

<p style="text-align: center;">DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL Recommended District Budget Priorities for 2009-2010</p>

The DAC recognizes that there are a number of very important programs and initiatives currently being undertaken by the district, including support for academically struggling campuses, high school redesign, middle school improvements, support for English Language Learners, and Strategic Compensation. The DAC of course supports these efforts, but feels they are certain to receive significant attention during the 2009-2010 budget development process. In identifying budget priorities for 2009-2010, given the limited amount of discretionary funding available, the DAC has chosen to concentrate on three specific areas of need that might not otherwise receive sufficient consideration, even though they are directly related to improving student achievement.

In alignment with AISD Strategic Plan priorities for education and resources, the DAC hereby recommends the following budget priorities for 2009-2010 for careful consideration by the Budget Task Force, district administration, and the Board of Trustees:

1. **Campus technology support staff.** Bond programs can provide for considerably more technology, but they cannot pay for additional support staff. Even if campuses receive the current computer hardware and software they need, these resources cannot be used to their maximum educational and administrative effectiveness without adequate technical support. At a minimum, the district should provide funding to Instructional Technology and Network Systems and Support at a level of approximately \$20 per student per year. This funding should be allocated to meet the greatest campus needs. (See Attachment 1 for additional justification.)
2. **Reduction in 5th grade class size cap.** The 5th grade class size cap should be reduced from its current maximum of 30 students to 25 students for all district elementary schools, implemented over three budget years commencing with a 28 student cap in the 2009-2010 budget, continuing with a 26 student cap in the 2010-2011 budget, and reaching the desired 25 student cap in the 2011-2012 budget. A similar reduction should be implemented for 6th grade class size at those elementary school campuses which continue to have 6th grade classes. (See Attachment 2 for additional justification.)
3. **Campus literacy specialists.** Full-time, on-campus literacy specialist should be provided at all district elementary schools with a student enrollment greater than 500 students, or a half-time, on-campus literacy specialist at all district elementary schools with a student population less than 500 students. (See Attachment 3 for additional justification.)

Attachment 1
Additional Justification for Campus Technology Support

- The district's Technology Plan recommends overall improvements to campus technical support, and for on-site technicians at all secondary campuses.
- Most districts require \$300 to \$500 per student for technology. But the state only provides approximately \$26 per student for technology, and most of this funding is used for technology refresh and licenses, with very little reaching campuses for discretionary use.
- Some campuses are able to raise money locally for technology support, but other campuses do not have this capability.
- Based on a 2007-2008 AISD survey, 35 campuses have a full-time technician, 19 have a half-time technician, and 6 pay a teacher supplemental pay for technical support. This support is funded at the campus level, not at the district level. [Round Rock ISD provides a full-time technician for all campuses with 900 or more students, and a half-time technician for all campuses with fewer than 900 students.]
- At the centralized level, AISD currently has 11 "break-fix" staff for over 36,000 pieces of equipment. The district has 12 instructional technology staff, who are often pulled into break-fix work.
- Teachers are often pulled into technology trouble-shooting, taking away from valuable instructional time.
- The industry standard for technology support is one technician per every 300 to 400 customers. However, this usually refers to a corporate or office environment; instructional technology needs are often at a much higher level.
- Central technology support that requires a campus visit may take from one to four weeks, or even longer, depending on the time of the year.
- As Texas moves to more student online testing, it will be critical to have adequate campus-based technical support.
- The vision of the Austin Instructional Management System (AIMS) is to provide digital curriculum resources 24/7 to teachers. Campus-based technical support will be needed to make the transition from paper to electronic resources.
- Beginning in the summer of 2009, "Innovation Stations" will be installed in classrooms. This system will include an installed projector, ceiling speakers, document camera, and computer. In addition, interactive slates and student response systems and other digital tools will be used in classrooms. Adequate technical support levels will be needed to make this project successful and to maximize the investment in terms of teacher use and student achievement.
- Laptops recently provided to all teachers will result in additional technical support needs at campuses.

Attachment 2
Additional Justification for Reduction in 5th Grade Class Size Cap

- District education specifications for construction of elementary schools do not differentiate classroom size to accommodate either differences in the number of students or the physical size of the students within a classroom. The current 5th grade cap of 30 students negatively impacts classroom management and effective small group instruction.
- Since most surrounding Central Texas school districts with which AISD competes for teachers have either adopted policies setting the 5th grade class size maximum at 25 students or have a long-standing practice of using that standard, the additional workload and classroom environment of a 26 to 30 student classroom negatively impacts the district's ability to attract and retain quality 5th grade teachers.
- While larger than desired class sizes are most often seen on high-growth campuses, since the total number of 5th grade students on any district campus changes from year to year, the current 30 student cap can negatively impact one or more 5th grade classroom on any elementary school campus in the district in any given year.
- November 2008 research from surrounding school districts:
 - Lake Travis ISD limits 5th grade classes to 25.
 - Pflugerville ISD has a district-imposed cap of 25 to 1.
 - Hays ISD does not have a formal policy, but practice is to limit to 25 to 1.
 - Round Rock ISD does not have formal limits, but 5th grade classes very rarely exceed 25.
 - Leander ISD does not have a policy limit; 27 to 1 is the staffing guideline.
 - Del Valle ISD offers the school an additional teacher if any 5th grade class is going to have more than 25 students. This year at Del Valle Elementary, the 5th grade team chose instead of another teacher to have the district hire two shared assistant teachers for four 5th grade teachers and therefore have four 5th grade classes with 30 students each, and 2 assistants who move among those 4 classes.
 - Eanes ISD is supplemented by the Eanes Foundation in keeping 5th grade class size to 25 to 1.

Attachment 3
Additional Justification for Campus Literacy Specialists

- The District has long-recognized the importance of a student attaining grade-level reading skills by the end of the 3rd grade in order to advance student achievement in all areas of study in subsequent grades.
- Intervention with struggling readers by a trained literacy specialist assists the regular classroom teacher in achieving grade-level student performance goals for all students in the classroom.