

# Austin Gifted

Annual Report 2013-14



# **Letter** *from the* **Founders**

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## **Dear Austin Gifted Community,**

Growing Austin Gifted has been a labor of love. From our beginning in 1999 with Summer Wonders, through nine years of ACE Academy, hundreds of student assessments, multiple seminar presentations, and the launch of our outreach program Saturday Wonders, we have seen our mission and vision animated into real life. When parents stop to tell us how their child or even their whole family has been transformed by our environment of learning, we know we are on the right path.

Through over a hundred Information Sessions, professional development presentations across the country and internationally, and invitations to speakers and specialists in related fields, we have both educated others about giftedness and grown a network of understanding and support. ACE Academy has attracted a faculty of the highest caliber, specialists in their fields who combine high standards of scholarship with love and understanding of the students in their care. Through community-wide programs such as ACE Innovation, we have earned the respect of local leaders and philanthropists who understand that our offerings extend beyond our immediate community to the benefit of greater Austin.

As we celebrate milestones such as our first high school graduation and 15 years of Summer Wonders, we also work to grow our programs strategically; our most immediate need has become a new and larger space in which to foster that growth. We are, like our students, thinkers and risk-takers, confident and creative. In the right environment, and with the ongoing support of our families and community, we plan to steer Austin Gifted to a larger form of our vision, enabling gifted learners to thrive as they reach their potential, one child at a time.

Donna B. Hulsey

Karen S. Langdon, M.Ed.

# Austin Gifted *at a glance*

**Austin Gifted is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving gifted learners. Since its inception, Austin Gifted has served thousands of bright minds by offering educational and enrichment services.**

*We proudly serve the Austin community through five services:*

- **ACE Academy**—a pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school
- **Summer Wonders**—an enrichment program; **Saturday Wonders**—our outreach program for high-ability, low-SES students in East Austin
- **Testing and Assessment Services**
- **Professional Training and Community Education**
- **Research Support**

**We believe that each of these five areas helps us to fulfill our Mission, Vision, and Purpose.**

**OUR MISSION** is to teach, support, affirm, and nurture gifted individuals in realizing their intellectual, emotional, social, and creative potential.

**OUR VISION** is to provide a learning environment in which gifted learners can explore their passions, push their limits, celebrate their talents, and truly become citizens of the world.

**OUR PURPOSE** is to bring gifted students together with one another and with teachers who are passionate about giftedness and creativity. We provide classroom flexibility, inquiry-based learning, and innovative, cross-curricular alignment. We encourage holistic development through formal emotional intelligence courses.



Summer Wonders  
Students

**450**

ACE Academy  
Students

**151**

Saturday  
Wonders  
Students

**33**

**1:4**

Average Austin Gifted  
Teacher to Student Ratio

ACE Academy  
Average SAT Score

**2120**

**54%**

Faculty with  
Advanced Degrees

**29**

Number of Full-Time  
Staff Members

**4**

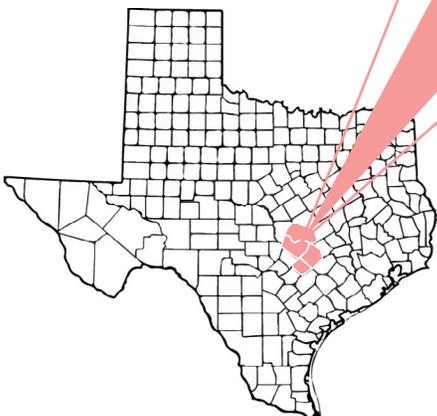
Number of  
Counties Served

Austin Gifted's  
2013 Annual Budget

**\$2.1m**

**\$956.82**

Average Annual Giving  
by ACE Families

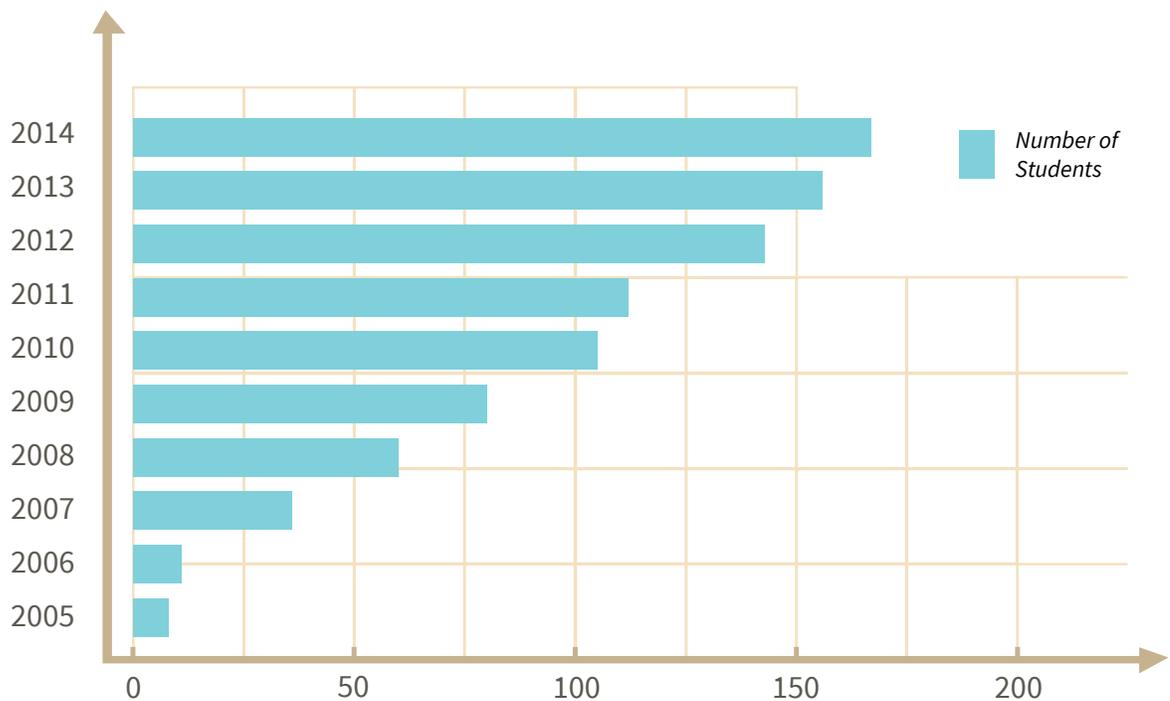


# Enrollment

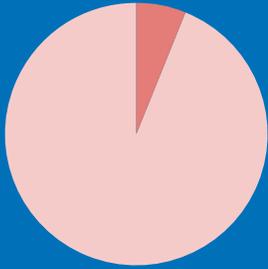
Since its inception, Austin Gifted has experienced steady growth across each of its five areas. Summer Wonders, Austin Gifted's original program, has grown to over 240 students for each of its two sessions. ACE Academy grew from its enrollment of only 8 students in 2005 to over 150 by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Saturday Wonders finished its second year with a 30% increase in enrollment. Interest in Austin Gifted and its programs continues to climb even as space grows tighter.

While there is no shortage of demand for Austin Gifted's programs, the major limiting factor in our growth is space. For nine years Austin Gifted has leased space from Congregation Beth Israel and enjoyed their hospitality. Austin Gifted is poised to outgrow the allotted space during the 2014-2015 school year. A Site Search Committee was formed with the goal of locating long-term solutions to accommodate our growth. We continue to search for a facility that will enable us to house up to 500 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students and give them access to state-of-the-art science facilities, an auditorium, outdoor space, and a gymnasium, and will accommodate our assessment, training, and research programs.

## Student Enrollment 2005-2014

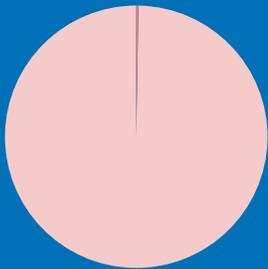


# Why Austin Needs Austin Gifted



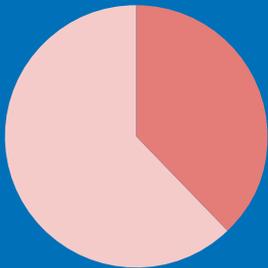
**6.32%**

Percentage of AISD students identified as gifted



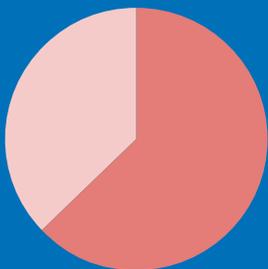
**0.35%**

Percentage of AISD budget allocated to G/T programs



**38%**

Percentage of gifted AISD students making adequate yearly progress in 2013



**63%**

AISD's goal for gifted student adequate yearly progress in 2014



*Our students are given opportunities to work at the level where they are and to reach goals as high as they want to set them. Students' individual needs are met and respected by teachers and other students. They are given many creative learning opportunities that reach a variety of learning styles.*

—ACE Teacher

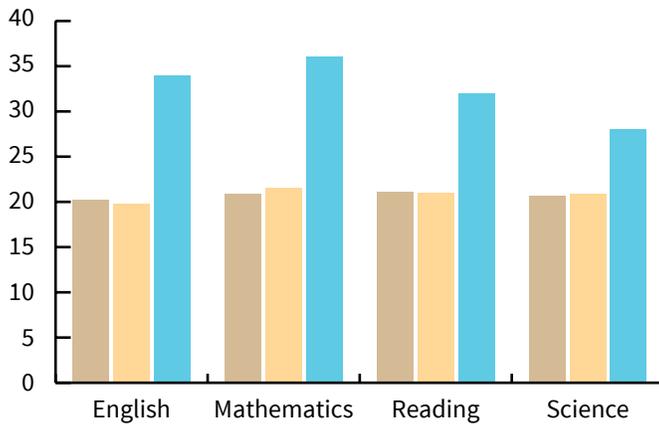
\* Figures used from public data from Austin Independent School District as an example of local districts

# Student Performance

**A**

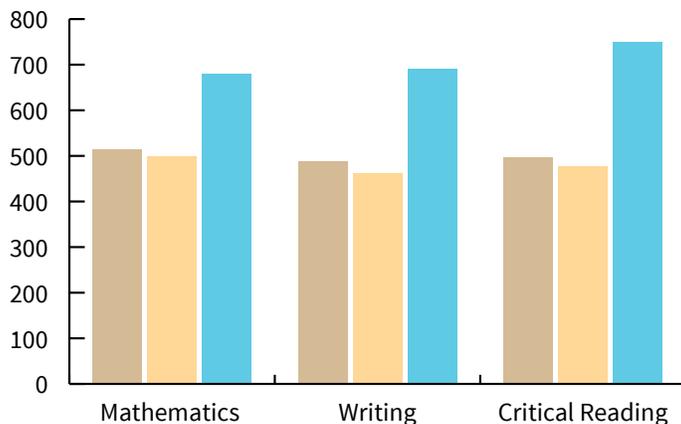
ustin Gifted students have a number of intellectual gifts—gifts that are frequently misunderstood or ignored in mainstream classrooms. We pride ourselves on creating a learning environment that helps our students to shine regardless of past educational experiences. Many gifted students actually underperform in public education classrooms. Performance on the ERB exams demonstrates that many ACE Academy students arrive performing well below their potential, but that this steadily improves with each year of attendance. Our students demonstrate a 3-7% increase in percentile for each year at ACE Academy. Moreover, student performance on college entrance exams such as the PSAT, ACT, and SAT is exemplary with averages well exceeding state and national averages.

## ACT Average Scores in 2013



	English	Mathematics	Reading	Science
<i>National</i>	20.2	20.9	21.1	20.7
<i>Texas</i>	19.8	21.5	21	20.9
<i>ACE Academy</i>	34	36	32	28

## SAT Average Scores in 2013



	Critical Reading	Mathematics	Writing
<i>National</i>	496	514	488
<i>Texas</i>	477	499	461
<i>ACE Academy</i>	750	680	690

**ACE Academy  
College Acceptances**  
*for the Class of 2014*

Marist College  
Southwestern University  
Texas A&M University  
The University of California Santa Cruz  
The University of Texas at Austin

## ERB Testing

The ERB test evaluates student subject mastery based on national grade level standards. ACE students age eight and older participate in the ERB exam each spring. Scores are provided that compare ACE Academy's student performance to those of schools nation-wide in addition to evaluating us against suburban public schools and private schools. ACE Academy consistently performs in the top 15% of private schools nationally, with many subject areas in the top 5-10% range. The graph below illustrates ACE Academy's average percentile rank increase for each year of attendance for all subject areas.

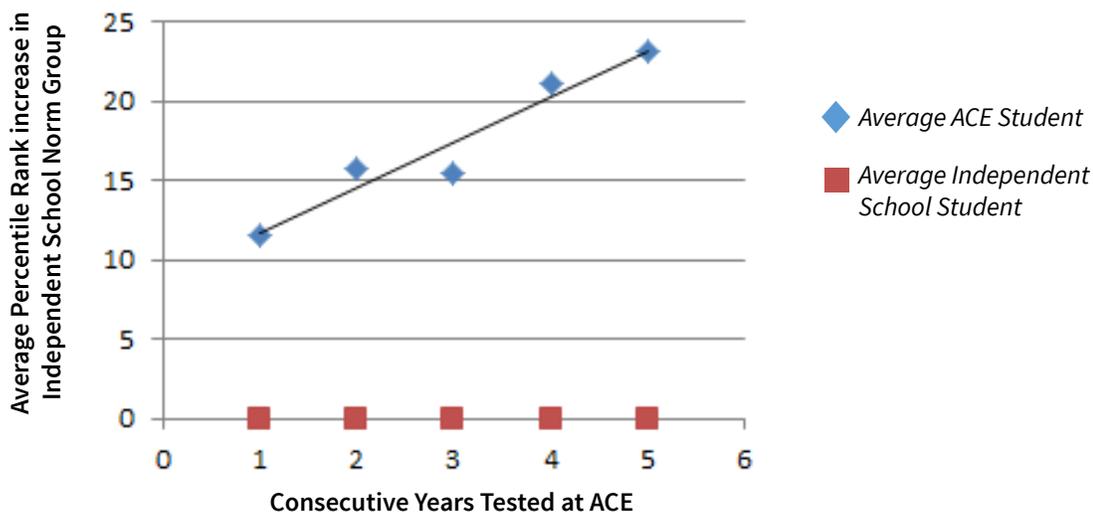
### *Reading Percentile Data*

Percentiles compare student performance to a normally distributed group of 100 individuals. In a randomly selected group, we can expect that most people will perform close to the average, with fewer people performing at the lower or higher ends. Using these assumptions, ERB provides a percentile. A percentile gives information about how an individual student performed in comparison to an average group of 100. A score at the 88th percentile means that, out of 100 students, this student performed better than 87 of them. The scores provided in the accompanying graph provide percentile average increases for all students within a grade range at ACE in comparison to averages across grade level in independent (or private) schools nationwide.

## 5 Year Longitudinal Analysis of ERB Data

Grades 2-10 All Students

All Test Subject Areas 2010-2014

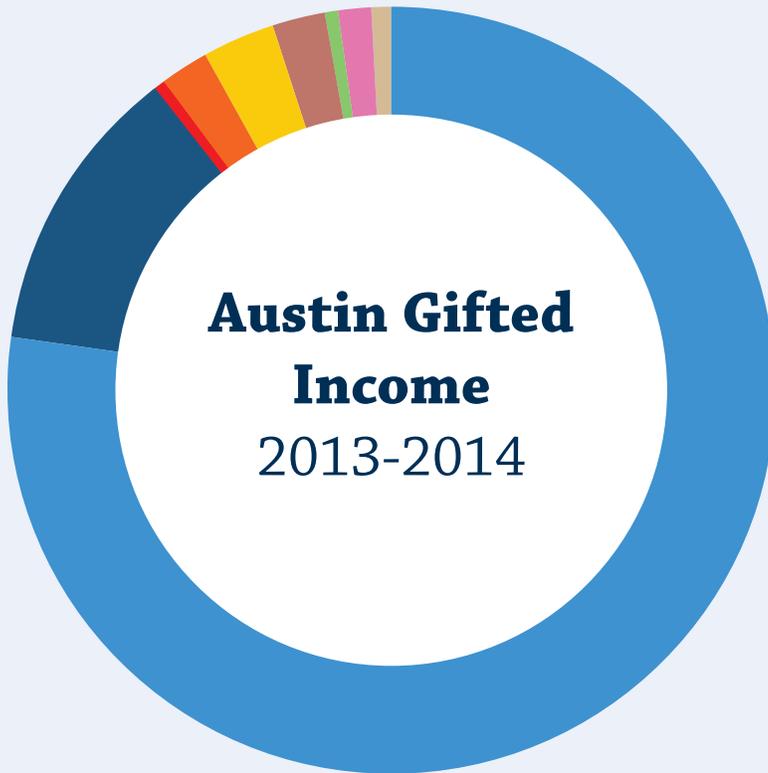


# Financials

**T**he 2013-2014 fiscal year proved Austin Gifted's most robust year ever. Increases in enrollment across all areas of Austin Gifted mean a greater number of gifted learners we can serve. In spite of our growth, Austin Gifted classes remain small to ensure one-on-one attention for each student. However, such individualized instruction comes at a price. During the 2013-2014 school year, tuition covered 90.8% of Austin Gifted's total expenses.

Why not raise tuition? The reason that Austin Gifted leaves a gap between the amount raised in tuition and the cost of educating each child is in order to remain as financially accessible as possible to Austin families. In order to cover our expenses, we rely upon the generosity of the Austin Gifted community. This year our fundraising increased by 26% with substantial gains in the amount given to the Annual Fund and through our Spring Gala. Not only did the Austin Gifted community provide the financial support needed for a bus, they exceeded the initial request by over \$3,000. Our supporters have demonstrated that they are equal to any challenge they face. ACE thrives because they support us—with no limits!





Total Income: \$2,179,260.83

ACE Academy	77.47%
Summer Wonders	12.11%
Saturday Wonders	0.09%
Testing	2.38%
Annual Fund	3.07%
Spring Gala	2.13%
Grants	0.76%
Other fundraising	1.27%
Miscellaneous	0.72%



Total Expenses: \$2,121,243.93

ACE Academy Salaries & Expenses	76.44%
Summer Wonders Salaries & Expenses	3.48%
Testing Expenses	0.20%
Operational Expenses	2.71%
Marketing and Fundraising	1.23%
Saturday Wonders Salaries & Expenses	0.52%
Instructional Materials	1.37%
Special Events	0.16%
Fees, Taxes, Insurance	5.94%
Facility Rental	6.11%
Student Activities	0.18%
Professional Development	0.35%
Financial Aid and Discounts	1.20%
Miscellaneous	0.11%

# Human Capital

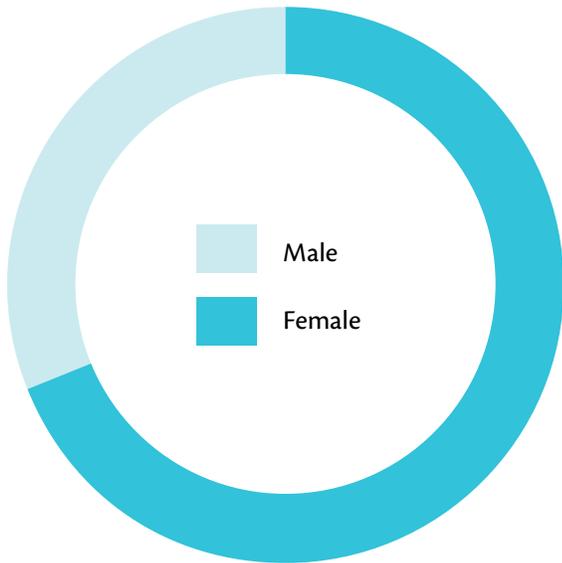
**A**ustin Gifted provides students with the finest staff. Not only are they experts in gifted education, but their expertise in their fields makes it possible for us to offer classes and communicate concepts that are not typically seen until the collegiate level. Austin Gifted teachers not only have the knowledge to keep our students motivated and challenged, they are also learners themselves. Each year Austin Gifted faculty go through mentorship and training with regard to best practices in gifted education. Whether it is our in-service days in which outside experts educate our instructors, attendance at national and international conferences, or our Summer Wonders teachers being guided through the process of creating excellent lesson plans for gifted students, it is important to us that our staff is passionate about lifelong learning.

Austin Gifted instructors presented at and attended a number of national and international conferences this year, including the National Association for Gifted Children, the International Group for Mathematical Creativity and Giftedness Conference, SXSWedu, the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented Conference, and the International Mathematics Educator Conference. Our in-house professional development this year included blending science and mathematics with the arts, dyslexia/dysgraphia, interpreting ERB test data, curriculum and accreditation, Mindset, and reporting and assessment. Summer Wonders and Saturday Wonders staff undergo extensive training in lesson planning, program mission, and gifted education prior to entering the classroom.

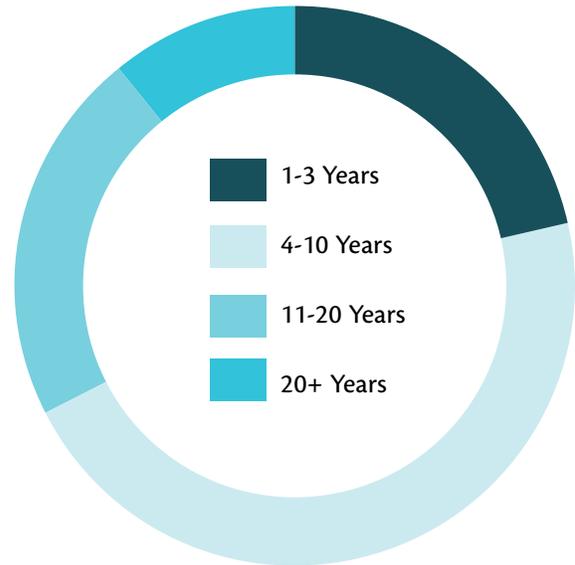
Austin Gifted's staff continues to grow. In 2013-2014, ACE Academy employed 29 full-time staff members and 17 part-time staff members. Summer Wonders employed 26 instructors and 29 teaching assistants for the approximately 240 students in attendance each session. We pride ourselves on the highest quality staff available—expert instructors who are experts in their fields. 54% of ACE Academy staff possesses a graduate degree (28% of primary teachers, 60% of core elementary teachers, 85% of core middle school teachers, and 100% of core high school teachers). Some faculty come to us from colleges and local education facilities, and many serve an internship year at the school as a Teaching Assistant before leading their own classes at ACE Academy. This ensures that our students receive the highest quality of education from professionals well versed in their needs.



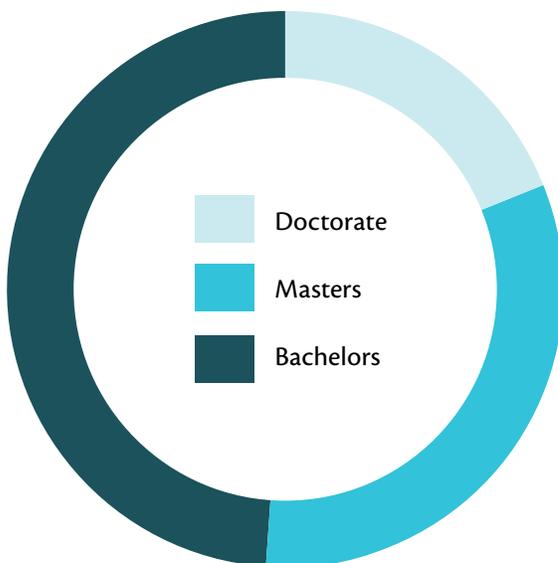
## ACE Teaching Faculty



## Years of Experience



## Education



# Initiatives

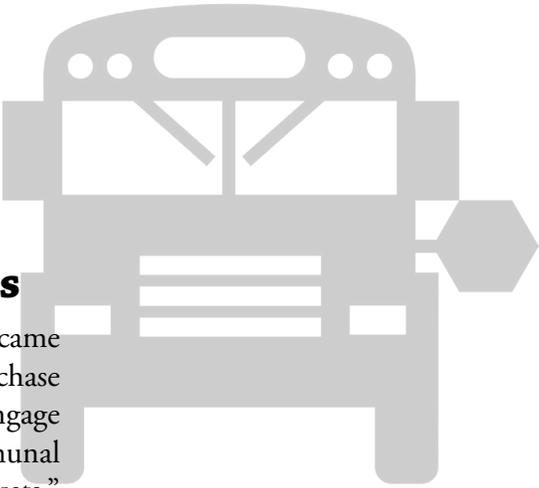
## Establishing a Permanent Location

Austin Gifted currently leases its space from Congregation Beth Israel. The one downside to their wonderful facilities is that we simply cannot make room for all the students who want to be a part of Austin Gifted. At present, we are limited to approximately 175 students—a number that we expect to exceed during the 2014-2015 school year. As numbers of prospective students continue to climb, our very active Site and Development Committee is working to find solutions. As we move forward in the process, Austin Gifted will be updating its stakeholders regarding progress toward reaching more students.



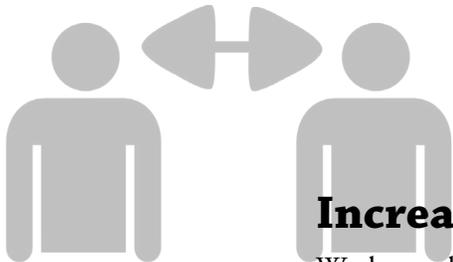
## Increasing Communication

It is important to all of us at Austin Gifted to maintain a cooperative learning network among teachers, administrators and parents in order to provide students with an education uniquely suited to their individual needs. To this end, Austin Gifted took steps in 2013-14 to increase communication and intends to take another step forward in this area for the 2014-2015 school year. In 2013, Google+ was re-launched through a series of trainings and increased classroom integration. Updates regarding class activities were sent to ACE parents each week on Friday to promote awareness of student progress. While these initiatives proved successful in many ways, it quickly became clear that focusing the forms of communication so that they could be received in one place was one of the most popular requests by our community. After careful review of administrative software, Austin Gifted decided to adopt RenWeb for the 2014-2015 school year. This platform is different from past forms of communication in that it provides parents a secure log-in through which they can monitor their child's assignments and learning objectives, track their academic progress with an online grade book, and receive announcements and important information. Based on user feedback, we have already begun the process of launching RenWeb for parents and students. We look forward to seeing how this increased communication fosters enhanced interaction between teachers and families.



## **Establishing Transportation Solutions**

At the 2014 Spring Gala, the generous Austin Gifted community came together in February 2014 and donated the funds needed to purchase our first school bus. Our new 15-seater allows our students to engage in special activities and field studies around town in safe, communal transportation. We hope this is just the first of a fleet of “ACE Rockets.”



## **Increasing Transparency**

We know how important it is to be able to get answers when you want them. To this end, Austin Gifted is working hard to increase transparency within our operations. Whether it is our Gold Rating on Guidestar—the leading resource for information on nonprofit organizations—or what our curricular trajectory looks like, we want our stakeholders to feel a sense of ownership when it comes to Austin Gifted. During the 2013-2014 school year we released information regarding the Site and Development search as well as published our degree plans online. You can expect to see additional information added in the 2014-2015 school year in the form of handbooks, published syllabi, our 2014 accreditation report, and this annual report online. Please also feel free to peruse our by-laws and organizational documents in the main office at any time. It is only through your support that Austin Gifted continues to exist. We want to reward the trust you placed in us with answers to your questions and concerns.

# Governance

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Adam Flagg, Upstream Investment Partners

Ross Garsson, Attorney, Greenberg Traurig, LLP

Donna Hulsey, Head of School, ACE Academy

Peggy Kruger, Ph.D., Austin Gifted Board President

Karen Langdon, M.Ed., Director of Admissions. ACE Academy; Executive Director, Summer Wonders

Elizabeth Lay

Keith Moe, Business Consultant & Advisor

Danny Mulligan, Technology Executive and Entrepreneur

Hatice O'Leary, IT Consultant

Estuardo Robles, Development Director, International Entrepreneur

Larry Secret, Ph.D., IC2 Businessman, Consultant

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