



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2010-2011 Mid-Year Report

Overview

In June 2009, Austin Independent School District (AISD) received \$17.3 million for initiatives from 2009–2011 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ARRA IDEA). Of the \$17.3 million, \$16.9 million were allocated to IDEA-Part B; the remaining funds were for IDEA Preschool. After set-asides for indirect costs and private schools, \$16.6 million remained. The focus of the current evaluation is on the programs implemented using these remaining funds.

AISD staff, under the guidance of the superintendent and the district's board of trustees, and along with community partners, parents, and representatives from nonprofit organizations in Central Texas, targeted the funds for projects that addressed one or more of the following goals:

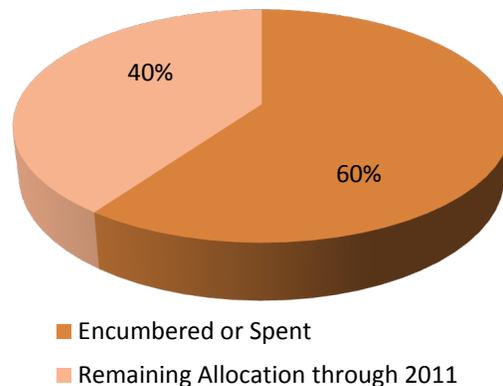
1. Eliminate the student achievement gap
2. Reduce disproportional representation of special education students, especially minority students
3. Improve special education processes
4. Reduce student dropout and increase graduation rates
5. Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs

In the first year, the ARRA IDEA projects across AISD created or saved 97.2 jobs and benefited more than 9,000 students, staff, and family members. In the second year, numbers served have increased to more than 30,000. Please note that these counts are duplicated, as individuals were sometimes served through multiple projects. The projects made progress toward meeting the five goals, and project staff maintained transparency with stakeholders through meetings and shared documents, set measurable goals, and monitored their own progress. Project staff began preparing sustainability plans for continuing critical and required activities to support and educate students with disabilities after the grant ends in September 2011.

Program Expenditures

Of the \$16.6 million allocated to the projects, 60% (\$9.9 million) was spent or encumbered between July 2009 and December 2010 on the ARRA IDEA projects that served students, staff, and families. A large portion of the allocation is spent on salaries, and all funds are expected to be used by the end of the grant.

Figure 1: ARRA IDEA Spending July 2009 through December 2010



Source. AISD ARRA IDEA financial documentation, January 2011

Jobs Saved and Created

A primary aim of ARRA IDEA was to create and sustain jobs while addressing critical needs in the American educational system. As of December 2010, 107.2 positions had been created through the grant (see Table 1). In addition, 3.0 positions were saved using ARRA IDEA monies.

Table 1. Counts of Jobs Created or Saved through the Use of ARRA IDEA Funding, December 2010

	Number of Jobs
Jobs created via new AISD positions	107.2
Jobs saved	3.0
Total Jobs Created or Saved	110.2

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA documentation, January 2011—from the quarterly report to TEA

Overview of Projects

Table 2 provides an implementation overview for projects by the five major grant goals, including funding allocation and expenditures, jobs created and saved, and numbers of students, staff and families served between July 2010 and December 2010. A more in-depth overview of each project can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2. Summary of Funding, Expenditures, and Services Provided Through ARRA IDEA, by Major Grant Goals, as of December 2010

Goal	Total Allocation	Expenditures as of 12/10	Jobs Created /Saved	Students Served * 7/10-12/10	Staff Served * 7/10-12/10	Family Served * 7/10-12/10
1. Eliminate the achievement gap	\$7,020,203	\$ 5,240,187	74.5	1,733	1,001	636
2. Reduce disproportionality	\$3,127,000	\$ 1,504,547	20.5	2,691	1,193	186
3. Improve special education processes	\$3,079,035	\$ 1,242,269	10.5	822	1,204	873
4. Reduce dropout and increase graduation	\$1,185,772	\$ 809,988	4.0	2,111	195	22
5. Improve teacher quality and evaluate programs	\$2,180,000	\$ 1,133,872	.7	389	672	312
Total	\$16,592,010	\$ 9,930,863	110.2	7,746	4,265	2,029

Source. AISD ARRA IDEA documentation, January 2011

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

Students, Staff, and Families Served

ARRA IDEA activities that served students include a wide variety of projects, such as early intervention services, computer-based prescriptive instruction, and vocational supports for students with disabilities. In these instances, students receive direct services and educational program support. As shown in Table 2, a total of 7,746 students were served during the first half of the second year of ARRA IDEA. Counts may be duplicated if a student received more than one service. Additionally, approximately 4,265 staff (duplicated count) benefited through training, coaching, and instructional support from ARRA IDEA funded projects during this same period. AISD supported 2,029 family members (duplicated count) of AISD students through project activities from July to December 2010. Over 896 trainings for staff and/or parents were completed, and AISD staff collaborated with 93 community agencies (duplicated count) during this period.

Mid-Year Progress Data

Students

More than 1,500 special education students struggling in reading and/or math were targeted for supplemental instruction after school and on Saturdays at 103 campuses. Fifty-three students with autism spectrum disorders attended preschool programs for children with disabilities (PPCD) on 4 campuses. TAKS-M benchmark assessments were implemented in grades 3-11 on every campus with students taking the modified TAKS. Over 550 students in Kindergarten and first and second grades received early intervention services (EIS) in reading at 21 elementary campuses in the Eastside Memorial, LBJ and Reagan attendance zones.

Three hundred sixty-five students were served by the district's PPCD evaluation team. On a written survey, 84% of parents *agreed or strongly agreed* that they were satisfied with the evaluation process. One parent wrote, "I appreciate PPCD and my son's excellent progress, and thank you to the teachers for their great efforts and the education they give my child." Parents' suggestions for improvement included increasing the length of evaluations and adding an in-home observation; expanding the scope of the evaluation to include other skills, in addition to verbal skills; lengthening PPCD classes; and using fewer acronyms. Eighty-seven percent of AISD staff surveyed reported being *satisfied or very satisfied* with the information they received from the evaluation team. One staff member wrote, "Overall, this process has been much more helpful and effective than campus-based evaluation and has allowed campus SLPs to better manage their 'already in school' referral loads. The reports I have received are excellent and give useful information." Staff members' suggestions for improvement included adding more training for evaluators; including home visits in evaluations; improving communication with Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) staff and among evaluation team members; and adding more evaluators, including two full-time evaluators provided by the Department of Special Education.

Finally, to prevent dropout and improve graduation rates, over 2,000 middle and high school students participated in computer-based prescriptive instruction using Compass Odyssey software. Two parents were trained for in-home use as well.

Staff

Staff capacity to support special education students' access to the general curriculum was increased as 558 staff members representing 79 campuses participated in 11 sessions of Us+! Thirty-four staff members completed an online evaluation of the training. Of those, 88% rated the course 4 or 5 (with 1 meaning *poor*, 3 *average*, and 5 *excellent*) on "Module Content," "Presentation of Content,"

“Quality of Module Materials,” and “Relevance to My Current Position;” 79% rated the course 4 or 5 on “Activities Reinforced Learning;” and 85% rated the course 4 or 5 on “Overall Evaluation.”

In August, a survey was sent to staff members from campuses that had the highest TAKS 2010 passing percentages in reading and math among special education students. From the responses, lists of best practices and effective resources were compiled, presented in district meetings, and made available online. In addition, during 14 trainings sessions, 490 instructional staff learned techniques to support students with autism spectrum disorder. Professional development sessions on Comprehensive Tier 3 reading instruction (i.e., LETRS) were provided to 94 teachers at 75 campuses to support reading programming. Tier 3 reading materials were purchased for, and delivered to, all campuses. Sixty staff members were trained on TEKS alignment of curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Over 140 staff members completed three modules of an IEP Best Practice e-learning course through Region XIII Education Service Center, and an additional 625 staff are registered for the course. Fifteen staff members received training in vocational supports for children with disabilities. Over 900 staff members were trained on topics related to ARD/IEP facilitation. All special education staff, PEIMS coordinators, and principals participated in special education compliance training. Special education staff continued working to enhance the electronic IEP data system. The IEP form templates were translated into Spanish, and the coding of the evaluation plan template was completed and made ready for testing. Three AISD staff members continued working toward becoming Board Certified Behavior Specialists (BCBAs). Each has completed, or is in the process of completing coursework, and all are currently in supervision, which includes classroom observation, debriefing, book study and research review. Each shared the latest professional development and research with the autism team at AISD. In addition over the summer, 5 AISD speech pathologists received intensive training in Spanish in an effort to become bilingual certified.

Families

During Fall 2010, in-home training on autism was provided to 292 parents. Sixty-eight parents participated in in-home training in language/pre-literacy skill development; training for 28 parents was conducted in English, and training for 40 parents was conducted in Spanish. Over 100 parents participated in Love and Logic training. Seventy-six parents completed surveys before and after Love and Logic training. Following the training, the percentage of parents who reported feeling stressed-out dropped from 49% to 28%. The percentage of parents who reported staying calm when they had to discipline their child increased from 36% to 62%, and the percentage of parents who reported letting their kids make their own decisions increased from 30% to 72%. Over 400 families were assisted by ARD/IEP Facilitator teams during the fall semester. Forty-five families were served through the district’s outreach to Spanish-speaking families in Platicas meetings, and the Spanish version of the Special Education Department’s Parent Handbook was updated. Participating families had opportunities to learn about special education in AISD, the ARD process, and the Parent Handbook. Fifty-eight families from 17 campuses were served by Parent Relation Liaisons and IEP Facilitators through individual communications and group meetings. On a written survey regarding these services, one parent wrote, “Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with the Principal and Assistant Principal at (my child’s school). (My child) is doing so well this year.”

Sustainability

Project managers were tasked with developing plans for continuation of selected project activities beyond ARRA IDEA funding. Some examples of activities mentioned in sustainability plans include building staff capacity through professional development, placing resources (e.g., lesson plans, parent

letters) available on district servers so that staff can access them easily in the future, and purchasing classroom materials (e.g., books, software) that can be used for years to come. With the current district budget crisis, there are many unknowns. However, continued funding for some project activities may be secured through creative and efficient use of existing funds or new grants. Some project activities or job responsibilities may be assigned to existing staff. Also, some projects will be discontinued due to lack of funds.

Summary

A year and a half into implementation, ARRA IDEA-funded projects across AISD have created or saved 110.2 jobs and served 7,746 students, 4,265 staff and 2,029 family members. Project staff have maintained transparency with stakeholders, set measurable goals, and monitored their own progress. Some examples of progress made by projects during this time period were presented, including project activities completed, numbers of staff trained, and survey responses collected. Despite challenges along the way, 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 seeking more efficiency in provision of essential services. A forthcoming report at the end of the grant will provide a more detailed analysis of the ARRA-IDEA funded progress toward meeting the goals of eliminating the student achievement gap, reducing disproportionality, improving special education processes, reducing student dropout and increasing graduation rates, and improving teacher quality.

Appendix

Appendix A: Summary of Funding, Expenditures, and Services Provided Through ARRA IDEA, by Project, December 2010

Project	Total Allocation	Expenditures as of 12/10	Jobs Created /Saved	Students Served * 7/10-12/10	Staff Served * 7/10-12/10	Family Served * 7/10-12/10
Campus funding to support innovative inclusion practices/ Provide extended learning opportunities to students	\$1,200,000	\$643,562	0	na	na	0
Build capacity to support students autism spectrum disorders***	\$752,550	\$175,757	.50	199	567	418
Increase numbers of students receiving specialized services on home campuses (decentralization)	\$1,800,000	\$2,198,035	66.25	na	66	0
Implement Tier 3 reading instruction	\$1,365,653	\$1,350,046	0	0	94	0
TEKS-curriculum alignment for students with significant cognitive disabilities	\$400,000	248,026	1.50	706	60	0
PPCD pre-literacy, in-home skill development	\$636,000	\$148,011	2.00	70	18	68
Compliance**	\$170,000	\$83,479	2.00	2,000	1,099	85
Improve IEP measurable goal writing and implement TAKS-M benchmarks	\$126,000	\$156,210	0	0	147	0
Continue RTI computer-based project at Garcia MS	\$201,000	\$140,692	.50	662	34	150
Increase vocational supports for students with disabilities	\$369,000	\$95,467	1.40	96	15	0
Implement Early Intervention Services (EIS)	\$2,267,000	\$1,419,561	17.50	557	18	0
Expand Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)	\$860,000	\$84,987	1.00	134	76	101
Develop ARD/IEP facilitation team	\$1,330,000	\$373,981	5.00	439	910	405
Enhance electronic IEP data system	\$450,000	\$210,298	0	0	2	0
Enhance outreach to Spanish-speaking families	\$387,000	\$108,716	1.00	0	38	45
Parent Liaisons, IEP facilitators	\$336,000	\$214,479	1.00	18	56	58

Project	Total Allocation	Expenditures as of 12/10	Jobs Created /Saved	Students Served * 7/10-12/10	Staff Served * 7/10-12/10	Family Served * 7/10-12/10
PPCD evaluation team for timely evaluations of children ages 3-5	\$576,035	\$334,796	3.49	365	198	365
Develop dropout recovery/ at-risk student programs at targeted campuses	\$440,000	\$135,803	2.00	20	54	20
Provide computer-based prescriptive instruction at middle and high schools	\$745,772	\$674,185	2.00	2,091	141	2
Develop model inclusion demonstration schools and classrooms/ Increase staff capacity to support access to general curriculum	\$1,880,000	\$886,053	2.30	0	558	0
Evaluate ARRA IDEA initiatives	\$140,000	\$130,633	.75	0	11	0
Create web-based IEP monitoring system	\$100,000	\$96,516	0	239	54	239
Support teachers to obtain dual certification	\$50,000	\$20,670	0	150	49	73
Total	\$16,582,010	\$9,930,863	110.2	7,746	4,265	2,029

Source: AISD ARRA IDEA documentation, January 2011

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

**New project as of 6/30/10.

*** Project includes in-home training, professional development, and Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD)

References

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