

Continuous Progress Over Time



On behalf of the Austin Independent School District, I am pleased to present to the AISD Board of Trustees and the entire Austin community this 2004 Annual Report.

It is our intention with this report to bring to our Austin stakeholders a fair and accurate picture of our progress to date, the challenges before us, and the initiatives we are putting into place to increase student achievement and to strengthen our schools as communities of learners. In addition to our gains on the TAKS tests, for instance, you will also find information about our student health initiatives, data on increased scholarship dollars received by our graduating seniors, plans by our Guidance and Counseling Department, and prizes garnered in the arts by AISD students.

You will also see that, while our elementary school students continued to climb in student achievement in all areas, some of our students at the middle school and high school levels showed continuous improvement but at slower rates. For the current school year, the District has worked to lower class size in twelfth grade and to provide additional support for middle school and high school students.

The District is also focusing on the achievement of students with limited English proficiency. The curriculum for these students has been made more uniform and rigorous in order to better prepare these students to meet the standards in order to be well prepared for college and successful careers. Our analysis of the academic needs of our recent immigrant high school students has also led us to open an International High School this year to provide them with in-depth English language immersion and strong foundations in the core curriculum so they can succeed when they return to their neighborhood AISD high schools the next year.

Our Annual Report is a report on a work-in-progress. The demands on our students change as the world changes. It is up to us to respond to those demands by providing a stimulating, enriching experience to prepare all our students for the future they will encounter when they graduate. At the same time, we need to be able to show that our students are making continuous progress as learners as they move toward graduation and our school district does a better job each year of preparing our students.

In order to change with changing times, for example, you will be hearing about our work in the current school year to redesign our high schools for the future to better meet the needs of the 21st Century student. Much of that work will be based on the data you'll find in this report.

Best regards,

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent

Message from the Board of Trustees

To the Austin Community:



We hope you find this Annual Report of the Austin School District to be both informative and useful. As the theme "**I am AISD**" suggests, this school district is much more than classrooms and books. Our success is rooted in thousands of dedicated teachers, students who find their courses challenging and exciting, and administrators and support employees who want to ensure that our children are educated in a safe, clean, nurturing environment.

One of our principle responsibilities as Trustees is to stay in touch with the Austin community. We rely upon a "Policy Governance" approach to carry out this mission. In 2004, we held eight Community Meetings to hear what parents, students, teachers and others value in our schools. We delegate responsibility for achieving these values to the Superintendent and Administration. The Board then holds the Superintendent accountable for the successes and failures of the results that the community values.

While much work remains, we believe that the vision and oversight presented by the Board of Trustees has helped the Austin School District chart a course that addresses the diverse challenges of our student population. We believe this Annual Report accurately reflects our successes to date, as well as the obstacles we must still overcome, if all students are to succeed at their full potential.

We invite you to review this 2004 Annual Report and share with us your comments about the information presented. You can contact us by email at trustees@austin.isd.tenet.edu or by mail at AISD Board of Trustees, 1111 West Sixth Street, Austin, TX 78703.

Sincerely,

Doyle Valdez
President, Board of Trustees

Challenges We Face

The District continues to face significant challenges as it strives to fulfill its mission for all students to progress academically and intellectually, and to graduate prepared for personal success and inspired to contribute to society. Changing student demographics, changing assessment requirements, and changing state and federal accountability systems are among the challenges. Specific actions to bring all *District Results Policies*, including the District Mission, to full fruition include but are not limited to the following initiatives:

- Guarantee access to a rigorous curriculum through:
 - Uniform implementation of the District curriculum,
 - Improved student attendance;
 - Utilization of benchmark assessments to guide instructional decision making;
 - Implementation of an elementary science curriculum action plan;
 - Maximized student participation in the Recommended and Distinguished High School Plans for graduation, and
 - Reinforcement of the *Principles of Learning*, especially in Bilingual/ESL classrooms.
- Implement strategic interventions for struggling learners to help ensure that all students meet or exceed state and national accountability performance standards.
- Implement a new program, English Learners and Educators Versed in Academic Rigor (ELEVAR), to raise the academic achievement of English language learners. At the elementary level, ELEVAR will be implemented through the RISE (Rigorous Instruction in Spanish and English) instructional framework. The focus of RISE is to increase gradually the amount of English instruction provided to students across subject areas as they progress by grade level.
- Utilize the newly created International High School to ensure that students are welcomed and supported in their acculturation as well as their academic education.
- Redesign Career and Technology Education programs, in collaboration with Austin Community College, to better prepare students for a wide array of successful post-secondary opportunities.
- Support high school initiatives to improve achievement and reduce gaps in college/career access among student groups;
- Support implementation of campus safety plans to create learning environments that are safe, inviting, and supportive of high student performance.
- Aggressively implement the District's Bond initiatives, and
- Increase opportunities for the community to offer feedback about the quality of service AISD provides.