCADA survey requests a response for a series of different types of alcohol; the SSUSS simply asks, "How often did you use alcohol," and provides a series of examples. This difference in the items appears to result in consistently higher rates of 30-day use in years that the TCADA survey was administered. It is important to be aware of these differences when comparing year-to-year data for this indicator.

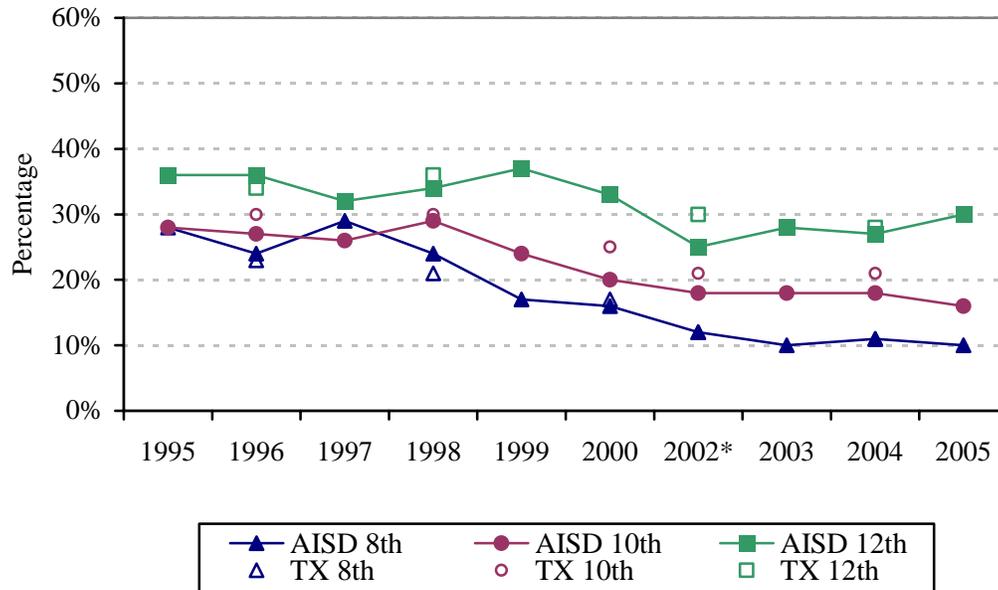
30-day marijuana use, discipline referrals for tobacco, discipline referrals for alcohol, and discipline referrals for drugs. A longitudinal analysis was conducted to look at district-wide trends in each of these indicators over time. For the purpose of this analysis, the indicators that were based on student self-report were calculated for 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. These grades were chosen because they provide a picture of substance use across the middle and high school years and because state and national comparison data were available for these grade levels. A least squares regression analysis was used to determine how well the ten-year data for each of these indicators fit a linear model and, where appropriate, to provide an estimate of the annual change in the indicator.

In addition to the longitudinal analysis, a separate analysis was conducted to look at self-reports of 30-day alcohol and marijuana use by school. Although middle school campuses administered the SSUSS to sixth grade students, only the results for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels are included in this report. Sixth grade students do not complete the secondary version of the TCADA survey. Therefore, sixth grade respondents were excluded from the analysis of the 2005 SSUSS data to provide comparable data for comparison to the 2004 TCADA data. When reported at the school level, each school's data were weighted to be proportional to the grade level population distribution at the school. The results of the longitudinal analyses and analyses by school are discussed below.

#### **LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF SUBSTANCE USE INDICATORS**

***Tobacco Use.*** Figure 5 displays the self-reported tobacco use trends for AISD and Texas 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from 1995 to 2005. Since 2000, the percentage of AISD 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reporting tobacco use in the past 30 days has been the same as or lower than that of the State sample (for years in which the State survey was conducted). Current research on tobacco use suggests that students living in metropolitan areas are less likely to smoke than those living in rural areas (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2005). Therefore, the finding that the rates of tobacco use are lower for the AISD sample than for the State sample is expected, because AISD primarily serves an urban population while the State serves both urban and rural populations.

Figure 5: Percentage of Respondents Who Reported Using Tobacco Within the Past 30 Days, Spring 1995 through Spring 2005



Source: AISD data points for 1995 through 2004 as summarized in the annual AISD Title IV reports. AISD 2005 data are based on the 2005 AISD SSUSS. Texas data points as summarized by Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI, 2004).

\* Due to a low response rate, the results for the 2001 survey were not representative of the AISD population and were excluded from the longitudinal analysis.

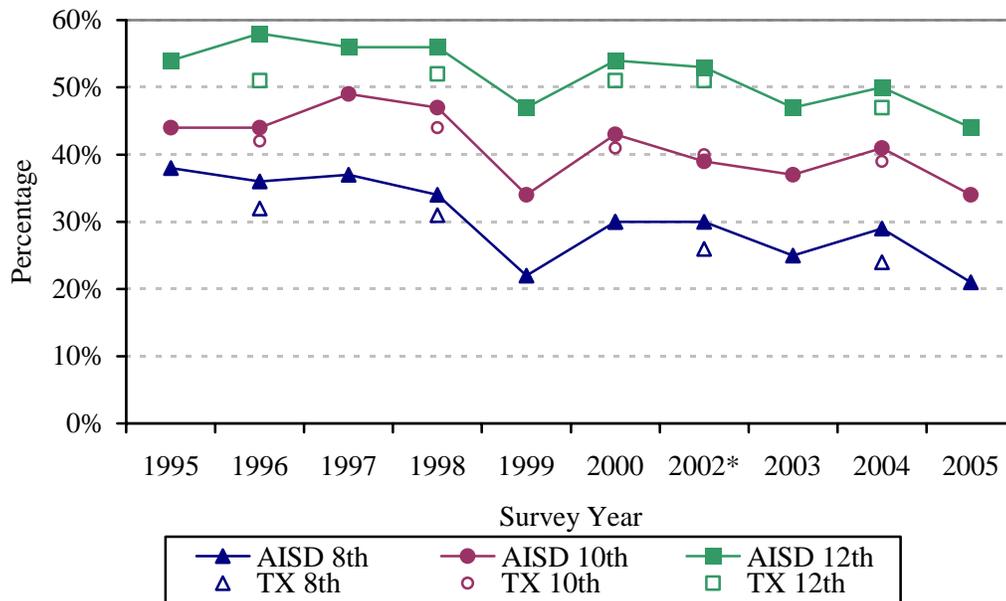
Like the trend for 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Texas sample, 30-day tobacco use has shown a steady decrease for AISD 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students since 1995. A statistically significant linear trend was found for each of these grade levels in both the AISD and Texas samples. For 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the analysis revealed a 2.0 percentage point decrease in tobacco use per year for the AISD sample ( $r^2 = .89$ ,  $F(8) = 61.6$ ,  $p < .001$ ) compared to a 1.7 percentage point decrease per year for the Texas sample ( $r^2 = .97$ ,  $F(3) = 83.8$ ,  $p = .003$ ). For 10<sup>th</sup> graders, the analysis revealed a 1.3 percentage point decrease per year for the AISD sample ( $r^2 = .88$ ,  $F(8) = 53.0$ ,  $p < .001$ ) compared to a 1.4 percentage point decrease per year for the Texas sample ( $r^2 = .90$ ,  $F(3) = 26.35$ ,  $p = .014$ ). These trends are consistent with decreases in cigarette use at the national level that have been attributed to a number of factors, including changes in marketing practices, a rise in cigarette prices, and an overall shift in attitudes towards smoking (Johnston et al., 2005).

The pattern of tobacco use among AISD 12<sup>th</sup> graders did not fit a linear model as well as that of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade samples. The percentage of AISD 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting 30-day tobacco use has shown a gradual increase since 2002. After dropping to 25% in 2002, the percentage climbed to 30% for 2005 but remains lower than the percentages observed for

AISD 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1995 through 2000. It will be important to monitor the current trend in use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders to see if smoking rates continue to increase. If so, this may suggest that tobacco prevention efforts simply are delaying the initiation of tobacco use to the late high school years.

**Alcohol Use.** From 1995 to 2005, self-reported alcohol use has dropped substantially for AISD 8<sup>th</sup> graders (17 percentage points), 10<sup>th</sup> graders (10 percentage points), and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (10 percentage points). These decreases are consistent with the decreases in use that have been observed in the Texas and national samples (Public Policy Research Institute [PPRI], 2004, Johnston et al., 2005). For the AISD population, alcohol use has decreased at a rate of 1.4 percentage points per year among 8<sup>th</sup> graders ( $r^2 = .61$ ,  $F(10) = 12.3$ ,  $p = .008$ ), at a rate of 0.98 percentage points per year among 10<sup>th</sup> graders ( $r^2 = .44$ ,  $F(10) = 6.21$ ,  $p = .037$ ), and at a rate of 1.0 percentage point per year among 12<sup>th</sup> graders ( $r^2 = 0.57$ ,  $F(10) = 10.7$ ,  $p = .011$ ). While the trend in alcohol use within AISD has followed that of the State sample, levels of use within AISD consistently have been higher than those for the state. With the exception of the 10th grade sample for 2002, 30-day alcohol use for AISD has been at or above the level for the Texas sample for each grade level since 1996.

Figure 6: Percentage of Respondents Who Reported Using Alcohol Within the Past 30 Days, Spring 1995 through Spring 2005

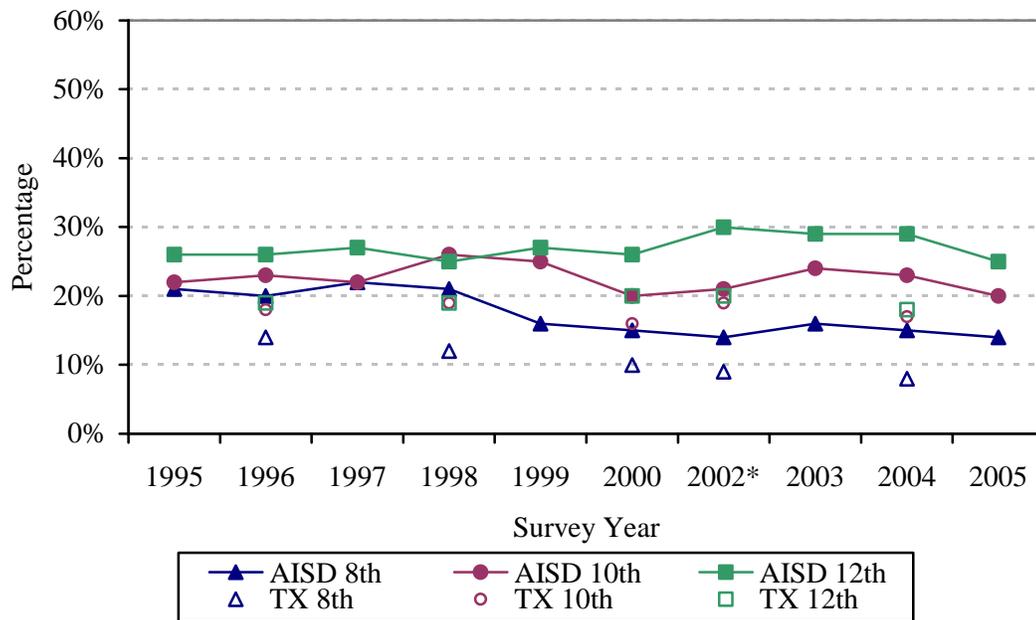


Source: AISD data points for 1995 through 2004 as summarized in the annual AISD Title IV reports. AISD 2005 data are based on the 2005 AISD SSUSS. Texas data points as summarized by Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI, 2004).

\* Due to a low response rate, the results for the 2001 survey were not representative of the AISD population and were excluded from the longitudinal analysis.

**Marijuana Use.** Since 1996 across all grades, levels of self-reported 30-day marijuana use have been consistently higher among the AISD sample than the Texas sample. For 30-day marijuana use, only the AISD and Texas 8th grade samples showed a statistically significant linear trend from 1995 to 2005. Based on this analysis, marijuana use showed a 0.8 percentage point decrease per year for both the AISD ( $r^2 = .73$ ,  $F(10) = 21.43$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and the Texas samples ( $r^2 = .97$ ,  $F(5) = 96.43$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Neither the AISD nor the Texas samples of 10th and 12th grade students showed a statistically significant linear trend. National studies have indicated that although rates of use among 8<sup>th</sup> graders began to decline in 1997, this decline did not begin until 2001 for 10th and 12th grade students (Johnston et al., 2005). A similar trend among AISD 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students appears to have begun in 2003. It will be important to monitor marijuana use among these groups in the upcoming years, to determine if this trend is sustained.

Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents who Reported Using Marijuana Within the Past 30 Days, Spring 1995 through Spring 2005

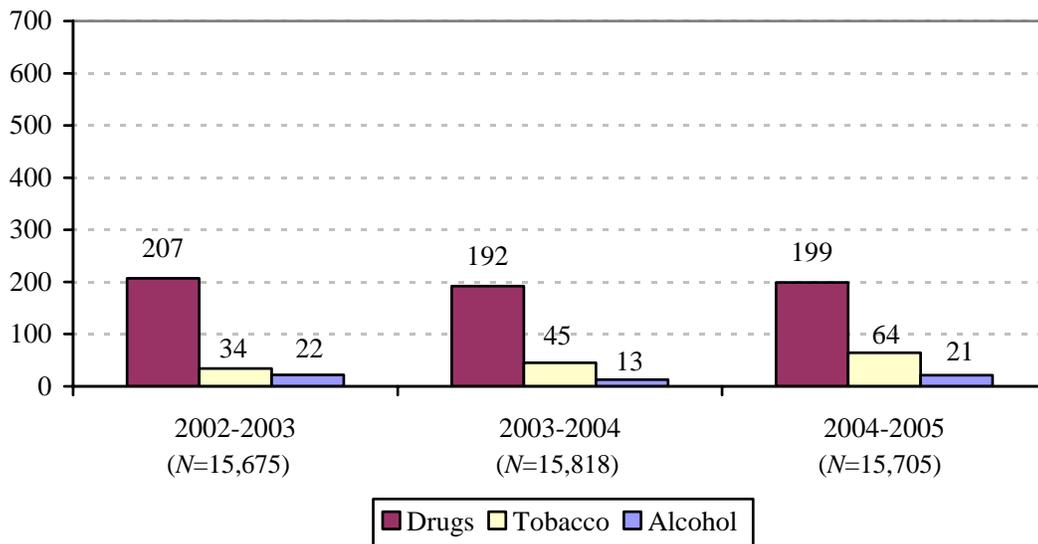


Source: AISD data points for 1995 through 2004 as summarized in the annual AISD Title IV reports. AISD 2005 data are based on the 2005 AISD SSUSS. Texas data points as summarized by Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI, 2004).

\* Due to a low response rate, the results for the 2001 survey were not representative of the AISD population and were excluded from the longitudinal analysis.

**Discipline Referral Patterns.** Figures 8 and 9 show the number of students with at least one discipline referral for tobacco, alcohol, and all other drugs (e.g., marijuana, ecstasy, etc.)<sup>6</sup> for the 2002-2003 academic year through the 2004-2005 academic year<sup>7</sup>. The percentages of middle school students disciplined for alcohol use and drug use have remained relatively constant over the three-year period. The percentages of high school students disciplined for alcohol use and tobacco use also have remained relatively constant.

Figure 8: Number of AISD Middle School Students Disciplined for Substance Use Offenses, 2002-2003 through 2004-2005

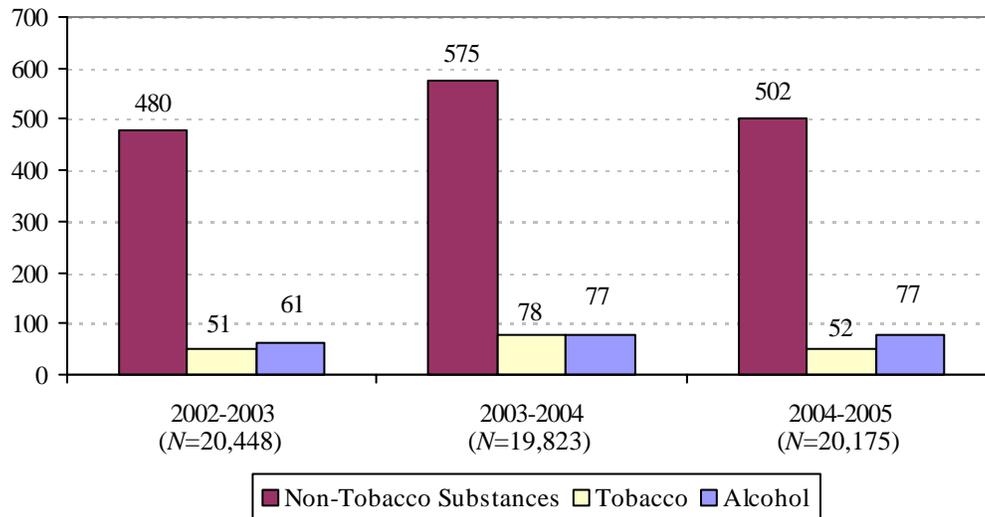


Source: Number of disciplinary offenses based on Austin ISD student discipline data, as of July 2005, Management Information Systems. Enrollment for 2001-2002 through 2003-2004 based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Enrollment for 2004-2005 based on PEIMS 110 records.

<sup>6</sup> Other drugs include: inappropriate use of over-the-counter medicine, controlled substance offenses (misdemeanor or felony possession, misdemeanor or felony consumption, misdemeanor under the influence, misdemeanor or felony sale/distribution), and abuse of glue/aerosol paint.

<sup>7</sup> This report presents the results of a recalculation of the number of students with discipline referrals for 2002-03 and 2003-04. In previous reports students were duplicated within a reporting category if they had more than one offense that fell into the reporting category. For example, a student who was disciplined for both the sale and possession of alcohol would have been counted twice for alcohol offenses in previous reports but is only counted one time in this report.

Figure 9: Number of AISD High School Students Disciplined for Substance Use Offenses, 2002-2003 through 2004-2005



Source: Number of disciplinary offenses based on Austin ISD student discipline data, as of July 2005, Management Information Systems. Enrollment for 2001-2002 through 2003-2004 based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Enrollment for 2004-2005 based on PEIMS 110 records.

The trend in drug referrals for high school students and the trend in tobacco referrals for middle school students have shown some variation over the past four years. For high school students, the percentage of high school students disciplined for drug use dropped in 2004-2005 after increasing the previous year. For middle school students, the number of students disciplined for tobacco use has increased at a greater rate than enrollment every academic year since 2002-2003. This is interesting in light of the finding, discussed above, that self-reports of 30-day tobacco use among 8<sup>th</sup> graders have shown approximately two percentage point declines each year since 1995. This seems to suggest that the increased discipline rate for tobacco offenses may be due to increased vigilance on the part of campus staff with regard to these offenses.

Over the past three years, the recidivism rate for drug offenses<sup>8</sup> has not shown a clear trend at either the high school or middle school level. For middle school students, the recidivism rate was 3.4% in 2002-2003, 5.7% in 2003-2004, and 5.0% in 2004-2005. For high school students the recidivism rate was 9.8% in 2002-2003, 9.7% in 2003-2004, and 6.6% in 2004-2005. It will be important to continue to measure recidivism rates over time, because this

<sup>8</sup> The recidivism rate is the percentage of offenders who have at least one more drug offense within the same academic year.

provides a useful measure of the effectiveness of disciplinary interventions at preventing subsequent substance use.

### **SUBSTANCE USE INDICATORS BY SCHOOL**

Figures B1 through B4 in Appendix B provide a comparison of 30-day alcohol use and 30-day marijuana use for each of the AISD middle and high schools for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years. In addition to the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 data provided for each school, the charts display the overall percentage of district high school or middle school students who reported use within the past 30 days for the 2004-2005 academic year. For each school the 95% confidence interval is shown for each year's data, based on the sample size calculations for the school. Thus, it is possible to identify schools at which the 2004-2005 level of use is significantly different than the level for the previous year at that school and/or the 2004-2005 level for the district as a whole.

The purpose of these charts is to identify areas in which improvements have been made and areas in need of improvement. It is important to recognize that the underlying causes of the difference in rates between schools may be attributable to differences in the student populations at those schools. For example, the Travis County Drug Diversion Court and community mental health workers refer students to Garza Independence High School. Therefore, one might expect to find higher rates of substance use there than at other schools due to the disproportionate number of students who enter the school with risk factors for substance use. These comparisons should provide a basis for determining where to focus prevention resources within the district and within each school.

**Alcohol Use.** For 2004-2005, across middle schools the percentages of students reporting alcohol use within the past 30 days ranged from 10.1% at Kealing to 27.8% at Paredes (Figure B1). Paredes was the only school for which the percentage was significantly higher than the district percentage (17.1%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at Burnet (10.8%) and Kealing (10.1%). The percentages of students reporting alcohol use showed a statistically significant decrease from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at five schools (Bedichek, Burnet, Kealing, Mendez, and Webb), and the percentage of students reporting alcohol use did not significantly increase at any middle school from 2004 to 2005.<sup>9</sup>

For 2004-2005, across high schools the percentages of students reporting alcohol use within the past 30 days ranged from 22.2% at Johnson and Lanier to 55.8% at Garza Independence (Figure B2). The percentages were significantly higher than the district

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<sup>9</sup> See footnote 5 on page 22.

percentage (35.2%) at Anderson (45.6%), Austin (46.8%), and Garza Independence (55.8%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at Johnson (22.2%), Johnston (23.3%), Lanier (22.2%), and Reagan (27.3%). The percentages showed a statistically significant decrease from 2004 to 2005 at Johnston and Bowie. The percentage of students reporting alcohol use did not significantly increase at any high school from 2004 to 2005.

***Marijuana Use.*** For 2004-2005, across all middle schools the percentages of students reporting marijuana use in the past thirty days ranged from 2.0% at Bailey to 18.9% at Martin (Figure B3). Bailey was the only school for which the percentage reporting marijuana use was significantly lower than the district percentage (10.1%). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage at both Fulmore (17.5%) and Martin (18.9%). The percentage of students reporting marijuana use did not show statistically significant change at any middle school from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005.

For 2004-2005, across all high schools, the percentages of students reporting marijuana use in the past thirty days ranged from 10.7% at Lanier to 34.0% at Garza Independence (Figure B4). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage (20.6%) at Crockett (25.8%), Garza Independence (34.0%), McCallum (31.0%), and Travis (25.9%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at Bowie (14.6%), Johnson (12.3%), and Lanier (10.7%). Bowie also experienced a statistically significant decrease in the percentage of students reporting marijuana use from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005. The percentage of students reporting marijuana use did not increase significantly at any high school.

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING SUBSTANCE USE**

Together, the indicator analyses by school and over time provide direction regarding how best to target substance use prevention efforts within the district. The longitudinal analysis of 10 years of data showed reductions in tobacco use for 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students; reductions in alcohol use for 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students; and reductions in marijuana use for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. These findings are consistent with state and national trends and are certainly encouraging. Nonetheless, the overall rates of these problems within the district and among campuses suggest that further prevention efforts are necessary.

The prevalence of tobacco use has been decreasing over the past ten years, and the prevalence is lower within AISD than within the corresponding grade-level groups of the Texas population as a whole. Meanwhile, the percentage of AISD middle school students disciplined for tobacco use offenses has increased every year for the past four years. This finding suggests that although it may not be necessary to devote new resources to tobacco use

prevention, continued vigilance in providing appropriate discipline for tobacco offenses should be encouraged because this vigilance may be contributing to the decreasing trend in tobacco use.

While the overall trends in substance use in AISD are encouraging, not all of the improvements among 8<sup>th</sup> graders have been realized in the high school population. Based on the results of the Spring 2005 SSUSS, one in five high school students has used marijuana in the past thirty days and one in three high school students has used alcohol in the past thirty days. In addition, the prevalence of use for both of these substances generally has been at or above the prevalence of use for the State over the past 10-year period. Data from other sources further support the need to focus prevention efforts on substance use prevention. When asked to select the most serious problem on their campus, “student marijuana use” was the most frequent response chosen by student respondents to the SSUSS at 10 out of the 12 AISD high schools<sup>10</sup>.

To reduce the prevalence of these problems at the high school level, continued universal prevention efforts are essential at the middle school level. Universal efforts at the middle school level ultimately may result in reductions in use in the upper grade levels as these grade cohorts age. In addition to universal efforts at the middle school level, targeted interventions are necessary at the high school level. The findings presented in this report suggest that many AISD high school students are already using substances. Therefore, at the high school level, interventions should focus on targeting students who are already using substances or students who are at-risk of using substances. Although targeted efforts are needed at all of the district’s high school campuses, substantial reductions in use may be achieved by first focusing these efforts on the campuses with the highest levels of alcohol and marijuana use.

## **VIOLENCE**

An analysis of discipline referral patterns over the past four years was carried out to look at trends within the district as a whole. This analysis examined trends in verbal and physical aggression offenses. In addition, an analysis of violence by school was conducted for indicators related to bullying and gang activity, based on student reports of these problems on the SSUSS.

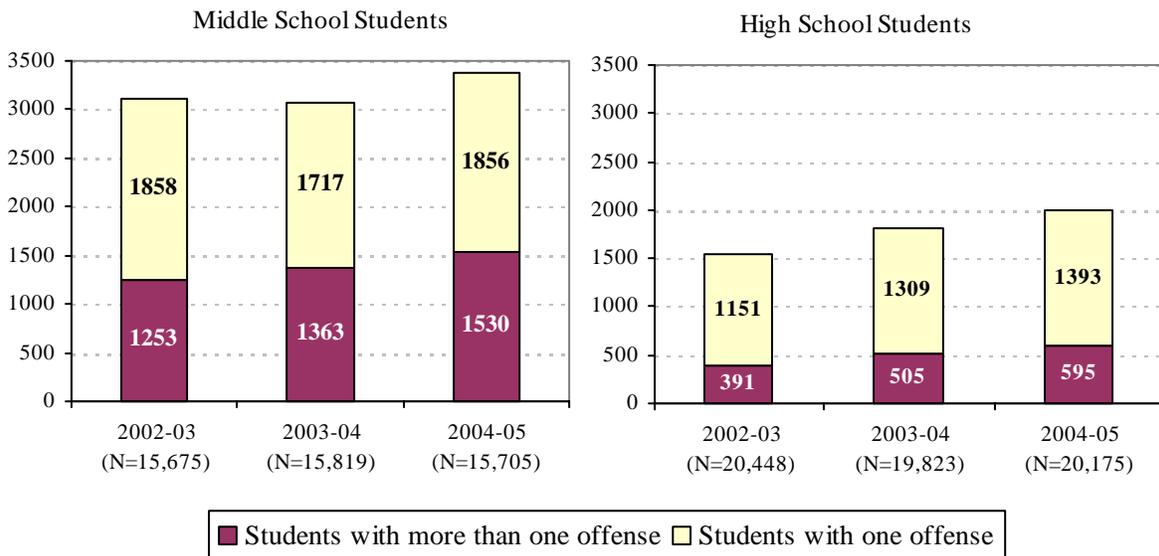
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<sup>10</sup> Response options included: student marijuana use; student alcohol use; student tobacco use; student use of prescription drugs or other medications to get high; student fighting and physical aggression; student harassment, threats and intimidation; student vandalism, criminal mischief; student weapon possession; violence or threats of violence toward staff; none of these are serious problems on my campus.

### LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE INDICATORS

Figure 10 provides the number of students disciplined for verbal or physical aggression from 2002-2003 through 2004-2005. Clearly, across all three years, aggressive behavior is a greater disciplinary problem among middle school students than high school students. Across the three-year period, the percentage of middle school students disciplined is approximately two to three times that of the percentage of high school students disciplined for aggressive behavior. Nonetheless, the percentage of students receiving referrals for aggressive behavior has increased at both the middle school and high school levels. At the middle school level this increase has occurred across the spectrum of offense types for verbal and physical aggression. However, at the high school level, the overall increase in aggression is due to an increase in the percentage of students disciplined for verbal aggression, while the percentage of high school students disciplined for physical aggression has remained relatively constant over the three-year period.

Figure 10: Number of Students with a Discipline Referral for Verbal or Physical Aggression, 2003-2003 through 2004-2005



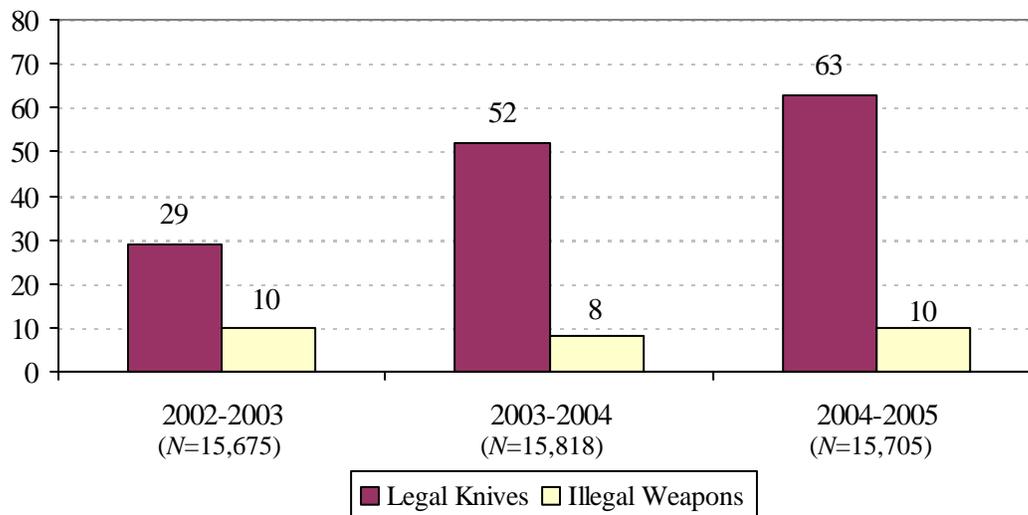
Source: Number of disciplinary offenses based on Austin ISD student discipline data, as of July 2005, Management Information Systems. Enrollment for 2002-2003 through 2003-2004 based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Enrollment for 2004-2005 based on PEIMS 110 records.

Note. Verbal and Physical Aggression includes the following offenses: rude to student, threat or harassment of student, physical aggression toward a student, fighting, assault of a student, aggravated assault of a student, gang violence, rude to an adult, threat or harassment of an adult, physical aggression toward an adult, assault of an adult, aggravated assault of an adult, retaliation against an adult, terroristic threats, kidnapping, murder, sexual assault of a student, and sexual assault of an adult.

It is also noteworthy that the percentage of aggressive offenders with more than one offense has also increased every year at both the middle school and high school levels. For middle school students, the percentage of aggressive offenders with more than one aggressive offense increased from 40.3% in 2002-2003 to 45.1% in 2004-2005. For high school students, this percentage increased from 25.3% in 2002-2003 to 29.9% in 2004-2005. While it is important to recognize that the increase in these percentages may be due to heightened awareness or vigilance on the part of campus staff rather than an increase in aggression on campuses, these trends do suggest a need to increase the district's capacity to handle violence-related disciplinary problems.

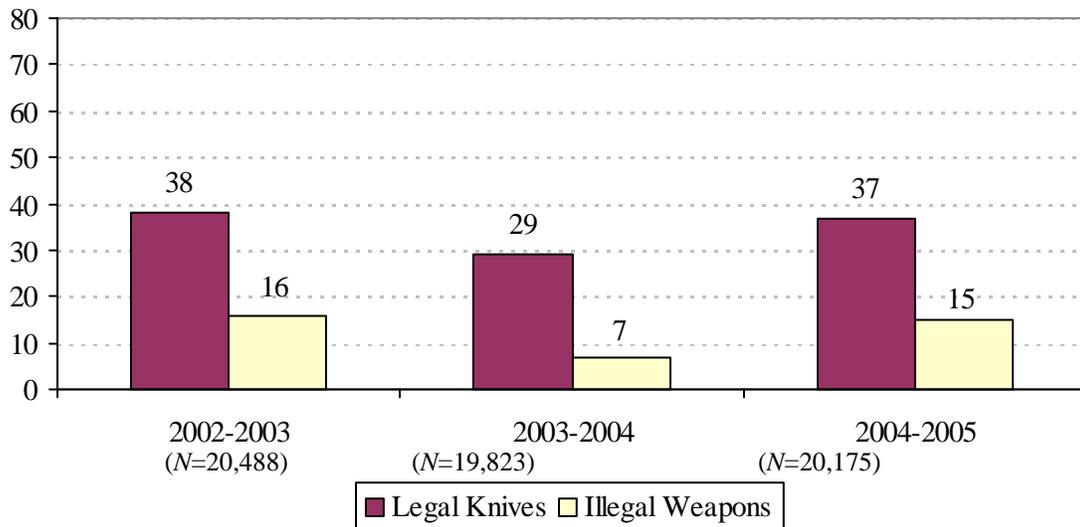
Figures 11 and 12 display the number of students disciplined for weapons offenses from 2002-2003 through 2004-2005. Although the percentages of high school students disciplined for legal knives and illegal weapons have fluctuated somewhat over the three-year period, the percentage of middle school students disciplined for illegal weapons has remained relatively constant. However, the percentage of middle school students disciplined for legal knives increased for the past two consecutive years.

Figure 11: Number of AISD Middle School Students Disciplined for Weapons Offenses, 2002-2003 through 2004-2005



Source: Number of disciplinary offenses based on Austin ISD student discipline data, as of July 2005, Management Information Systems. Enrollment for 2002-2003 through 2004-2005 based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Enrollment for 2004-2005 based on PEIMS 110 records.

Figure 12: Number of AISD High School Students Disciplined for Weapons Offenses, 2002-2003 through 2004-2005



Source: Number of disciplinary offenses based on Austin ISD student discipline data, as of July 2005, Management Information Systems. Enrollment for 2002-2003 through 2004-2005 based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Enrollment for 2004-2005 based on PEIMS 110 records.

## VIOLENCE INDICATORS BY SCHOOL

Appendix B displays the percentage of students at each school who reported experiencing bullying at least one time during the school year (Figures B5 and B6) and the percentage of students who reported that they have friends who belong to a gang (Figures B7 and B8). These items from the SSUSS provide useful indicators of the safety of the school environment, and are similar to the indicators used to monitor school crime and safety at the national level (DeVoe, Peter, Kaufman, Miller, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2004). Like the substance use indicators that were based on the SSUSS, these indicators include only 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students for the middle school samples and were weighted to be proportional to the school's grade level distribution. As previously discussed, these results should be used to identify schools that have shown improvement (that may serve as models for other schools), and areas in need of improvement.

### Bullying

At the district level, 58% of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students reported experiencing bullying at least one time during the 2004-2005 academic year, based on the February 2005 survey. By comparison, only 13% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 9% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in a national sample reported

experiencing bullying at school during the previous six months (DeVoe et al., 2004)<sup>11</sup>. Across middle schools the percentages of students who reported experiencing bullying at least one time during the school year ranged from 48.3% at Webb to 73.6% at Small (Figure B5). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage at Covington (71.1%) and Small (73.6%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at Bedichek (50.0%), Mendez (49.2%), and Webb (48.3%). The percentages showed a statistically significant decrease from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at Mendez and Kealing. The percentage did not increase significantly from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at any middle school.

At the district level, 45% of high school students reported experiencing bullying at least one time during the 2004-2005 academic year, based on the February 2005 survey. In a national sample, the grade-level percentages of students who reported experiencing bullying at school in the previous six months ranged from 2% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders to 7% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders (DeVoe et al., 2004)<sup>11</sup>. For 2004-2005, across all high schools the percentages of students who reported experiencing bullying at least one time during the school year ranged from 17.6% at Garza Independence to 53.3% at Travis (Figure B6). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage at Johnson (52.1%), McCallum (50.7%), and Travis (53.3%), and the percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at Garza Independence (17.6%) and Lanier (34.5%). The percentage did not change significantly from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at any school.

### **Gang Activity**

For 2004-2005, AISD middle schools fell into distinct clusters according to their level of student-reported gang activity. Across middle schools the percentages of students who reported that they have friends who belong to a gang ranged from 16.9% at Murchison to 51.0% at both Porter and Martin (Figure B7). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage (32.6%) at five middle schools, including Burnet (48.4%), Dobie (40.5%), Fulmore (42.1%), Martin (51.0%), Porter (51.0%), and Webb (50.0%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at seven middle schools, including Bailey (19.1%), Covington (26.3%), Kealing (23.1%), Lamar (25.0%), Murchison (16.9%), O'Henry (23.5%), and Small (21.9%). The percentage of students who reported that they have friends who belong to a gang did not change significantly from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at any middle school.

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<sup>11</sup> The AISD and national survey items differed slightly. The AISD item asked how often the student experienced "any type of bullying at school" and provided seven response options ranging from "never" to "several times a week." The national survey asked, "have you been bullied" and provided a yes or no response option. In addition, the national survey included private school students, who were found to be less likely to report experiencing bullying at school.

Like the middle schools, AISD high schools also fell into distinct clusters according to their level of student-reported gang activity. Across high schools the percentages of students who reported that they have friends who belong to a gang ranged from 11.8% at Garza Independence to 44.8% at Travis (Figure B8). The percentages were significantly higher than the district percentage (26.2%) at four high schools, including Akins (40.9%), Crockett (31.8%), Reagan (39.6%), and Travis (44.8%). The percentages were significantly lower than the district percentage at five high schools, including Anderson (19.4%), Bowie (16.9%), Garza Independence (11.8%), Johnson (18.3%), and McCallum (14.3%). The percentages showed a statistically significant decrease from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005 at Lanier and Johnston.

### **VIOLENCE INDICATOR CORRELATIONS**

The analysis of the bullying and gang activity indicators by school suggests that these are two distinct violence-related problems. The prevalence of bullying reported at a school is unrelated to the level of gang activity reported at the school. For example, reports of gang activity at Small were significantly lower than overall reports for the district; yet, reports of bullying at Small were significantly higher than those for the district. To describe each of these problems better, an analysis was performed to examine correlations of bullying and gang activity with other school characteristics, such as the level of victimization and the level of safety at the school. The results of these analyses are displayed in Appendix D, along with a description of each of the school characteristics included in the analysis.

The level of gang activity on an AISD campus is strongly negatively correlated with how safe students feel on the campus at both the middle school and high school levels. That is, students at schools with higher levels of gang activity are less likely to report feeling at least somewhat safe at school. At the middle school level, gang activity also is positively correlated with the level of marijuana use at the school and the presence of weapons at the school.

Unlike the level of gang activity at a school, the prevalence of bullying is not associated with how safe students feel at the school. However, it is associated with the level of perceived victimization at the school. That is, a school whose students report a higher prevalence of bullying is more likely to have higher percentages of students who report that they have been physically harmed or threatened with physical harm at least once during the school year. Among the high schools, the prevalence of bullying also is negatively associated with several

indicators of school climate that were derived from the 2005 Student Climate Survey<sup>12</sup>, and with the degree to which school rules against verbal or physical assaults are enforced.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING VIOLENCE**

Although it was not possible to conduct a ten-year longitudinal analysis of trends in violence within the district, there is considerable evidence to suggest that violence prevention should remain a priority for AISD middle school and high school campuses. The increases in the percentage of students with disciplinary referrals for verbal and physical aggression suggest that violence remains a problem for AISD campuses and that incidents of violence may be increasing. The fact that violence is particularly a problem among middle schools is further evidenced by student reports of the most serious problem on their campus. “Fighting and physical aggression” was the most frequent response chosen by respondents to the 2005 SSUSS at 13 out of the 18 AISD middle schools. Clearly, interventions are needed to address both the problems of gang activity and bullying.

Efforts to reduce the level of gang activity are essential to provide students with a safe school environment. Unlike the distribution of schools on most of the other indicators of substance use and violence, middle and high schools fall into clusters according to their levels of gang activity. Six middle schools and four high schools stand out as having high levels of student-reported gang activity. This finding suggests that interventions designed to reduce gang-related violence should target these schools. A coordinated effort among these campuses may be an efficient approach to addressing this problem. Due to the neighborhood-related factors that influence gang activity (DOJ, 2001), one option for targeting these activities is to coordinate efforts within the vertical teams of schools that have high rates of gang activity.

Bullying is a distinct violence-related problem that is independent of the problems associated with gang activity at a school. Over half (58%) of AISD 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students reported that they experienced bullying at least one time during the 2004-2005 academic year. By comparison, only 13% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 9% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in a national sample reported being bullied at school during the previous 6-month period (DeVoe et al., 2004)<sup>13</sup>. The findings of the correlational analyses suggest that student perceptions of bullying and the corresponding problem of victimization are less likely to occur at AISD schools that enforce rules against verbal and physical assaults and that create positive academic and behavioral

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<sup>12</sup> In 2005, the AISD Student Climate Survey was administered for the second consecutive year to students in grades 3 through 11 across the district. The survey is designed to measure student perceptions regarding three broad dimensions called Behavioral Environment, Adult/Student Interactions, and Academic Environment. Each of these three dimensions is made up of multiple concepts that are measured with groups of survey items, or subscales.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 11 on page 35.

environments for learning. As such, the problem of bullying calls for universal interventions that work to improve the overall school climate. School-wide PBS is an example of this type of intervention. It is encouraging that two of the nine schools that implemented PBS during the 2004-2005 academic year showed statistically significant decreases in reports of bullying from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005. Continued efforts to ensure that school-wide PBS efforts are fully implemented within schools should help to improve the climate on AISD campuses and should ultimately lead to reductions in disciplinary actions related to verbal and physical aggression.

## **PART IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite a decreasing trend in substance use among AISD students, substance use and violence prevention remain priorities for AISD. The overall rates of marijuana and alcohol use are higher for AISD than for the State, and disciplinary offenses for aggressive behavior have shown an increasing trend over the past three years. AISD should focus efforts at substance use and violence prevention to decrease the overall rates of these problems in the district and to reduce the disparities that exist between schools within AISD.

The Student Intervention Model framework provides a useful tool for understanding where Title IV resources are being utilized and for determining where gaps may exist in addressing substance use and violence prevention needs at each level of the intervention model. Although AISD hosts a number of substance use and violence prevention programs that are not funded through Title IV, the programs and services funded through Title IV provide the core set of efforts devoted specifically to substance use and violence prevention. Following are recommendations at each level of the Student Intervention Model. These recommendations were developed by identifying gaps in the availability of Title IV-funded services to address the concerns that were identified through the needs assessment.

### **UNIVERSAL LEVEL**

- 1. Provide technical assistance to support schools in identifying and addressing their substance use and violence prevention needs.** Title IV funding must be channeled into more effective school-based prevention strategies. Schools must work to identify their most pressing substance use and violence problems and to select appropriate evidence-based interventions. The district can support schools in these effort by providing technical assistance to schools in (a) interpreting school-level data and using them to plan interventions, (b) mapping available resources and identifying where additional resources are needed, (c) selecting evidence-based programs and services, and (d) identifying funding sources to support interventions. One option for increasing schools' capacity in these areas is to provide technical assistance to the school-based PBS teams, as these responsibilities appear to fit well with their role.

In conjunction with these technical assistance efforts, AISD must work to restrict campus-based Title IV expenditures to evidence-based prevention practices. For the private school programs, this can be accomplished by developing criteria that the grant manager and budget specialist can employ to determine whether to approve a private school request. For the AISD campus-based programs, this could be accomplished by offering campuses Title IV funds with the stipulation that the funds may be used only to

support their PBS program or to implement and sustain a prevention program that has been designated as effective by USDE or another national organization, such as SAMHSA.

2. **Continue to work with middle schools to implement a PBS model that helps to improve school climate.** Violence continues to be a pervasive problem on middle school campuses, with more than half (58.2%) of AISD 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students reporting that they experienced bullying at least one time during the 2004-2005 academic year. Without school-wide efforts to improve school climate, the disciplinary system will be burdened increasingly with the problems of verbal and physical aggression. It is encouraging that two of the nine schools that implemented PBS during the 2004-2005 academic year showed statistically significant decreases in reports of bullying from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005. AISD should work to ensure that middle schools receive the support that they need to fully implement PBS strategies.

### TARGETED LEVEL

3. **Support additional ROPES staff so that the program can be restored to its original format and so that it may serve more students.** ROPES staff are unable to serve all of the groups that request services and yet the district's ROPES course facilities are underutilized. Options for increasing the number of ROPES facilitators should be explored so that the program may be expanded to serve more students and to provide more intensive services. For example, ROPES would serve AISD campuses better in their efforts to implement PBS if the program were restored to its original five-phase series of workshops.
4. **Ensure that substance use screening and referral services are available to high school students.** Despite a decreasing trend in substance use among AISD 8<sup>th</sup> graders, substance use remains a problem among AISD high school students. In addition to providing universal substance use prevention programs at the middle school level, targeted interventions are necessary at that high school level. Substance use problem identification and referral services are essential to ensure that intervention occurs as early as possible. Title IV does not fund counseling services for high school students at non-alternative campuses. Although every high school campus employs high school counselors, other demands on these staff limit their availability to provide substance use screening and referral services. A resource assessment should be conducted to determine how high school students are currently accessing substance abuse services and where additional resources are needed.
5. **Support programs that are designed to reduce gang activity among targeted student populations.** Six middle schools and four high schools stood out as having high levels of student-reported gang activity. Given that the level of gang activity on an AISD campus is

strongly negatively correlated with how safe students feel on the campus, it is essential for AISD to work to reduce the level of gang activity on these campuses.

### **INTENSIVE LEVEL**

6. **Enhance and expand the INVEST program model.** First-time substance use offenders who participated in the INVEST program demonstrated better outcomes than first-time offenders who did not participate in the program with regard to school attendance, grade-level promotion, and academic credit earned, even when controlling for some important differences between the groups. The program outcomes are encouraging and suggest that it would be worthwhile to enhance and to expand the program model, using the information provided by the 2004-2005 formative evaluation.
7. **Develop a system for following up with students who have returned to their home campuses after a stay at the ALC.** A coordinated service delivery network is a hallmark of best practices in substance use and violence prevention. AISD should play a key role in facilitating service coordination by ensuring that ALC staff contact staff at a student's home campus after the student has completed his or her stay at the ALC, with the purpose of ensuring that any recommendations for services are being carried out. Implementing a system for following up with INVEST and Positive Families participants would provide a useful starting place for developing a more global system to follow up with all students who are removed to the ALC, and it would expand the services provided through the INVEST and Positive Families programs.



## APPENDIX A: STUDENT INTERVENTION MODEL

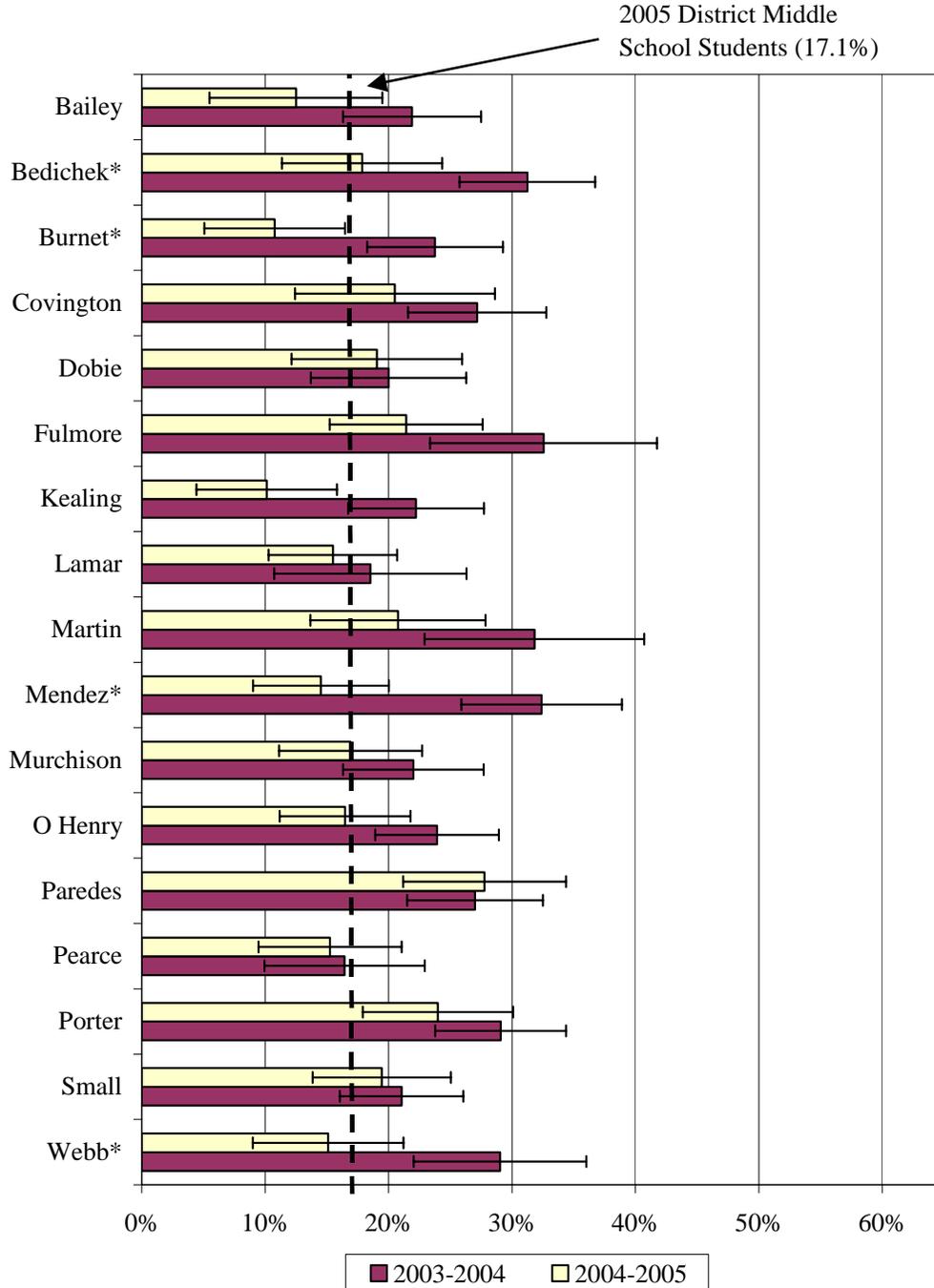
**STUDENT ATTENDANCE & BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION MODEL – 8/18/04**

**Purpose:** Support high levels of student academic achievement and compliance with attendance and behavior expectations in alignment with the district Struggling Learner Model and with minimal disruption to the student’s regular instructional process.

		Level I	Level II	Level III
<b>Academic Interventions</b>		<p><i>Classroom Level Academic Interventions for Struggling Learners.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IPG differentiation &amp; modification</li> <li>▪ Multiple instructional strategies</li> <li>▪ Small group instruction</li> </ul>	<p><i>Academic Interventions Outside the Classroom for Struggling Learners.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive small group instruction</li> <li>▪ Tutoring aligned with student needs</li> </ul>	<p><i>Extended Learning Opportunities for Learners Who are Retained or Have Not Mastered Coursework on Schedule</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive individual or group instruction</li> <li>▪ Extended day/week instruction</li> <li>▪ Credit Recovery</li> </ul>
<b>Behavior Support &amp; Discipline Interventions</b>		<p><i>School wide and Classroom level strategies for achieving substantial attendance and behavior compliance by at least 85% of students.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School wide behavior management modifications</li> <li>▪ Classroom management modifications</li> <li>▪ Personal development skills instruction for students</li> <li>▪ General communications to students and parents</li> <li>▪ Parent workshops &amp; information sharing events</li> </ul>	<p><i>Targeted Interventions for students with minor attendance and/or behavior issues, e.g. 3+ absences, minor Student Code of Conduct violations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Follow-up on attendance warning letters to parents</li> <li>▪ Short-term problem solving with students and families</li> <li>▪ Referral to community social, health, and mental health resources</li> <li>▪ Support groups for students &amp; families</li> </ul>	<p><i>Intensive Interventions for students with major attendance and/or behavior issues, e.g. 10+ absences, major Student Code of Conduct violations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crises intervention</li> <li>▪ Impact Team assessment, service plan, case management</li> <li>▪ Filing and follow-up on truancy cases</li> <li>▪ Ongoing problem-solving with students and families</li> <li>▪ Connection with Systems of Care and other wrap-around service resources</li> <li>▪ Connection with community social, health, and mental health resources</li> </ul>
		<p><i>Minor Discipline Intervention</i> (do not remove the student from regular instruction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conference with Assistant Principal/ Teacher/ Student/ Parent</li> <li>▪ Withdrawal of privileges</li> <li>▪ After school detention</li> <li>▪ Saturday School</li> </ul>	<p><i>Intermediate Discipline Intervention</i> (short term removal from regular instruction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In School Suspension</li> <li>▪ Suspension to Home</li> </ul>	<p><i>Major Discipline Intervention</i> (student taken out of regular instruction)</p> <p>Removal to DAEP due to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Safety Concerns</li> <li>➢ Serious Disruption to the Educational Process</li> <li>➢ Part of Intervention Plan</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX B: KEY SUBSTANCE USE AND VIOLENCE INDICATORS BY SCHOOL**

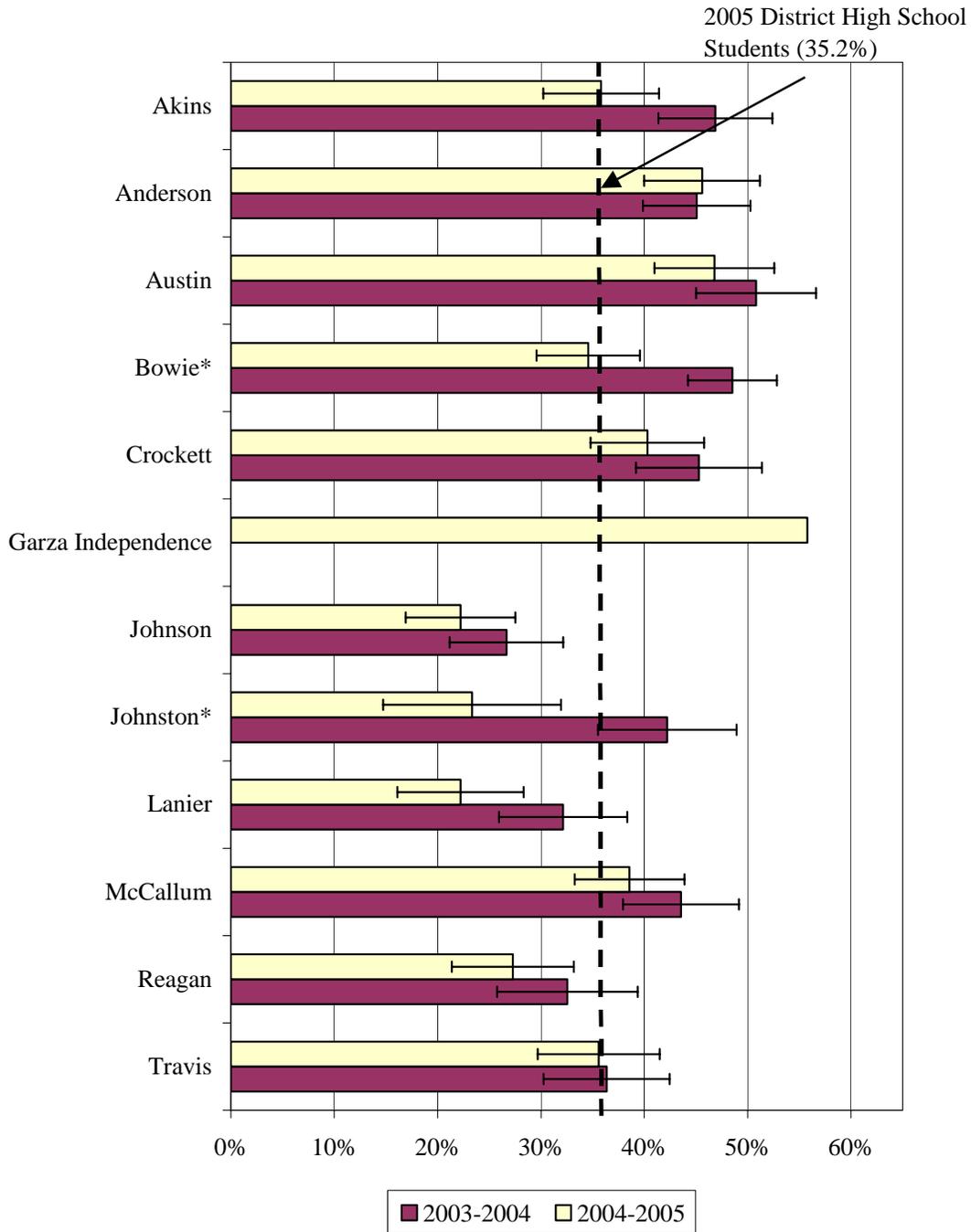
**Figure B1: Percentage of Middle School Students Reporting Alcohol Use in the Past 30 Days by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

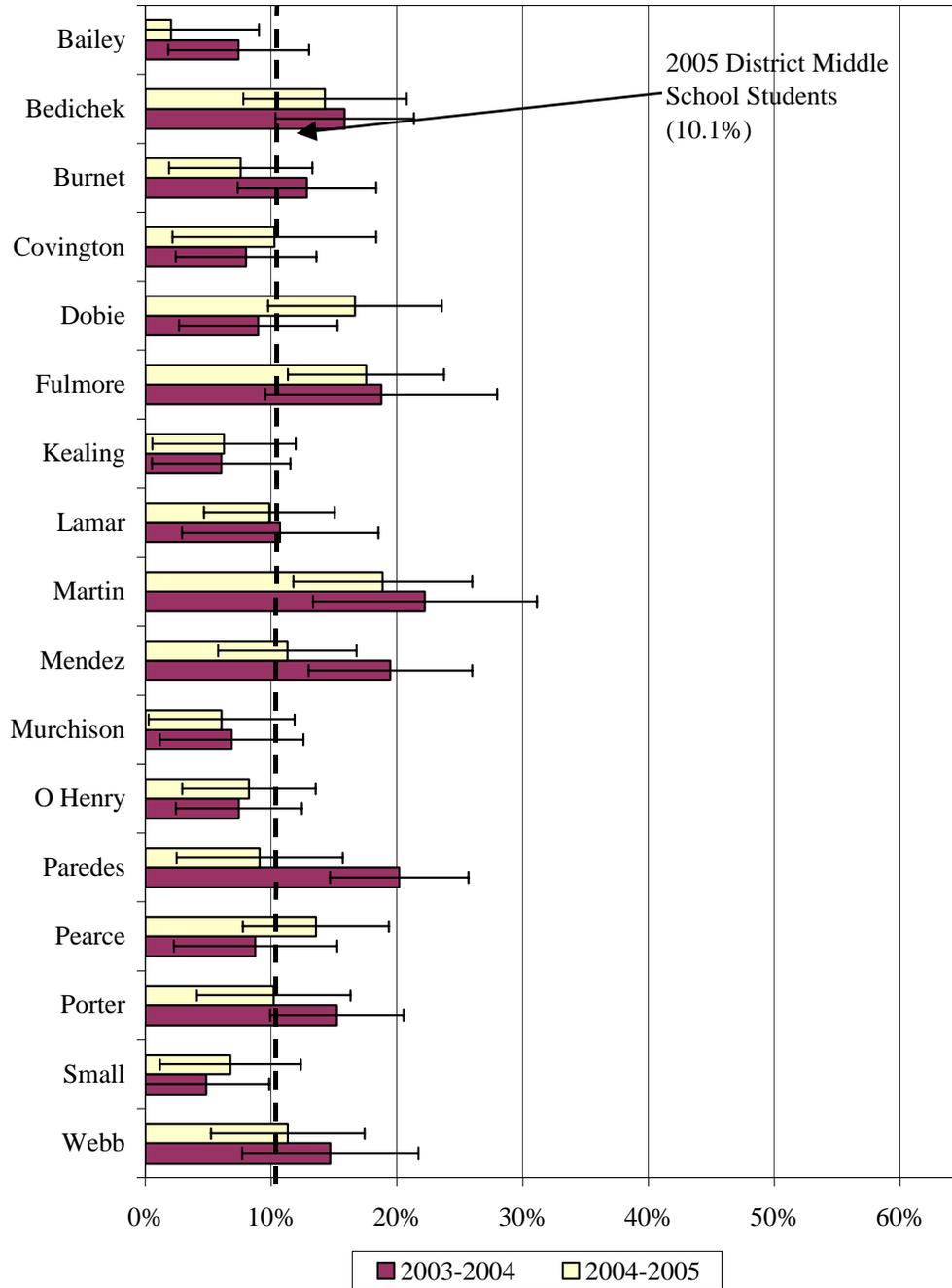
**Figure B2: Percentage of High School Students Reporting Alcohol Use in the Past 30 Days by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Garza Independence did not participate in the 2004 TCADA Survey. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

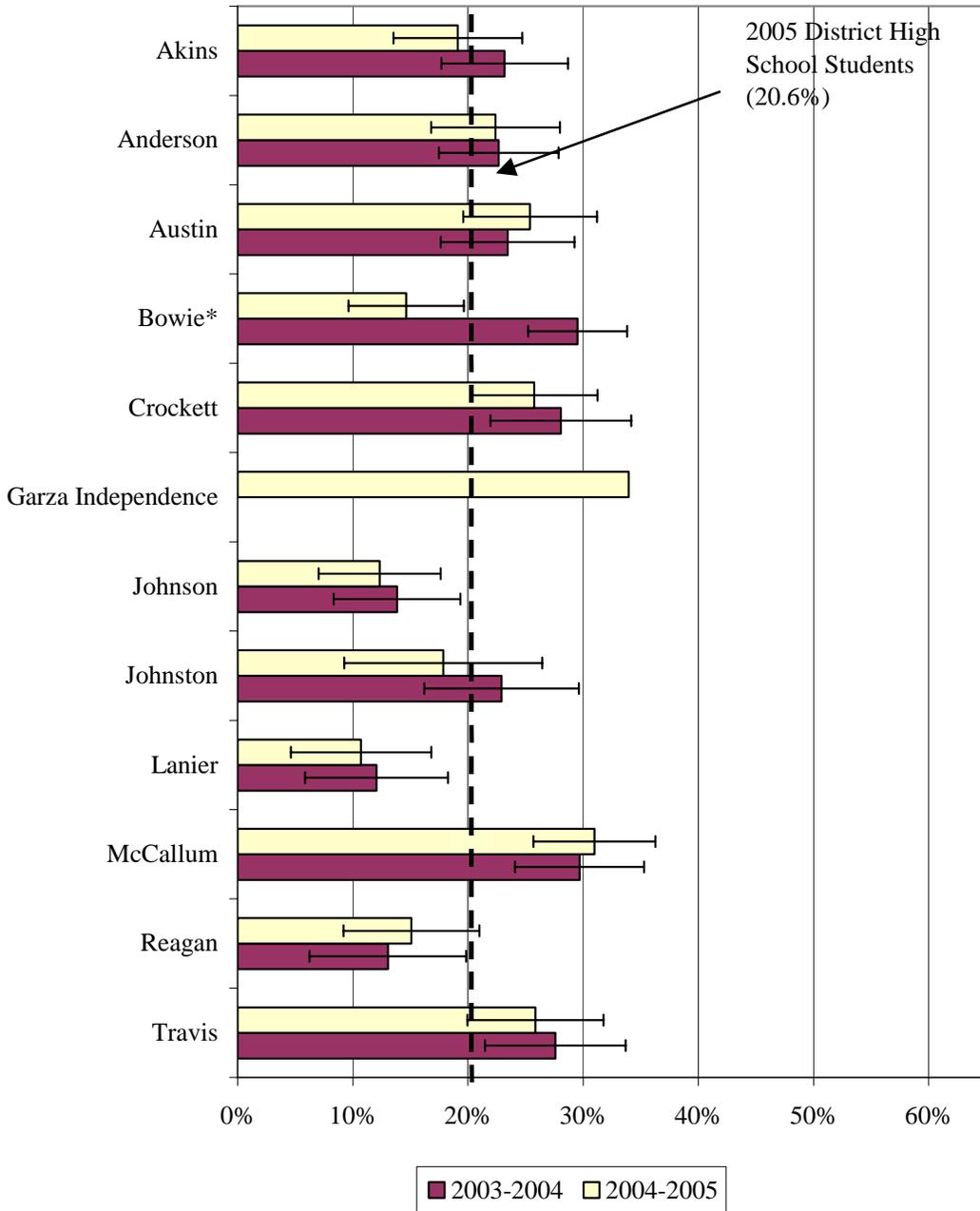
**Figure B3: Percentage of Middle School Students Reporting Marijuana Use in the Past 30 Days by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level.

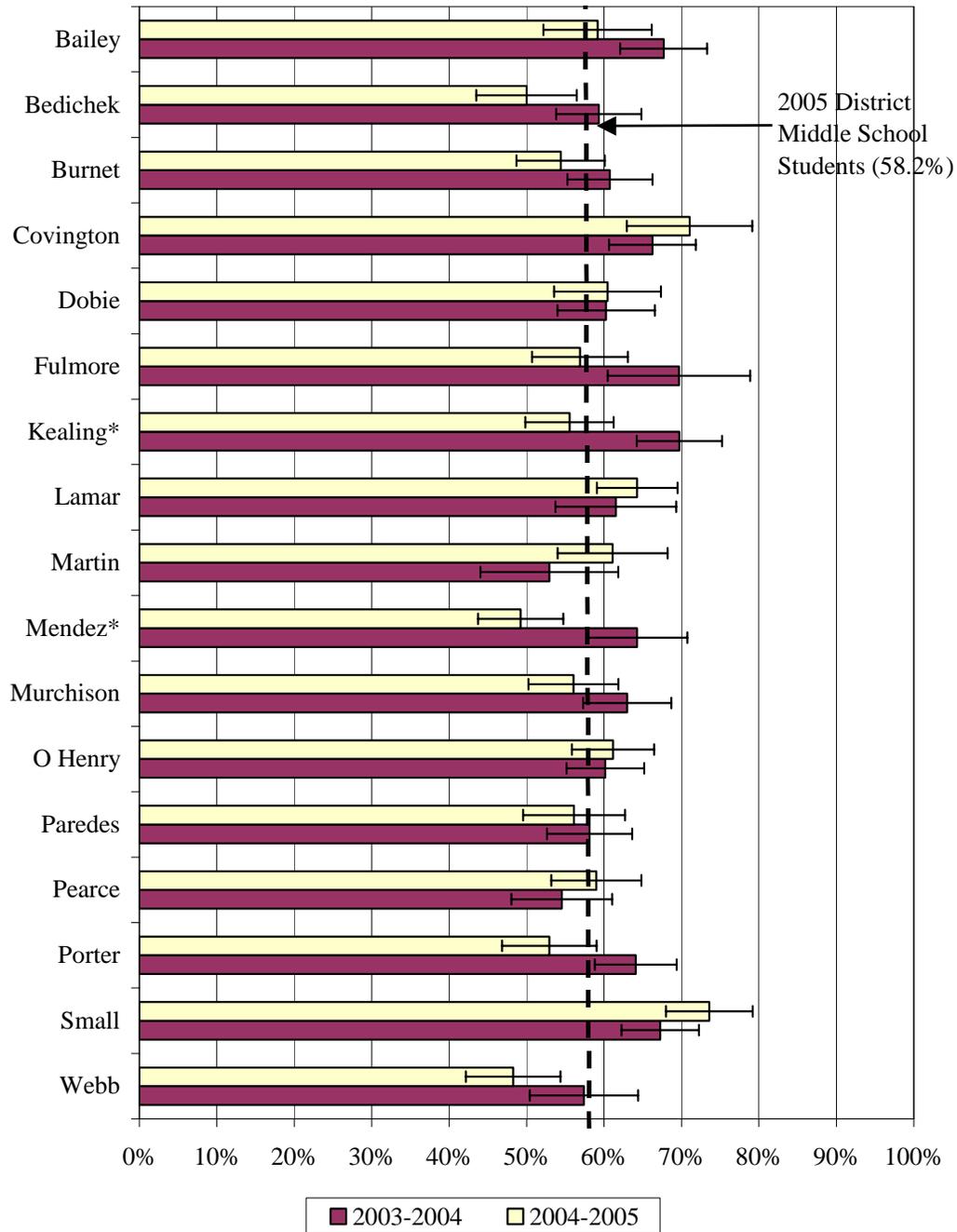
**Figure B4: Percentage of High School Students Reporting Marijuana Use in the Past 30 Days by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Garza Independence did not participate in the 2004 TCADA Survey. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

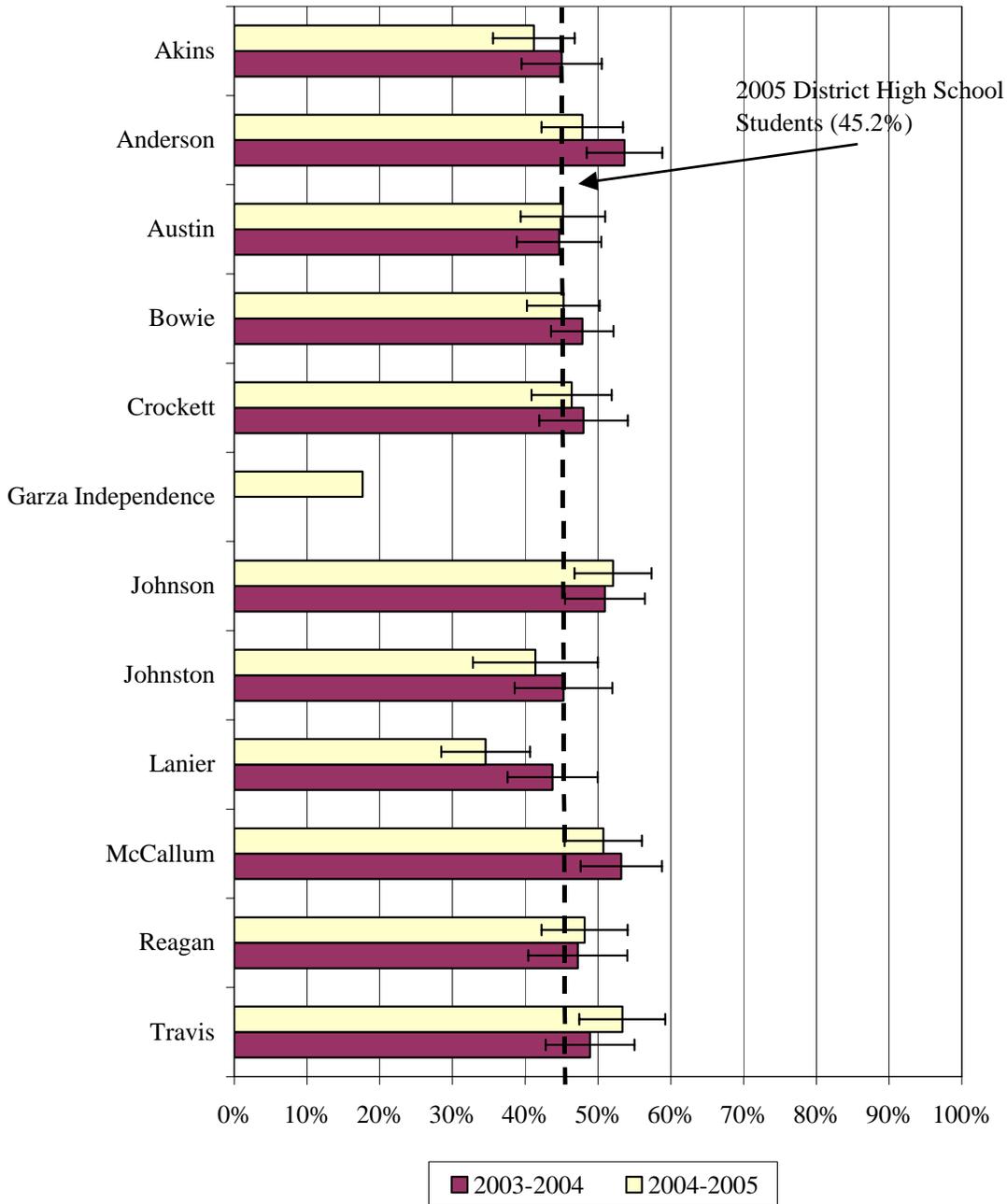
**Figure B5: Percentage of Middle School Students Experiencing Bullying at Least One Time During the School Year by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

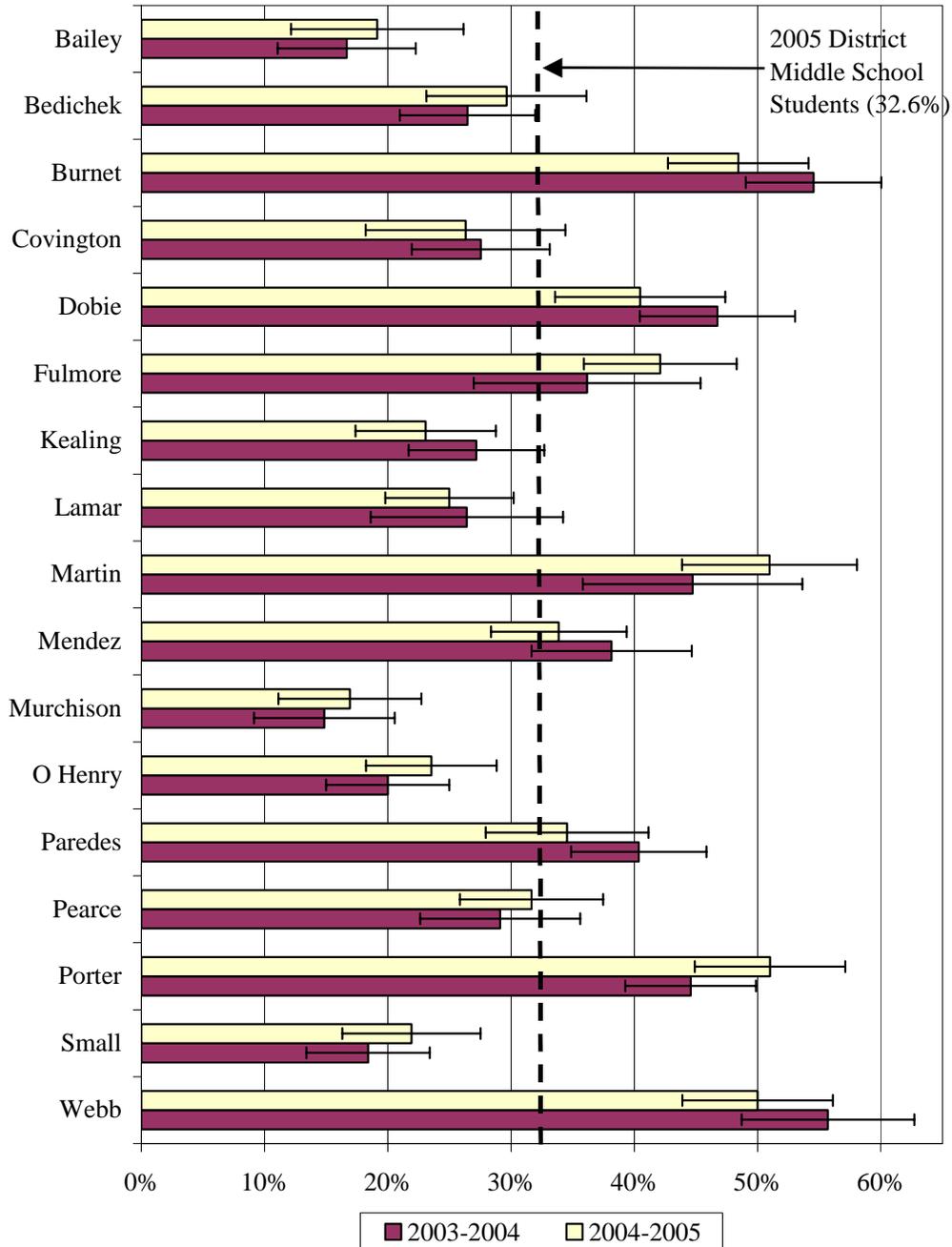
**Figure B6: Percentage of High School Students Experiencing Bullying at Least One Time During the School Year by School**



Source: 2004 and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

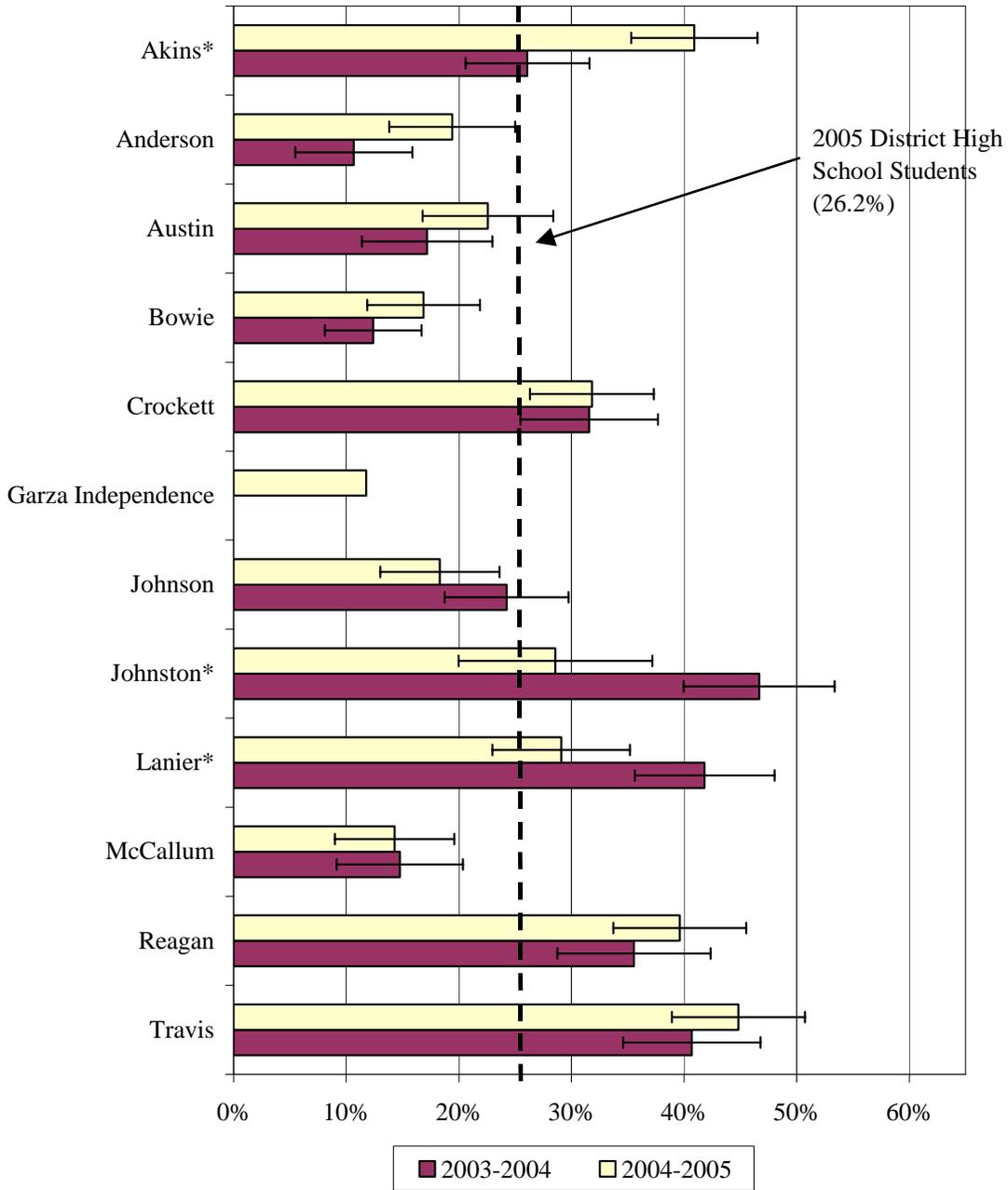
Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Garza Independence did not participate in the 2004 TCADA Survey. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

**Figure B7: Percentage of Middle School Students Who Report That They Have Friends Who Belong to a Gang by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.  
 Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

**Figure B8: Percentage of High School Students Who Report That They Have Friends Who Belong to a Gang by School**



Source: 2004 TCADA Survey and 2005 AISD SSUSS.

Note. Appendix C provides sample sizes and response rates by school. Garza Independence did not participate in the 2004 TCADA Survey. Error bars are shown for the confidence interval associated with a 95% confidence level, and an asterisk indicates a statistically significant change in the percentage from 2004 to 2005.

**APPENDIX C: TCADA SURVEY AND SSUSS RESPONSE RATES BY SCHOOL**

Table C1: 2003-2004 TCADA and 2004-2005 SSUSS Survey Response Rates by School

	2003-2004		2004-2005	
	Response Rate	<i>n</i>	Response Rate	<i>n</i>
<b>High Schools</b>				
<b>Akins High School</b>	73%	281	65%	271
<b>Anderson High School</b>	80%	303	62%	267
<b>Austin High School</b>	66%	254	72%	254
<b>Bowie High School</b>	110%	435	75%	332
<b>Crockett High School</b>	60%	226	65%	270
<b>Garza Independence High School</b>	--	--	47%	107
<b>Johnston High School</b>	54%	177	30%	115
<b>Lanier High School</b>	56%	217	53%	221
<b>LBJ High School</b>	71%	267	70%	283
<b>McCallum High School</b>	70%	260	67%	280
<b>Reagan High School</b>	50%	177	57%	215
<b>Travis High School</b>	60%	222	57%	235
<b>Middle Schools</b>				
<b>Bailey Middle School</b>	78%	221	67%	152
<b>Bedichek Middle School</b>	74%	205	67%	168
<b>Burnet Middle School</b>	76%	221	86%	204
<b>Covington Middle School</b>	79%	206	49%	118
<b>Dobie Middle School</b>	66%	162	65%	145
<b>Fulmore Middle School</b>	37%	98	75%	184
<b>Kealing Junior High</b>	75%	239	77%	222
<b>Lamar Middle School</b>	47%	122	86%	207
<b>Martin Middle School</b>	39%	98	57%	142
<b>Mendez Middle School</b>	60%	161	82%	197
<b>Murchison Middle School</b>	76%	214	82%	208
<b>O. Henry Middle School</b>	90%	249	84%	221
<b>Paredes Middle School</b>	75%	228	69%	176
<b>Pearce Middle School</b>	62%	163	82%	185
<b>Porter Middle School</b>	81%	196	79%	154
<b>Small Middle School</b>	88%	253	85%	217
<b>Webb Middle School</b>	71%	141	77%	172

Source: 2004 TCADA survey and 2005 SUSS records.

Note. Middle school data include only 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade respondents.

## APPENDIX D: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Table D1: Correlations (Pearson's *r*) Between Indicators of Violence and High School Characteristics\*

	Prevalence of Bullying	Level of Gang Activity
<b>Presence of Weapons</b>	--	-.681
<b>Level of Victimization</b>	.882	--
<b>Level of Safety</b>	--	-.806
<b>Level of Rules Enforcement</b>	-.701	-.582
<b>Academic Environment</b>	-.784	--
<b>Behavioral Environment</b>	-.829	--
<b>Adult-Student Interactions</b>	-.839	--

Note. Correlation coefficients are shown only for relationships that achieved statistical significance at the alpha = .05 level.

Table D2: Correlations (Pearson's *r*) Between Indicators of Violence and Middle School Characteristics\*

	Prevalence of Bullying	Level of Gang Activity
<b>Marijuana Use</b>	--	.601
<b>Presence of Weapons</b>	-.510	.676
<b>Level of Victimization</b>	.812	--
<b>Level of Safety</b>	--	-.619

Note. Correlation coefficients are shown only for relationships that achieved statistical significance at the alpha = .05 level.

\* *Prevalence of Bullying* is based on the percentage of students who report experiencing bullying at least one time during the school year; *Level of Gang Activity* is based on the percentage of students who report that they have friends who belong to a gang; *Presence of Weapons* is based on the percentage of students who report that brought guns, knives, or other weapons to school during the school year; *Level of Victimization* is based on the percentage of students who report that they have been physically harmed or threatened with physical harm at least once during the school year; *Marijuana Use* is based on the percentage of students who report that they have used marijuana in the past 30 days; *Level of Safety* is based on the percentage of students who report that they feel at least somewhat safe; *Level of Rules Enforcement* is based on the percentage of students who report that rules on verbal or physical assaults are usually or always enforced. *Academic Environment* is based on the school's scale score on the Student Climate Survey subscale that describes the rigor of academic expectations and students' sense of academic efficacy; *Behavioral Environment* is based on the school's scale score on the Student Climate Survey subscale that describes the social and physical school environment; *Adult/Student Interactions* is based on the school's scale score on the Student Climate Survey subscale that describes the relationships between students and adults on campus.



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