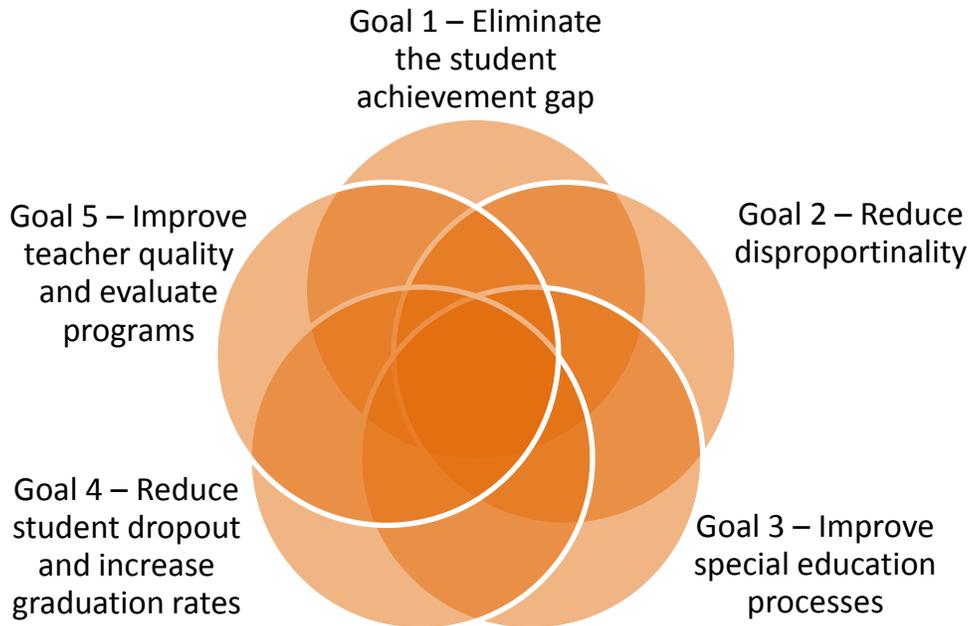


American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA), 2009–2010 Summary



Overview

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

1. Eliminate the student achievement gap
2. Reduce disproportional representation of special education students, especially minority students
3. Improve special education processes
4. Reduce student dropout and increase graduation rates
5. Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs

For goal 1, eliminating the achievement gap, 11 projects are helping to reduce and eliminate the achievement gap for AISD's special education students. Examples of some of these activities include the following:

- Providing critical training and classroom instruction modeling of best practices to teachers

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

For goal 2, reducing disproportionality, two projects have as their target reducing the numbers of students who are referred to special education (e.g., early intervention services [EIS]) and reducing the overrepresentation of certain student groups (e.g., minorities) in special education and in discipline referrals (e.g., expansion of the district's positive behavior support initiative [PBS]).

For goal 3, improving special education processes, five projects are focused on improving AISD's special education systems, procedures, and processes. Examples of these projects include the following:

- Providing schools with an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) facilitation team
- Providing school staff with a useful and streamlined electronic special education student information data system
- Enhancing outreach to Spanish-speaking families through parent trainings about the district's special education processes (e.g., ARD)
- Providing schools with special education parent liaisons and individual education plan (IEP) facilitators
- Ensuring the district provides timely evaluation of children ages 3 through 5 years for possible eligibility for special education services

For goal 4, reducing dropout and increasing graduation rates, two district projects funded by ARRA IDEA are providing services to special education students that focus on the following:

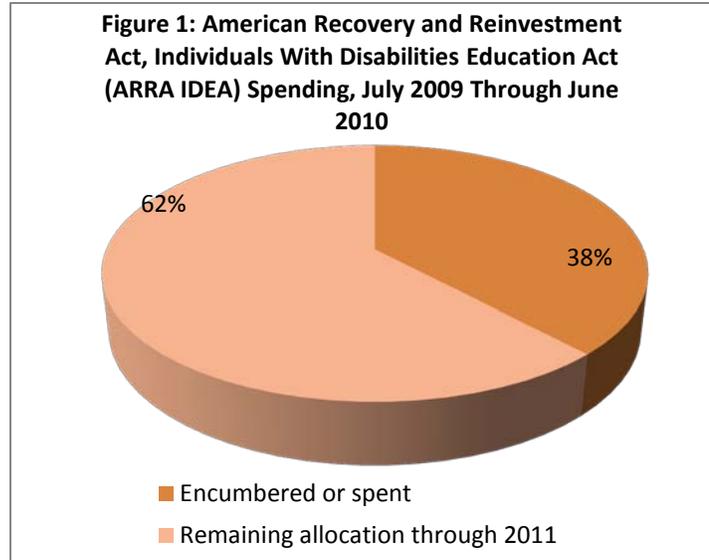
- Supporting course credit recovery at specific high-needs schools for high school students who dropped out of school and returned
- Providing prescriptive skill-based instruction through the use of computer technology to help special education students who are struggling in a core subject area (e.g., reading or math)

For goal 5, improving teacher quality and evaluating programs, five projects are providing the following services:

- Increasing school staff capacity to support special education students' access to the general curriculum
- Creating a web-based IEP monitoring system for teachers and administrators
- Supporting teachers to obtain dual certification
- Evaluating all ARRA IDEA projects to ensure accountability through data gathering and reporting on measurable outcomes
- Providing professional development opportunities for effective practices

Program Expenditures

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



Source. AISD ARRA IDEA financial documentation, July 2010

Jobs Saved and Created

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

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

	Number of jobs
Jobs created through new AISD positions	92.2
Jobs saved	5.0
Total jobs created or saved	97.2

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA documentation, July 2010

Overview of Projects

Table 2 provides an overview of implementation for categories of projects, by major grant goals, including funding allocation and expenditures; jobs created and saved; and numbers of students, staff, and families served as of the end of June 2010. Appendix A has a more in-depth overview of each project. Note that data about students, staff, and families served may contain duplicated counts if these groups were served by more than one project activity. A mid-year report about ARRA IDEA projects was produced in early 2010 and is available online (Doolittle, 2010a).

Table 2. Summary of Funding, Jobs, and Services Provided by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA), July 2009 Through June 2010

ARRA IDEA goal	Two-year allocation	Year 1 expenditures	Jobs created	Jobs saved	Students served *	Staff served *	Family members served *
1. Eliminate the achievement gap	\$7,580,203	\$3,382,753	55.7	2.0	1,725	606	629
2. Reduce disproportionality	\$3,127,000	\$943,230	19.5	1.0	604	209	240
3. Improve special education processes	\$3,079,035	\$883,769	11.0	2.0	999	1,040	1,112
4. Reduce dropout and increase graduation	\$1,185,772	\$424,659	4.0	0	1,405	201	22
5. Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs	\$1,450,000	\$612,306	2.0	0	186	290	0
Total	\$16,422,010	\$6,246,717	92.2	5.0	4,919	2,346	2,003

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA documentation, July 2010

* Totals may include duplicates because people may have been served by more than one project.

ARRA IDEA activities that served students included a wide variety of projects (e.g., EIS, computer-based prescriptive instruction, and vocational supports for students with disabilities). In these instances, students receive direct services and educational program support. A total of 4,919 students were served during the first year of ARRA IDEA. Counts may be duplicated if a student received more than one service. Additionally, approximately 2,346 staff (duplicated count) benefited through training, coaching, and instructional support from projects funded through ARRA IDEA. During the first year of ARRA IDEA, AISD supported 2,003 family members (duplicated count) of AISD students through project activities. More than 192 trainings for staff and/or parents were completed, and AISD staff collaborated with 42 community agencies (duplicated count).

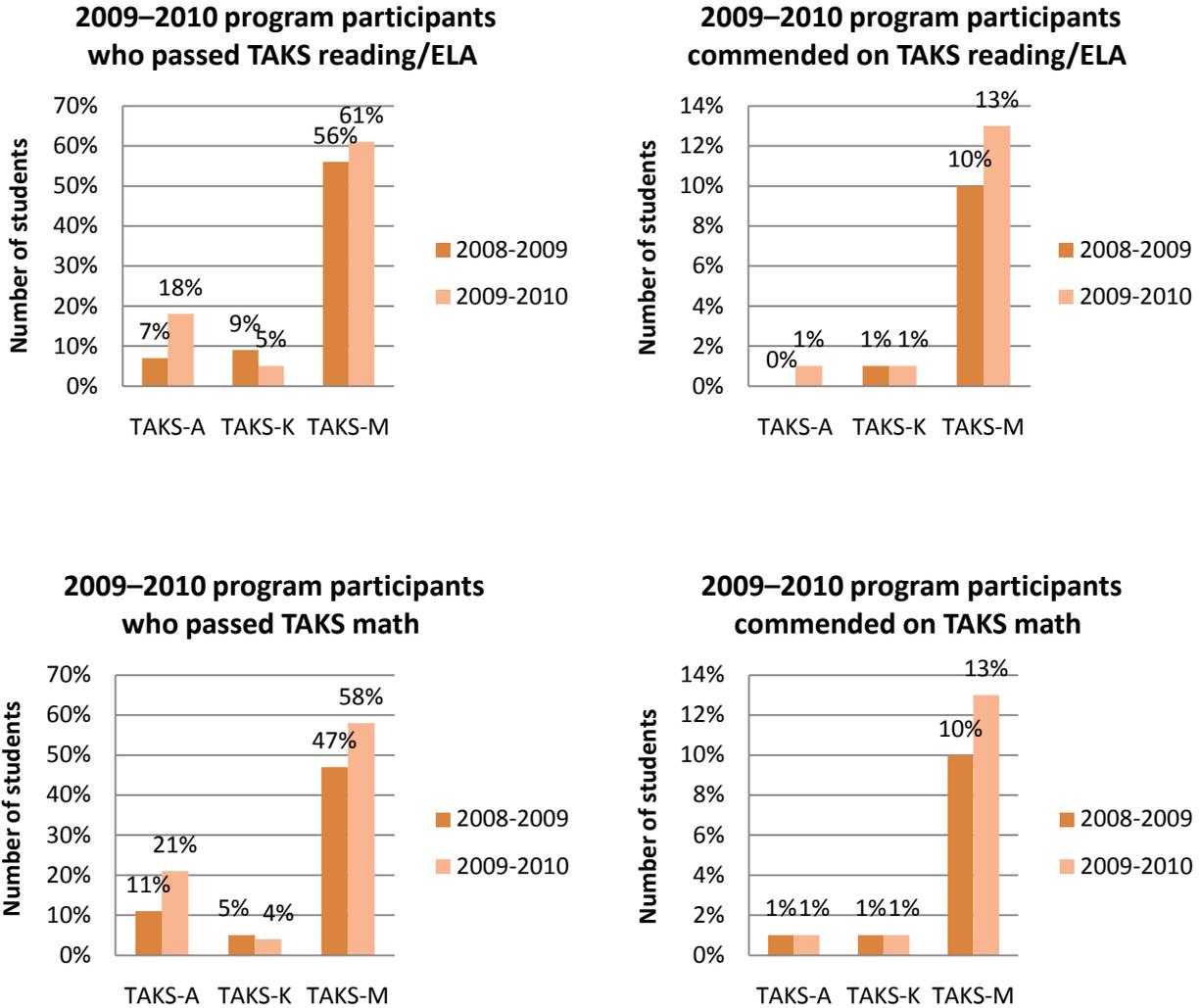
Projects to Reduce the Student Achievement Gap and Dropout Rates

ARRA IDEA funds were used to support a variety of projects that addressed the achievement gap and dropout rates.

Eliminating the Achievement Gap Project

During 2009–2010, funds were provided to schools to support afterschool and Saturday school sessions that enabled special education students to receive additional instructional support and academic interventions in reading and math. A greater number of special education students who received reading or math interventions during 2009–2010 passed the 2010 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests in reading and math, compared with their performance on TAKS in the previous year. Figure 2 shows a summary of these results. In August 2010, a campus survey identified common best practices and resources used by schools that had high percentages of special education students passing reading/English language arts (ELA) and math TAKS in 2009–2010, and a summary of these findings were shared with school staff in September 2010 (Doolittle, 2010b).

Figure 2. 2009 and 2010 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing and Commended Percentages in Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Math) for Special Education Students Who Participated in 2009–2010 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA), Academic Interventions



Source. AISD TAKS records 2009, 2010

Computer-Based Interventions Projects

During 2009–2010, one teacher and one teaching assistant were funded to implement a computer-based, prescriptive instruction program in reading, writing, and math for at-risk students at Garcia Middle School. The program served 131 students, and seven staff members participated in six training sessions. Preliminary data indicated a 22% gain from 2009 to 2010 in the number of 8th-grade students who passed the math TAKS.

Computer-based, prescriptive instruction also was provided for the special education students most at risk of dropping out of school at middle and high schools. The goals targeted were credit recovery, course completion, and reduction of students’ academic deficits. Grant funds paid for one program facilitator and one field technician for this project. More than 1,300 students were served at 22

campuses, and 108 staff attended 35 trainings. Among students served, growth was seen in students' TAKS passing rates for each subject area from 2009 to 2010, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Rates in 2009 and 2010 for Middle and High School Special Education Students Who Participated in Computer-Based Prescriptive Instruction, 2009–2010

TAKS subject	% Passing 2009	% Passing 2010	Percentage point gain
Reading/English language arts	63	69	6
Mathematics	38	46	8
Science	32	46	14
Social studies	64	73	9

Source. AISD TAKS records, 2009 and 2010

Among student participants at Travis High School, 62 were able to graduate in 2010, and of those, 33 used computer-based software for course credit recovery (an increase of 30 students, compared with the number who had been successful the previous year). Several schools reported success in enabling students who had dropped out to return and gain course credits toward graduation (e.g., Travis, Anderson).

Vocational Supports Project

The goal of this project was to increase vocational supports for students with disabilities through community-based vocational instruction (CBVI) and career and technology education (CTED). CBVI served six high schools (i.e., Akins, Crockett, LBJ, Reagan, Travis, and Anderson) during 2009–2010. Two CBVI consultants, supervised by the existing employment supervisor, developed 14 new sites and increased the number of students participating from 21 to 64. Databases of CBVI contacts were created for the six high schools. CBVI development for these six high schools, plus Austin, Bowie, Eastside, McCallum, and Lanier, will continue with ARRA staff during 2010–2011. Supported employment consultants will collaborate with ARRA staff to facilitate the program after ARRA funding has ended. Career and technology education staff established two basic computer integration skills (BCIS) classes at the Crockett campus, with a total enrollment of 13 students. Students learned office skills in accordance with Office of Proficiency Assessment and Certification (OPAC) guidelines and coursework. A goal is to have first-year students return to complete the second year of this 2-year program.

Dropout Recovery Project

A dropout recovery program focused on special education students was developed and implemented at Travis High School in 2009–2010. Two grant-funded staff members collaborated with existing Communities in Schools (CIS) staff and dropout specialists to find students who had left school in the prior school year and to reconnect them with opportunities for completing coursework so that they could graduate. A data system to track students, program tools, and student and family surveys was created. By the end of Summer 2010, 37 students had earned a total of 76 credits, and 15 students had graduated. Six students were linked to post-graduation services. Program staff plan to share best practices for dropout recovery with staff from other high schools in AISD, and the program is

continuing in 2010–2011 with plans to integrate services with other existing district dropout recovery efforts.

Projects Addressing Disproportionality

Early Intervention Services Project

To reduce the number of students being identified for special education, with a particular focus on not over-identifying African American students, 30 to 40 minutes of proven, research-based reading instruction was provided to the lowest performing kindergarten through grade 2 students at elementary schools in the LBJ, Reagan, and Eastside Memorial Vertical Teams. Students were identified for the program if they were in the lowest 20% in reading at their grade level, as measured by several early literacy assessments. More than 600 students were served, along with 105 staff, who attended 10 trainings. Four percent of student participants successfully exited the program at the end of 2009–2010. At the beginning of the year, 2% of EIS students in kindergarten through grade 2 were performing on or above grade level. By the end of the year, 23% of kindergarten program participants were performing on or above grade level, with 15% of 1st-grade participants, and 12% of 2nd-grade participants performing on or above grade level. Significant progress, as measured with the DRA, was made by 79% of kindergarten participants, 44% of 1st-grade participants, and 65% of 2nd-grade participants. Only 1.8% of program participants qualified for the special education program by the end of 2009–2010.

Positive Behavior Support Through Parent Training Project

To reduce disproportionality in discretionary disciplinary removals in special education, staff from the Special Education Department collaborated with staff from the Parent Support Office, the Department of Positive Behavior Support, and the Region XIII Service Center to expand and deepen PBS in AISD. The goal of this project was to provide prevention, early intervention, and intervention services through integrated efforts. More than 100 staff members from 25 campuses attended trainings in Coaching Model and Love and Logic. A total of 240 parents attended 18 Love and Logic trainings. Training was offered on 11 campuses; in addition, all AISD parents were invited to participate at four district-wide sites. Following the trainings, the number of parents who reported having fun being a parent increased by 40 percentage points, the number of parents who reported that they stayed calm while disciplining their child increased by 44 percentage points, and the number of parents who reported that their child argued or talked back to them decreased by 32 percentage points (Doolittle, 2010c).

Decentralization Project

Specialized supports and services were provided across the district to enable special education students to receive services on their home campus or at a campus nearby within the home vertical team. From 2008–2009 to 2009–2010, the number of special education students served off of their home campus decreased from 1,050 to 876. Among elementary students, attendance improved from 94% to 95%. In addition, the number of students riding the bus (to or from services) for one hour or more decreased from 191 to 144 during the same period. The average bus ride time increased from 25 to 30 minutes due to district rerouting. When families of these students were surveyed regarding the new processes, 67% of respondents indicated that they approved of the new processes.

Principals were surveyed, as well. Overall, principals viewed the decentralization efforts positively, in terms of having students receive their special education services on or near the home campus, and seeing improvements in students' learning. Ninety-one percent indicated that students received

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

“The collegial atmosphere, drive for goals and sense of purpose everyone is exhibiting is really encouraging... You all clearly care about what you do, and about doing it well.”—AISD parent

Projects to Improve Special Education Processes

ARD/IEP Facilitation Project

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

Overall, case managers reported learning a great deal from the trainings. One case manager said, "I can't believe how much I have learned about crafting an IEP since last October." Another reported, "I now feel like I could move home to the valley and be a sped coordinator I have learned so much." Upon reviewing TAKS results by objective, a case manager said, "Now I see how I can connect needs, goals, and competencies by using this data." Positive feedback has been received from parents, as well. One parent wrote, "The collegial atmosphere, drive for goals and sense of purpose everyone is exhibiting is really encouraging... You all clearly care about what you do, and about doing it well" and "It's impossible for parents to separate themselves from the emotion of discussing their child, and I assume it's also impossible for staff to separate themselves from the reality of their already stretched resource pool. Having an intermediary to bridge those two worlds and keep the entire train on the tracks is the best thing AISD could do for successful ARD management. GREAT use of tax dollars in my humble opinion (IMHO)."

Parent Relations Liaison and Facilitation Project

Parent relation liaisons/IEP facilitators were assigned to support high-need situations and to provide training to campus teams. The focus was district wide, on the basis of administrators' requests for support. Twenty-five students at 24 campuses were served. Ninety-eight percent of cases at targeted campuses were resolved. Parent complaints and due process hearing requests were reduced by 25%, compared with requests the prior year. Administrators' time that would have been spent working on these cases was recaptured by 20%. Program staff will continue working to develop a primer on working with parents, a framework for parent training, information sharing, and support groups to be provided through the co-op. In addition, program staff will develop a document to summarize conflict situations and their outcomes (e.g., due process, compliance, and mediation). A small number of surveys ($n = 3$) given during the first 8 weeks of school to parents who requested support for resolution of concerns indicated that parents were very satisfied with their conferences, which included sharing their concerns, obtaining helpful feedback, resolving their concerns, and being heard and respected.

“(My daughter) wouldn't be where she is if it wasn't for her teachers and those who helped us enroll her. She couldn't communicate her basic needs one year ago. Now, she talks all the time. We love it! We are very grateful!”—AISD parent

PPCD Evaluation Team Project

A team of evaluators, consisting of speech language pathologists and education diagnosticians/licensed specialists in school psychology, evaluated children ages 3 through 5 with suspected disabilities who were not yet enrolled in AISD. The team assessed children's cognitive, adaptive, behavior, and speech skills. A second team, consisting of special education supervisors, a representative from Head Start, an AISD elementary principal, and the early childhood intervention (ECI) transition specialist, was responsible for reviewing data; monitoring compliance; improving the referral and evaluation process; reviewing needs and concerns of the community; and training district and agency professionals about eligibility criteria, referral processes, and ARD requirements. Five trainings were completed; 716 students at 65 campuses were served. The percentage of evaluations completed on time increased from 83% to 90% to 94% during the 3 years between 2007 and 2010. An electronic database on a share drive was created to monitor and track the evaluations. Regarding the evaluation process, one parent wrote, “(My daughter) wouldn't be where she is if it wasn't for her teachers and those who helped us enroll her. She couldn't communicate her basic needs one year ago. Now, she talks all the time. We love it! We are very grateful!”

Web-Based Data Systems and Progress Monitoring Projects

A programmer was employed to develop a web-based system for IEP and behavior intervention plan (BIP) progress monitoring (i.e., that interfaced with the existing data system), to communicate academic and behavioral progress to parents and staff, and to guide instructional and behavioral interventions. The system was piloted during extended school year (ESY, summer) session 2010, with the goal of all special education teachers using the system to monitor and report the progress of IEP goals and objectives.

The same programmer and another staff member worked to enhance the electronic IEP data system. Equipment will be purchased to develop data systems for in-home and parent training, migrating paper-based evaluations, printing IEPs in Spanish, capturing audio, producing electronic signatures, and integrating Special Education Electronic Document System (SEEDS) with other district web

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

Projects to Improve Teacher Quality

Improve Inclusion Practices

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

Autism Support

More than 200 staff members attended 13 training sessions to support data-driven service delivery to students with autism. Training sessions included the Social Communication Resources and Services (SCORES) Institute and SCORES support meetings, Michelle Garcia Winner Social Skills Curriculum, Monthly Autism Essentials, and Advanced Social Skills. Among SCORES attendees, 80% reported that the training was very helpful. At the conclusion of the Michelle Garcia Winner training, 100% of participants reported that they felt prepared to implement the social skills curriculum. In addition, a district library with more than 150 autism resources for teachers and parents was established, and individual SCORES resources, in English and in Spanish, were purchased for all campus programs.

Teacher Support for Tier 3 Reading Instruction

Staff implemented Tier 3 reading instruction that complimented core reading instruction in AISD with students who were having difficulty with reading. Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), a research-based reading program, was identified to meet the needs of these special education students. One high school teacher reported, "I am so EXCITED FOR MY STUDENTS!!! They are in for the ride of their young lives! This LETRS training (dubbed "Graduate School on Steroids") should be taught to all teachers and in all teacher-education programs." Ninety-two teachers were trained in prescriptive speaking, reading, writing, and spelling strategies. According to one middle school teacher, "This is the first training I've been to in years where I felt totally engrossed and excited about the information. I can't wait to get ALL of my resources, get my room setup, and start practicing what I learned." Another stated, "After teaching children with special needs for 20 years, I finally understand the connection between language and reading and writing. I feel prepared for the first time to accurately diagnose, develop a plan, and address reading and writing problems." Classroom materials and hardware were purchased. Six teachers were identified to receive trainer-of-trainer (TOT) sessions to lead ongoing professional development activities in this area for other campus staff. One project goal is to increase the number of teachers who will receive TOT training during 2010–2011 as a means to building capacity to maintain LETRS training and knowledge beyond the grant.

Supporting Teachers of Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities

AISD staff partnered with the Region XIII Educational Service Center to develop, deliver, and implement a comprehensive Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)-aligned, content-focused curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. More than 100 staff participated in web-based video training, and instructional specialists were employed to lead teachers in implementation

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

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

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

Source. AISD TAKS records, 2009 and 2010

Improving Measurable Goal Writing; Implementing TAKS-M Benchmarks

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

Dual Certification

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

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

Projects to Improve Home-School Connections

Pre-Literacy, In-Home Parent Training

Twenty-seven in-home training sessions were provided to 14 parents of 12 children between the ages of 3 and 4 years who were enrolled in two preschool programs for children with disabilities in AISD. The purpose of the sessions was to share strategies that help develop language and pre-literacy skills at home, and to help parents provide a language- and literacy-rich environment. The sessions, provided twice per week, offered parents practical, hands-on strategies to meet the unique needs of their children. In addition, a family orientation and staff training sessions were held. Seventy-eight percent of parents who responded to a survey administered by teachers at the end of the 2009–2010 school year indicated that they were successful *occasionally* or *frequently* in providing their child with pre-literacy activities taught by the program. Similarly, 80% of parents who responded to the in-home session evaluation survey indicated that they had made progress toward meeting the child-centered goals *sometimes* or *often*. Two teachers reported increased parent involvement in the classroom.

Parent Training to Improve Knowledge and Participation in Special Education Processes

A team of bilingual parent-support specialists developed and delivered trainings to parents of students with disabilities to increase parents' knowledge and understanding of the special education process. The support specialists implemented Nutriendo a Otros Bajo Liderazgo Especializado (NOBLE) to build a core group of parent leaders to meaningfully participate in the ARD process. The team collaborated with the following community organizations, as appropriate: El Buen Samaritano, Family Connections, and Any Baby Can. Thirty-nine parents from five campuses participated in 13 trainings about topics, including the following: Introduction to the New Parent Handbook, The ARD Meeting, Developing an IEP, Participating in the ARD Meeting, and Questions Parents Should Ask During an ARD Meeting. Other AISD activities in which parents and staff participated included the following: Back to School Bash, Spanish Emotional Support Group for parents at the Rosedale Co-op, Feria Para Aprender, the Akins Vertical Team Fall Resource Fair, listening stations at the superintendent's forums and Co-op Resource Fair, and Go Project Open House at Extend-A-Care.

Successes and Challenges

ARRA IDEA Successes

The first year of implementation of ARRA IDEA projects in AISD was successful in many ways. In accordance with the requirements of ARRA IDEA, and in support of local district policy and practice, progress monitoring was established to provide transparency and accountability across projects. A project management approach was used to set and meet clearly measurable benchmarks and timelines. From the beginning, all projects were goal oriented and outcome focused. In each case, measures for accountability were developed. Each project was monitored by its own staff, staff from other projects, and by the district evaluator. Bimonthly meetings were held, and project staff reported their progress to date. Each project team recorded its progress electronically so that projects could be tracked by all staff. Projects were evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine effectiveness and make responsive changes, as necessary. Through ARRA IDEA, certain activities and services for students, staff, and families were supported that might not have occurred otherwise. For example, five job positions were saved and 92.2 job positions were created by the use of ARRA IDEA funds. In addition, EIS provided classroom support in reading to low-performing kindergarten through grade-2 students. Also, improvements to special education processes (e.g., ARD/IEP facilitation) and systems (e.g., IEP progress monitoring), and provision of staff professional development

opportunities and resources (e.g., inclusion training, tier-3 reading training, autism library) occurred during 2009–2010 and will continue to benefit campuses in years to come.

ARRA IDEA Challenges

Challenges were associated with some projects funded by ARRA IDEA, as well. For example, in an effort to streamline similar activities, a project that was to include professional development opportunities about effective practices was combined with existing professional development projects. A new project that focused on compliance to meet a more pressing district need to ensure special education students receive adequate and timely services began in Fall 2010. Some projects had slow starts due to difficulty finding staff to hire, while other projects were subject to a change in activity focus so they would better align with district and campus needs. By the end of the first year, some ARRA IDEA project staff began leaving, possibly out of concern that their positions would end along with ARRA IDEA in September 2011. In addition, the district began projecting a shortfall in the 2011–2012 budget year, causing ARRA IDEA leadership to rethink how and if current special education services and staff support are provided with regular IDEA and local funds. Key to these plans will be how to maintain support for activities initiated through ARRA IDEA after funding has ceased, and still continue to provide critical and mandated services to students with disabilities.

Moving Forward—Beyond ARRA

To prepare for a difficult situation created by an impending ARRA IDEA “funding cliff” at the end of September 2011, in combination with a potential district budget shortfall for 2011–2012, AISD special education staff members are preparing for the sustainability of their projects’ activities after ARRA. For example, the autism specialist, for whom BCBA certification costs had been paid, trained members of AISD’s autism team, increasing the district’s capacity to served students with autism in the future at no additional cost. Also, the vocational supports project is training teachers to teach job skill development, developing curriculum, and establishing job sites that will continue after ARRA concludes. In several projects, selected campus teachers were trained as TOTs or leadership cohorts who could provide ongoing professional development opportunities and support to other teachers. Data systems and coordination of services were improved to benefit students and staff at campuses in current and future years. Ensuring accountability through team-based project monitoring and evaluation has enabled all staff participating in the ARRA IDEA grant to incorporate the use of data to drive efficiency and program improvement. This practice will benefit all staff who continue to find better ways to serve students with disabilities.

Based on findings from the first year of ARRA IDEA in AISD, the following key elements to support program implementation and the measurement of effectiveness are in place and should be maintained:

- Continue to imbed accountability and progress monitoring through the project management process. This will occur through regularly scheduled review meetings and cross-functional communication.
- Plan for when ARRA IDEA funds are no longer available by reexamining current policy, practice, and processes—at campus and district levels, within special education, and across district departments and functions.

Summary

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

Appendix

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

Initiative	Students served*	Staff trained*	Families supported*	Two-year ARRA funds allocated	Results from year 1
Develop model inclusion demonstration schools and classrooms	0	0	0	\$730,000	(See results for “Increase staff capacity to support access to general curriculum” below)
Campus funding to support innovative inclusion practices	749	0	0	\$500,000	(See results for “Provide extended learning opportunities to students” below)
Build capacity to support students autism spectrum disorders	159	200	314	\$752,000	More than 200 staff members trained in autism support; district library established with 150 autism resources
Increase numbers of students receiving specialized services on home campuses (decentralization)	297	0	297	\$1,800,000	Special education students served off of their home campus decreased from 1,050 to 876
Implement Tier 3 reading instruction	0	79	0	\$1,365,653	Eighty teachers trained; materials and hardware purchased
TEKS-curriculum alignment for students with significant cognitive disabilities	300	108	4	\$400,000	More than 100 staff trained; instructional specialists hired; cohorts of literacy leaders created
Provide extended learning opportunities to students	0	0	0	\$700,000	Participants had higher passing and commended rates on their 2010 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) than on their 2009 TAKS
PPCD pre-literacy, in-home skill development	12	4	14	\$636,000	Twenty-seven in-home training sessions provided to 14 parents; 78% of parents reported successfully implementing skills
Improve IEP measurable goal writing and implement TAKS-M benchmarks	0	194	0	\$126,000	One hundred ninety-four staff trained; TAKS-M benchmarks, standards for modified curriculum, and supplemental aids created
Continue RTI computer-based project at Garcia MS	131	7	0	\$201,000	Preliminary data indicated a 22% gain from 2009 to 2010 in the number of 8 th -grade students who passed math TAKS
Increase vocational supports for students with disabilities	77	14	0	\$369,000	Two CBVI consultants developed 14 new sites and increased the number of students participating from 21 to 64;CTED staff established two basic computer classes that served 13 students

Initiative	Students served*	Staff trained*	Families supported*	Two-year ARRA funds allocated	Results from year 1
Implement Early Intervention Services (EIS)	604	105	0	\$2,267,000	The majority of participants in kindergarten through grade 2 made progress, as measured by the DRA; only 1.8% program participants qualified for the special education program by the end of the year
Expand Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)	0	104	240	\$860,000	The number of parents who reported that they stayed calm while disciplining their child increased by 44%; the number of parents who reported that their child argued or talked back to them decrease by 32%
Develop ARD/IEP facilitation team	258	663	318	\$1,330,000	Fourteen trainings completed; admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) materials created (e.g., handbook, phone script); the facilitator received highly positive feedback on surveys; case managers reported learning a great deal from the trainings
Enhance electronic IEP data system	0	2	0	\$450,000	Development feedback meetings held
Enhance outreach to Spanish-speaking families	0	3	39	\$387,000	Thirty-nine parents from five campuses participated in 13 trainings; parents and staff participated in a variety of other activities
Parent Liaisons, IEP facilitators	25	125	39	\$336,000	Ninety-eight percent of cases resolved; parent complaints and due process hearing requests reduced by 25%; administrators' time recaptured by 20%
PPCD evaluation team for timely evaluations of children ages 3-5	716	247	716	\$576,035	Ninety-four percent of evaluations completed on schedule
Compliance *project to begin 2010-2011					
Develop dropout recovery/ at-risk student programs at targeted campuses	37	93	22	\$440,000	Thirty-seven students earned a total of 76 credits; 15 students graduated; six students linked to post-graduation services
Provide computer-based prescriptive instruction at middle and high schools	1,368	108	0	\$745,772	Sixty-two participants from Travis HS graduated; of those, 33 used computer-based software for course credit recovery (30 more than the previous year); participants showed growth on TAKS in all subject areas

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

* Totals may include duplicates since people may have been served in more than one project.

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