



AUSTIN PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Connecting the Community and the Classroom
News from January - March 2011



Austin Partners in Education Selected for Cities of Service Initiative



Austin Chief Services Officer Andy Mormon and Mayor Lee Leffingwell have selected [Austin Partners in Education](#) (APIE) as a service project for the national [Cities of Service](#) initiative in which the Mayor's office is participating. Cities of Service is a bi-partisan coalition of mayors from select cities across the U.S. APIE is one of four programs selected in Austin designed to mobilize volunteers to

create a positive impact on the quality of life in Austin. Cities of Service was founded in response to Senator Edward M. Kennedy's *Serve America Act's* call to find innovative ways to harness the power of volunteers to solve local pressing challenges.

The Cities of Service project will launch a **Back to School** collaboration, coordinated by Austin Partners in Education, engaging volunteers in best practice initiatives serving Austin students. The collaboration will include education service agencies including the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

The trademarked Classroom Coaching model is an important part of this community-wide call to action to find solutions to the rapid growth and change in demographics in Austin ISD, as well as current budget challenges. According to the recent APIE third-party evaluation, (Meadows Center for the Prevention of Educational Risk, 2010) students, Classroom Coaches and teachers report favorably on APIE's contribution to their schools and classrooms. There was very high satisfaction with coach/student interactions. Students, coaches and teachers noted the supportive nature of these relationships and the general benefits associated with these positive encounters.

Building a Love of Reading

When Carlos began working with his 6th grade Reading Classroom Coach he was reading at a kindergarten level. He was reluctant and self conscious, and was disengaged in group reading activities. Working with his teacher, APIE determined that Carlos would be best served by 1:1 coaching. He also received support during his advisory period via our Step-UP program. As he left for winter break, Carlos asked his coach for a copy of the Readers' Theatre packet they had been working with that Fall. When Carlos returned from break, he surprised his coach and his teacher by asking to read not just one character in the Theatre reading, but every character. He had shared his excitement about the plays with his family, who helped him practice over the break. He is making considerable progress and works with a new sense of excitement and confidence. The work his teacher is doing is supported by the time Carlos gets from APIE staff and volunteers with individualized instruction. He has discovered a love of reading and the knowledge that he can succeed.

(APIE changes the names of students in all references to protect individual privacy. Student stories accurately reflect real interactions in Austin ISD-based APIE programs.)

Sixth Grade Reading Program Addresses Fluency Challenges

APIE continues to revise curriculum in response to teacher and volunteer feedback, classroom observations, student performance, and emerging educational research. Curriculum is developed in

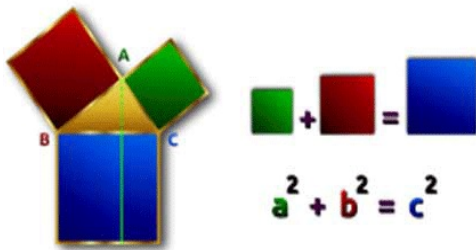


partnership with AISD with an increased emphasis on vocabulary expansion. This approach was developed and advocated by Dr. Sharon Vaughn of The Meadows Center for the Prevention of Educational Risk at the University of Texas at Austin. In our efforts to ensure each child receives the best possible support, trained staff members are working with students in beginning of year, middle of year and end of year fluency assessments. Students in our 6th grade Reading program are reading across five grade levels, making the individualized attention provided in small group coaching sessions even more critical for success. The assessment revealed specific challenges, such as suffixes, which will result in curriculum updates to better enable coaches to strengthen skills. Results also help determine the best ratio for coach to student grouping for optimum support.



Learn more about the [6th grade Reading Classroom Coaching](#) program. Program supporters include: Anonymous Foundation, Andy Roddick Foundation, and Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

Math Coaches Introduce Power Lunch at Burnet Middle School



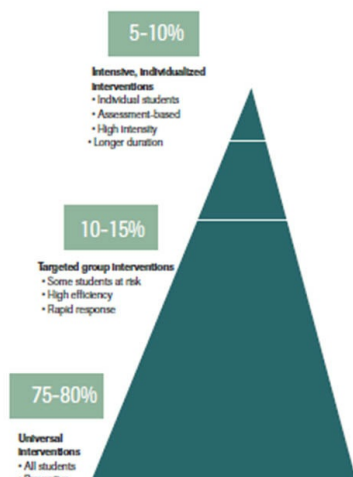
In his report, "Do College Students Lack Basic Math Skills" T.W. Jones states that college professors are frustrated that entering students lack the basic math skills needed to succeed in gateway courses such as Statistics. Many of our Math coaches are seeing student difficulties with foundational skills in 8th grade Math Classroom Coaching sessions, and have worked with program manager Amy Moore to help. Several volunteers stay after the late morning coaching session and work another 30 minutes one-on-one with students during their lunch. Coaches are able to identify and

assist with the specific skills students are having problems mastering. "The lunch gets the students an additional 30 minutes of math each week, building a foundation for future success," says program manager Amy Moore. "Having volunteers in my class once a week is a huge asset to the education of my students," says Sara Marks, Math teacher at Burnet Middle School.

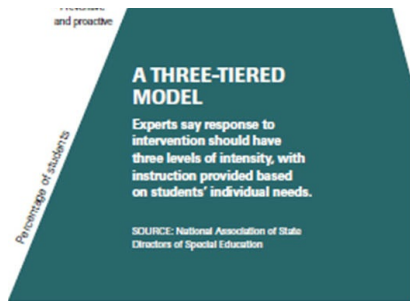
Learn more about the [8th grade Math Classroom Coaching](#) Program. Program supporters include: Andy Roddick Foundation, Anonymous Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and KDK-Harman Foundation.

Deeper Intervention Tutoring Shows Benefits in Step-UP Program

Our Step-Up program coordinator Sandy Bootz is seeing measurable academic progress utilizing an RTI (Response to Intervention) model placing volunteers individually or in pairs with 6th graders in Reading and 8th graders in Math, three to four times a week. Step-UP students are reading below expected grade level performance.



Based on their scoring on initial screening tests, students get increasingly intensive instruction and intervention in those areas where specific assessments identify need. Then, the students are reassessed to determine if they have mastered the skill or item being tutored via the RTI model. Step-UP Program Manager Sandy Bootz says in addition to seeing measurable student progress on stated academic goals, she's seeing positive change in social/emotional contexts. A retired teacher volunteers with John three times a week. "This volunteer is working with a student who struggles in many ways. He wouldn't interact with other children, the teacher, or the coach," says Sandy. "Since this coach has been working with John we see this student tackling words he used to just walk away from. He's building a relationship with his volunteer. Instead of John looking everywhere else, he's actually making eye contact with his coach and is engaging with the content as well as his coach." Sandy says John's comprehension and vocabulary have increased in just two months with the



program. There is much national attention being given to RTI, and APIE is examining models to expand our Response to Intervention program in the coming year. "RTI is the big thing that really can transform how we approach teaching all kids," said W. David Tilly III in *Education Week's Special Report: Spotlight on Response to Intervention*. Tilly is the director of innovation and accountability for the Heartland Area Education Agency providing resources and professional development to 54 districts in Iowa.

Learn more about the [Step-Up Program](#). Program supporters include: Applied Materials, Anonymous Foundation, Intel, and Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

City of Austin Video Highlighting Coaching Program and Volunteer Kathy Garland

City is producing a video about their in-school volunteer programs and recently filmed in one of our 2nd grade Reading Coaching sessions with parent approval. Thanks to Principal Elia Mar Diaz Ortiz and teacher Ms. Thorn for graciously accommodating that visit. Among the volunteers in the class was city employee Kathy Garland, a third year volunteer (pictured at right). "I play hangman with the children the last few minutes of class as a reward for reading well," she said. "One of my students asked if he could make up the word. He wanted to use 'reading is so much fun it will make your mind explode,'" she laughed. It's great to see Kathy mixing fun with learning important reading skills! Watch for more about Kathy in an upcoming Volunteer Spotlight.



Learn more about the [2nd grade Reading Classroom Coaching](#) program. Program supporters include: 3M Foundation, Applied Materials Foundation, and Ragsville Lake Foundation.

96% of Reading teachers agreed or strongly agreed the program was increasing their students' ability to read fluently, while 93% agreed or strongly agreed the program increased their students' reading comprehension. (Meadows Center for Prevention of Educational Risk, 2010.)

Classroom Coach Gets a Big Check and Big Change to a New Career



Omarr Guerrero, (second from left) Horace Mann Insurance Field Sales Leader for the Lone Star District, presents 2nd grade Reading Classroom Coach Sherry Washington with a \$500 scholarship toward teacher certification. Joining him in the presentation were Tracy Snider (left) and Paul Spell (right). [Horace Mann Insurance](#) honored Sherry for her service to students through Austin Partners in Education. Previously a systems analyst with Health and Human Services, Sherry's volunteer experience piqued her long time interest in education, and made her decide to start a new career as a teacher. Sherry is right to believe in the importance of reading in second grade. According to the National Research Council, a person who is not

at least a modestly skilled reader by (3rd grade) is unlikely to graduate from high school. Sherry tells her students, "If you can read, you can do anything." She certainly proved this with her own incredible journey last year – learn more in the [Volunteer Spotlight](#). Thanks to Horace Mann and Omarr Guerrero for their commitment to educators.

Compañeros en Lectura Moms Go Digital

Through Compañeros en Lectura, (2nd grade Reading in Spanish) several parent coaches have

become citizens of the Internet. Previously, these mothers did not communicate via email. Marta Garcia Vizcarro (APIE Program Coordinator) and Odom Elementary School staff worked together as Marta established email accounts for these parents, and taught them the basics of the Internet use on school computers. School and family communication has increased as a result. "Our parents who volunteer as Classroom Coaches in Compañeros en Lectura are really special," says Marta. "Not only are they role models, they bring Spanish language expertise. I enjoy seeing them gain confidence as they build relationships with campus staff and each other."

Pictured at right (bold type) are four of our Compañeros en Lectura moms who also participated in Austin ISD's Promesas Graduation program, committing to encourage a college-going culture in their homes.

Marisol Sanchez, Madeline Gonzalez, Alma Delia Yañez, Eva Alonso, Maria Prieto Perez, Luis Miguel Hernandez.



Photo courtesy of Austin Independent School District.

Donor Spotlight: Michael and Susan Dell Foundation

Austin Partners in Education has received a \$150,000 grant from the [Michael & Susan Dell Foundation](#) to support the College Readiness pipeline by increasing student outcomes at key academic watersheds via Classroom Coaching programs. The Foundation's support allows APIE to serve economically disadvantaged student populations in under-resourced communities.

APIE's Classroom Coaching model supports and improves different learning styles and maturity levels. Because not every child learns the same way or at the same pace, APIE provides differentiated support to students. By recognizing that students learn, understand, and mature differently, and by supporting these differences with its curriculum and volunteer model, APIE builds a child's confidence, engagement and self-direction in addition to his or her performance on tests and exams. In 2009 – 2010, 20% more Math Classroom Coaching students passed the TAKS test than they did the previous year.

APIE's College Readiness program identifies seniors in the gap between graduation ready and college ready. During 2010-11, the program extended its outreach and advisory efforts to include high school juniors that have been identified as not meeting Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college readiness standards. APIE's College Readiness campaign reached more than 5,600 students (juniors and seniors) and their families with information about the TSI standards and recommendations for tutoring.



"The Dell family foundation has been a long-time friend of Austin Partners in Education with aligned goals for increasing student success, especially among economically disadvantaged and first generation college students," said APIE Executive Director Kathrin Brewer. "Their understanding and support of our mission creates an opportunity for us to mobilize the community in creating a future for students that can include college or career, regardless of the student's economic status.

Last year, more than 600 high school seniors formerly in the 'gap' achieved College Ready standards as result of collaborative College Readiness programs in AISD. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, a post-secondary education will be essential for an estimated 90 percent of the jobs in high-wage, growth areas of employment.

Volunteer Spotlight: Mentor Gilbert Cantu

Sometimes, history makes a full circle. It did at Zavala Elementary.



When Mrs. Jeanne Colvin first met Gilbert Cantu, the fourth grader had been held back in second grade, and was still struggling as an English Language Learner at a time when children were forbidden from speaking Spanish in school. Though his family lived in Austin, they would travel to West Texas each summer to pick cotton. Twice the harvest season ran long and Gilbert could not return to start school until December.

Mrs. Colvin took a special interest in her student, and provided him the support kids grow up to remember as pivotal to their future success. That was in the late 1940's. Imagine the moment when some 30 years later, Gilbert Cantu bumped into Mrs. Colvin in the halls of Zavala Elementary and was able to reintroduce himself to her as the new school principal. "Seeing her in the hallway that day was almost a religious experience," recalls Gilbert.



Though the two had lost touch over the years with Gilbert going to college and joining the military, he never forgot the influence the teacher had on him. As Mrs. Colvin grew older and entered a nursing home, it was Gilbert Cantu who would come visit her. And, when she passed away, it was her struggling fourth grade student, now grown into a responsible and successful school administrator, who served as pallbearer at her funeral. It's said that education transforms lives. Teachers and mentors often lead that transformative process, with the impact lasting in recipient's hearts and minds for a lifetime. See Gilbert's story on our website in the [Volunteer Spotlight](#).

Mentor Contacts - Meet Anne Buechler

Our Campus and Community Engagement department facilitates partnership and mentor programs. Anne Buechler joined APIE staff in that department last fall, and coordinates 750 weekly mentors, about 100 campus mentor contacts, and APIE partnership coordinators throughout the district. Anne brings with her more than 10 years experience in both public and private schools including: school administration, teaching, curriculum development, marketing, community engagement, as well as directing both private school admission and alumni relations. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Anne taught humanities classes, including English, World History, Civics, American History and Spanish to 5th through 11th grade students at Davidson Day School, a Pre-K through 12th grade independent school in Davidson, NC. Anne will be leading the launch for mentor and partner programs this fall as well as being the point person for routing our Cities of Service volunteers to the appropriate program or contact.

Donor Highlights

In addition to the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Austin Partners in Education gratefully acknowledges grant support this quarter from 3M Foundation, Andy Roddick Foundation, Anonymous Foundation, Pape Foundation, and the Rattlesville Lake Foundation. [Learn more about our donors](#) on our website.

Join us at Salute May 18th and Thank our Sponsors

The nominations are in. Who will be this year's Teacher of the Year? Find out when you join us May 18th at 6:30 at the Long Center to applaud excellence in our school district during Austin ISD's annual Salute celebration. In addition to the Teacher of the Year and College Readiness Student of the Year, Austin ISD will also award the following: Principal of the Year, Classified Staff of the Year, PTA of the Year, Partners in Education Coordinator of the Year, Classroom Coach/Tutor of the Year, Mentor of the Year, Campus Partner of the Year, Volunteer Group of the Year, and Individual Volunteer of the Year.



[Watch our website](#) for Salute updates and please join us in thanking these generous donors for supporting this event.

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In the News

[Link to media announcements on the press](#) page of our website. We also post these to Facebook as they occur at www.facebook.com/AustinPartnersinEducation. Fan us by clicking the like button, and get the news as it happens.

Recent media includes:

Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo Honored with Statewide Community Partnership Advocate Award –

Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo was honored with the Gold Partnership Advocate Award by the Texas Association of Partners in Education. Acevedo (pictured at right with APIE Executive Director Kathrin Brewer) was nominated by APIE for his leadership in community engagement in education, most recently as the spokesperson in a media campaign encouraging participation in APIE's Classroom Coaching programs in Spanish language reading and math for Austin ISD 2nd – 8th grade students. [Read the story here.](#)



Life in Action: Non-Profit Steps in to Help Students Succeed Reporter -

Jennifer Borget of ynn.com (formerly News 8) came by to interview us about Classroom Coaching. [See the video here.](#)

KXAN OnPolitix: Volunteers to Help Ease Teacher Layoffs -

Reporter Josh Hinkle interviewed us about the way we use Classroom Coaches to help differentiate instruction with increasing class sizes due to budget cuts. [See the video here.](#)

Austin Business Journal Giving Guide –

Thanks to Sponsors [Higginbotham and Associates!](#) We appreciate the generosity of our friend Curtis Page at Higginbotham and Associates in sponsoring a page for us in the Austin Business Journal's Giving Guide this February. We look forward to working with Curtis on upcoming events this year.

Austin American Statesman's Special Publication Education U - Thanks to Drew Scheberle at the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce for giving us the opportunity to promote our College Readiness program in this special section of the *Statesman* published January 27.

Thank you to our Supporters:

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