

# West Austin News

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## Education Call To Action

**By Susan Cohen**

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The growing incidence of poverty is leaving increasing numbers of students and schools in the Austin Independent School District struggling to succeed.

“AISD serves more than 82,000 students, and more than half of those students are at-risk for lower achievement because of economic challenges,” said AISD Board President Mark Williams.

Fortunately for some of those AISD students, volunteers from the community are stepping in to help.

It’s a one-of-a-kind program created by nonprofit Austin Partners In Education that brings volunteer, adult “study coaches” from the community into classrooms to ease the struggle and make a difference in the lessons and lives of children.

“We developed a systemic solution that increases the teaching efficiency of the classroom so



**Mentors can make the difference in helping at-risk children succeed in school.**

that all 50 thousand at-risk students, not just a lucky few, get the help they need to succeed,” said AISD Superintendent Pat Forgione.

Kathrin Brewer, Executive Director of Austin Partners in Education, explained that research found that small group learning is the best accelerator of student achievement. Last year

a pilot program of classroom study groups was launched.

Each coach works with the same three to four students each week in the classroom to foster a mentoring relationship and provide academic support. The teacher is available for support and every student in the room is placed with a coach.

Since its inception, and thanks

to a huge volunteer effort by hundreds of City of Austin workers, the program has grown from 30 to 80 to over 600 volunteer study coaches and creating successful outcomes in all grade levels.

“Research of this model shows stunning results. Our goal is to take this districtwide, so that all students are on track for college and career success,” said Dr. Forgione.

Right now the program is helping about 2,000 students. But that leaves tens of thousands more students waiting for the community to step in again for them.

“We’ll need an army of volunteers,” said Austin Partners in Education’s Brewer, to fight a battle she says the district, city, and community can’t afford to lose. “This is a call to action – Austin’s children need you to help them succeed in school.”

To learn how you can help or get involved, visit [www.austinpartners.org](http://www.austinpartners.org), or call 512-637-0900.