

Little Longhorns  Big Dreams
The University of Texas Elementary School
2008-2009 Annual Report





Letter from the CEO

2008-09 was another landmark year for the University of Texas Elementary School.

It was the first year that our grade-level teams were complete: After six years of growth we were finally a school family from **pre-kindergarten through fifth grade**.

Our mission to serve as a research-based demonstration school also came to fruition this year as our collaboration with the **Urban Education Pilot Program** began with its first cohort of University of Texas undergraduates. This leading-edge collaboration — between us, UT's College of Education

and Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, and the Austin Independent School District — is focused on pre-service teacher education. UT Elementary master teachers were called upon to share their knowledge and real-life experience with veteran college professors, particularly in the areas of **Response to Intervention** and **Social and Emotional Learning**. These concepts were embedded within the teacher preparation courses for this pilot cohort. Through generous foundation funding, training and materials were provided for cooperating teachers in two partnering AISD schools.

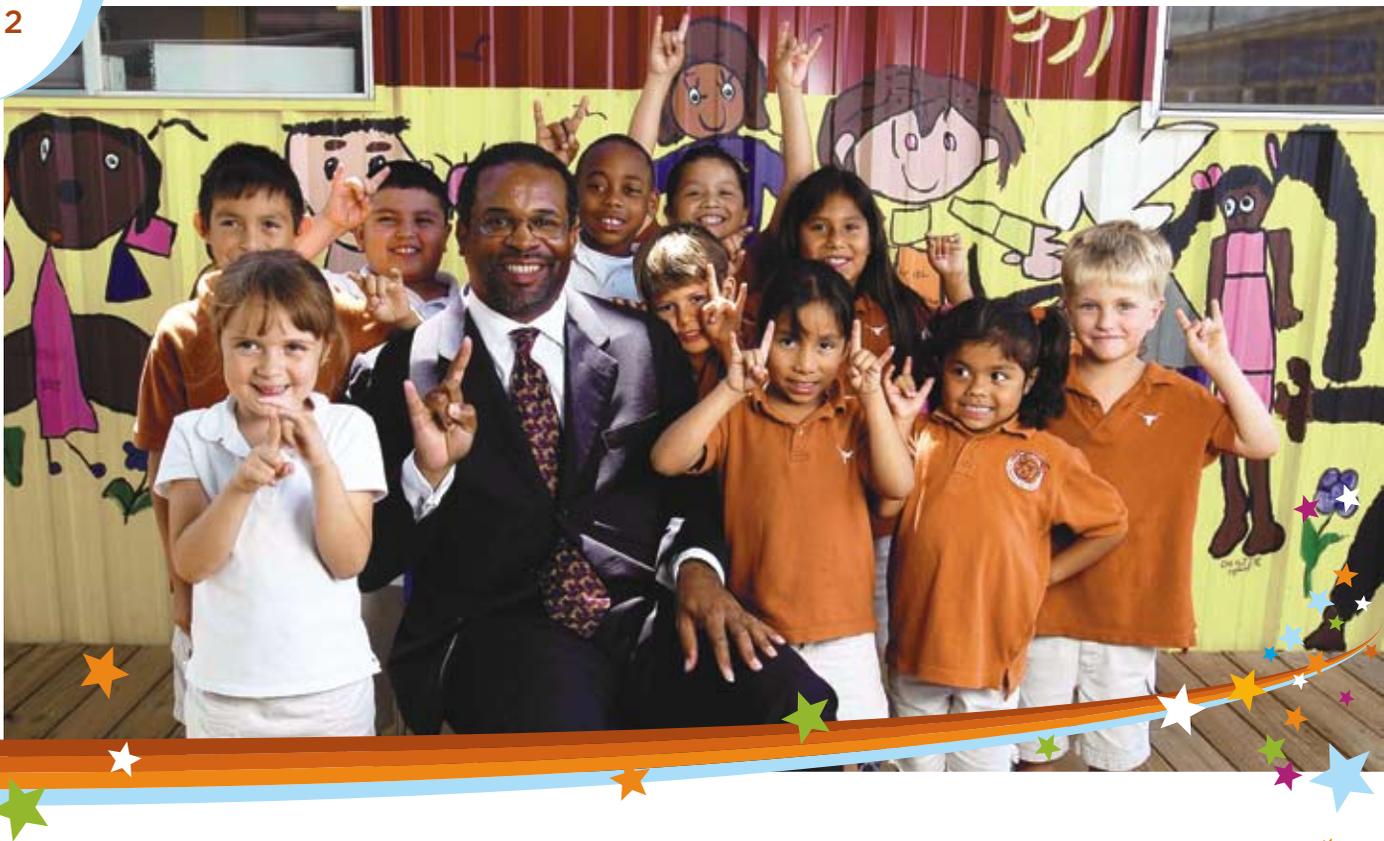


The vision of our school has become reality — **to bridge research** from the best and brightest at the University and **to practice**, as well as demonstrate and disseminate it.

I commend our demonstration teachers for their tireless efforts, their expertise in teaching the students and supporting families in East Austin, and their role as guest lecturers and staff developers, all while remaining in the spotlight as other educators and VIPs from as far away as Japan toured their classrooms. These teachers' extraordinary work has helped us earn **another "Exemplary" rating** (the state's highest). Given that accolade, it is appropriate that this was also the year to begin writing a book on teacher-recommended **best practices**. In its final stage it will be bound for pre-service teachers in the UT College of Education.

In addition to the performance of our teachers I am proud of the efforts of our students. I am thankful for the support and guidance of The University of Texas, especially the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. But none of us could do the purposeful work that we do without the **donations and support of individuals, foundations, and corporations** who believe in our mission. On behalf of the Littlest Longhorns I want to thank you for your commitment to make an impact on public education and on the lives of the children of East Austin.

Dr. Ramona Treviño
Founding Principal & CEO



The core purpose of The University of Texas is to transform lives for the benefit of society. The University does this in a number of ways. Our primary job is educating Texans so they can use their knowledge and UT experience to benefit the community and the world. And as a state flagship research institution, we want to share our knowledge and findings, helping communities solve critical problems. We also want to ensure that every child has the opportunity to go to college and thrive. High-quality instruction, early intervention, and community support that begin at an early age and continue through high school are the foundation to lifelong success. As a public school focused on offering innovative and exceptional educational opportunities for the children of East Austin, the University of Texas Elementary School builds a bridge between scientifically based research and effective classroom practice. UT Elementary is in the unique position, as a model “Exemplary” school and training ground for future teachers, to advance education throughout the state of Texas and beyond. By continually improving upon and disseminating these instructional best practices widely, The University of Texas is giving students the tools and supports they need to succeed in an educational career from an early age — from Pre-K to Ph.D.

Dr. Gregory J. Vincent

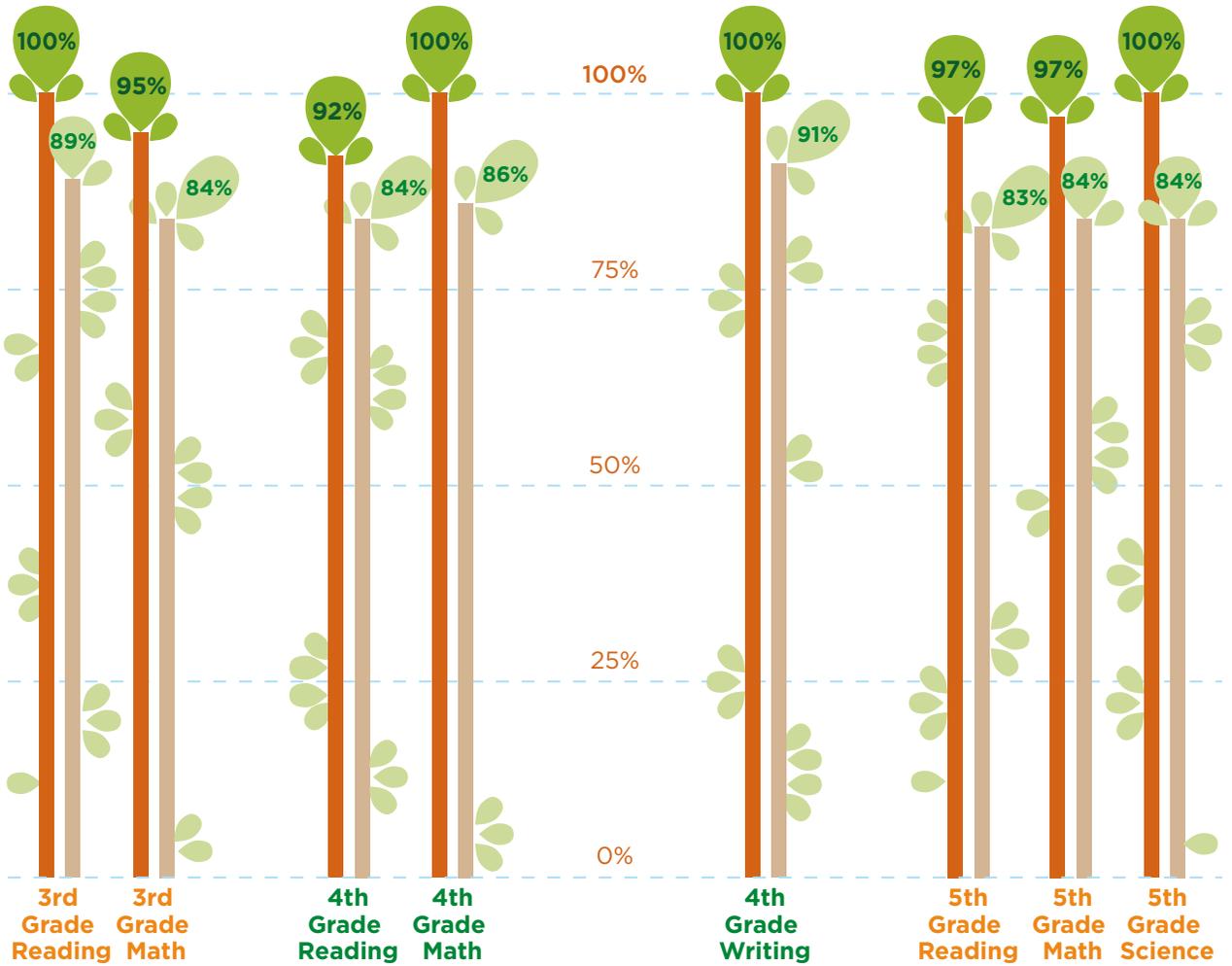
*Management Board Chair, UT Elementary School
Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement*





2009 TAKS Passing Rates

UT Elementary School Compared to Statewide Scores



UTES | Statewide



UT Elementary School Demographics

UT Elementary Student Population Breakdown

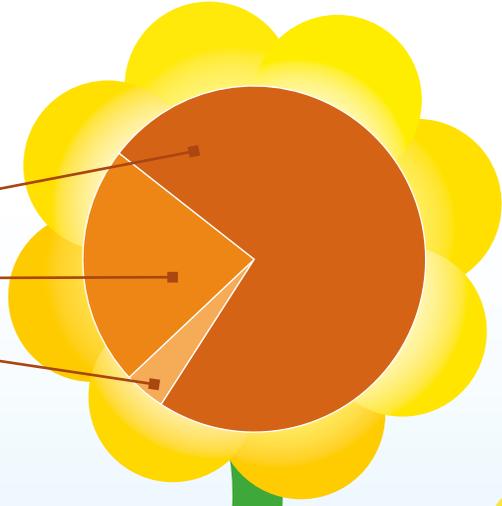
Hispanic: 72%

African American: 21%

White: 7%

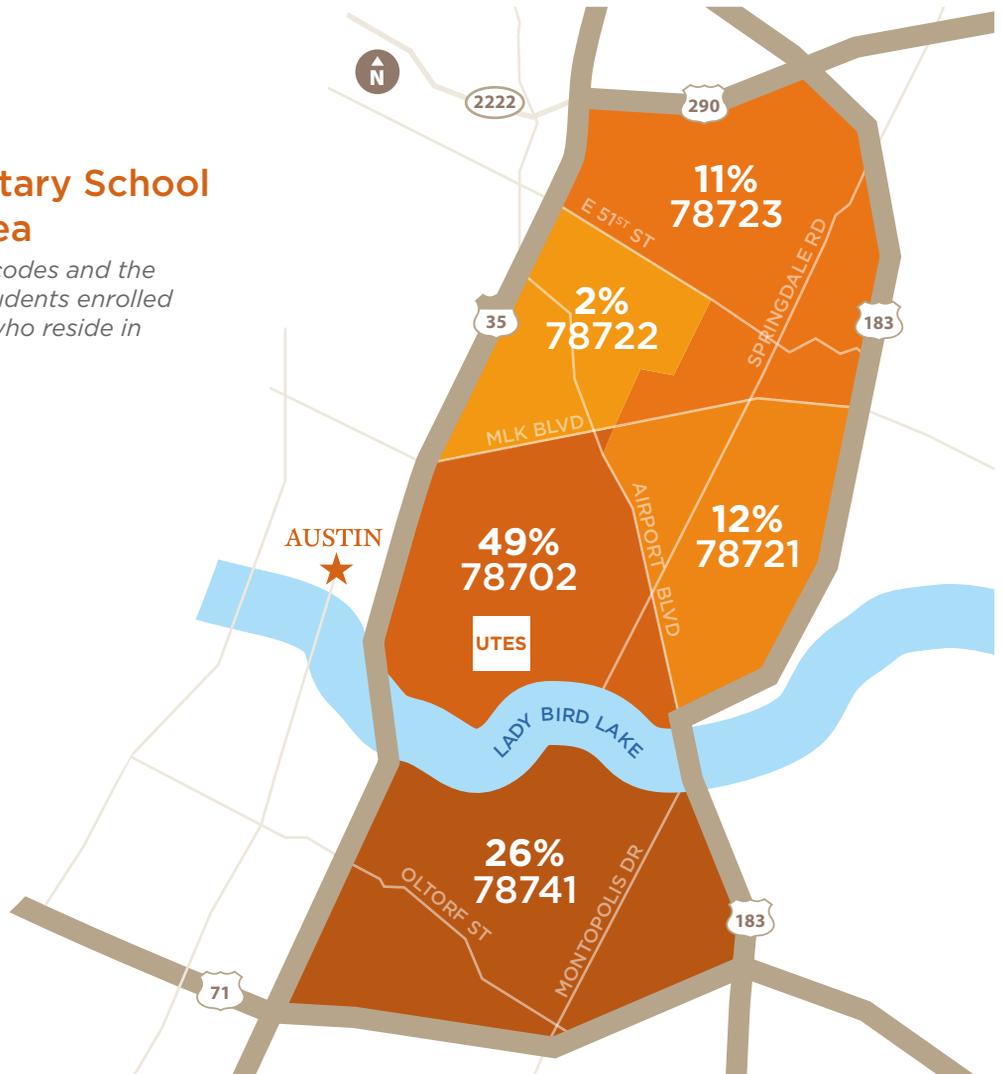
Male: 51%

Female: 49%



UT Elementary School Service Area

Map depicts zip codes and the percentage of students enrolled as of May 2009 who reside in each zip code.





Four Innovative Programs that Set UT Elementary Apart

What truly distinguishes UT Elementary is our consistent application of the latest research to all aspects of what we do, from curriculum and instruction to administration and staffing. This year our focus has been on four significant areas that advance our mission to ensure the success of each individual child: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) methods, the creation of a Science Demonstration Program, and the Healthy Families Initiative.



Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is an effort to ensure academic success for individual students in regular classroom settings. RTI prescribes early and frequent assessment of each student, which promptly identifies learning difficulties and concepts that need reinforcement. This allows teachers to analyze individual students' learning needs and respond immediately with specific resources and strategies. Interventions are prescribed according to a three-tier system, where students are provided additional assistance according to the level of difficulty they are experiencing. We have had such success with the RTI model in reading that we have adapted the approach to other curriculum areas.



Social & Emotional Learning

Social & Emotional Learning is designed to promote 21st-century skills such as respect, problem solving, empathy, communication, and teamwork within the elementary classroom. Research shows that students from low-income backgrounds are often not motivated by the promise of a grade or competition for class rank. Rather, they are motivated by positive relationships with teachers and other adults whom they respect and whom they know respect them. These SEL concepts are key to the creation of a caring, respectful school environment, which in turn is essential to supporting learning for young children.



Science Demonstration Program

Best-practice research indicates that the integration of science curricula across subjects is most effective for student learning. Accordingly, we now employ a science demonstration teacher and instructional coach who extend and integrate science curriculum into earlier grades and connect it with subjects such as reading, writing, and math. Our Science Demonstration Program serves as a model to other schools throughout Texas through a partnership with the Texas Regional Collaboratives, a statewide network of P-12 teachers of science and mathematics across the state. We thank the KDK-Harman Foundation for their crucial support of this partnership, which holds so much promise in our efforts to build enthusiasm for learning in science — and ultimately to encourage future generations of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians.



Healthy Families Initiative

At UT Elementary, kinesiology and health education are essential to a well-rounded curriculum. The purpose of the Healthy Families Initiative is to actively encourage physical activity and healthy food choices among the students and their families. Beyond classroom instruction, the entire school implements a coordinated school health program that reinforces content being taught in health and physical education. Students tend their own vegetable gardens and participate in health-focused events, including the Lil' Longhorn 5K Fun-Run, Healthfest, and Olympic Day. Most importantly, UT Elementary extends the concept of RTI into physical education and nutrition. At-risk students receive targeted interventions from the school's wellness instructor, and families are encouraged to participate in the after-school KidShape program.



Transforming Public Education in Texas The Urban Education Pilot Program

Because teacher quality is highly correlated with student achievement, teacher turnover in urban schools is receiving increased attention in education research and policy. Teacher turnover is almost a third higher in low-income urban school districts, often leaving urban schools with the least qualified teachers. The Urban Education Pilot Program confronts this issue by preparing pre-service teachers for the unique challenges they will meet in urban schools.

UT Elementary teachers collaborate with faculty of the UT College of Education to integrate specific, proven practices into the undergraduate teacher education program. The goal is to give new teachers tools to provide effective, research-based education to increasing numbers of children. With the support of UT's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, the two-year pilot program launched this year. With it we are building on what we have learned in our first six years and taking advantage of our role as a demonstration site for research-based practices.

Training the Trainers

Immediately preceding the start of the Austin ISD's 2008-09 academic year, UT Elementary teachers and staff provided training to cooperating teachers and principals at Metz and Govalle Elementary Schools. The schools have provided field experiences for all of the UT students from the pilot group; our teachers also serve as mentors to those teachers.

In fall 2008, 21 students in the College of Education self-selected to participate in the first student group of the Urban Education Pilot Program. They were assigned to UT Elementary School, Metz, and Govalle for their field experiences, and took specific sections of required education courses that have been adapted by participating UT faculty. Veteran teachers at UT Elementary were invited to serve as guest lecturers in pre-service education classes for this pilot group, and opened their classrooms for observation.



Amber Rector

Feedback from Participants

Students in the Urban Education Pilot Program's first year are extremely positive about their experiences. Amber Rector, a senior in the College of Education, is representative of the group when she says, "I will leave this program much more knowledgeable about approaches to intervention for urban students



than my peers who are missing out on these strategies.” UT senior Victoria Potter adds: “I have never felt so purposeful in the classroom. I get so much more now out of being able to apply this information with the kids than do my peers in other cohorts with no specific focus.”



Angela Worley

A big part of urban teaching beyond interacting with the children is the interactions teachers have with parents. Angela Worley, a kindergarten teacher at Govalle Elementary, says she appreciates how the program advocates that interns spend time doing service projects at their assigned school. These future teachers often find themselves working one-on-one with parents toward a common goal. “They get to see the kids outside of the classroom, on the weekends, or at night with their families,” Worley says. “They sometimes get to see the kids in their living environment, which is a huge eye-opener. It really helps you understand where they’re coming from. It’s very valuable.”

UT faculty members visit UT Elementary, Metz, and Govalle several times a month and serve as mentors to the other participants. They observe in the classroom and then sit down with the teachers and interns for a

round-table discussion of what they have observed. And it is not one-way; faculty take what they see in the elementary school classrooms back to their UT classrooms.

In public schools throughout Texas, there can be a wide gap between what is learned at the college level and what is actually used in the classroom. A major objective of the Urban Education Pilot Program is to bridge that gap between theory and the reality of practice. “It’s a good learning experience for everybody, all the way around,” says Worley. “The teachers learn from it; the UT professors learn from it. I think it’s incredibly valuable for the professors to come into our classrooms, rather than just the other way around.”

A Big Thank You to Our Supporters

Already, our experiences in the Urban Education Pilot Program are informing the content of our best-practices manual, the production of which is now under way. This program will affect an entire generation of Texas students as teachers enter urban classrooms more fully prepared with the highest quality training. The College of Education, likewise, is integrating its findings into its teacher education programs. By both these measures the pilot program is off to an impressive start.

While UT Elementary has received basic operational funding from federal and state sources, as well as start-up and development funds from UT and the UT System, we must rely on the philanthropy of individuals, corporations, and foundations to support projects such as the Urban Education Pilot Program. Thus far we have received generous funding from the RGK Foundation, the Powell Foundation, and from Suzan and Julius Glickman, for which we are extremely grateful.



Building a Strong Foundation to Improve Learning



Our **Student Mentoring Program** has been hugely successful this year at fostering supportive one-on-one relationships between mentors and students. Mentorship provides additional opportunities for students to receive care and support from an interested adult outside of their family. Participating students come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, have a variety of interests, and a range of ages from kindergarten through 5th grade.

Regardless of their background or age, all of the students may benefit from increased:

- Academic stimulation;
- Exposure to different careers/hobbies/skills;
- School attendance/motivation;
- Self awareness/esteem; and
- Social-emotional and problem-solving skills.

Mentors commit to 30-45 minutes per week during the school year, and are encouraged to recommit each year the student remains at UT Elementary. Mentors gain experience working with students and the satisfaction of giving back to the community. More important, however, is the effect the program has

on our students, who benefit from having a consistent, dependable relationship with a caring adult. Most students raise academic achievement and improve behavior at school and at home.

Extending Out-of-School Learning

Beginning in 2008, teacher Rose Tran spearheaded an effort to encourage fourth- and fifth-grade student enthusiasm for learning mathematics. Beyond that goal, another objective is to help students become more relaxed and better prepared for their TAKS tests. Thus Saturday Camps were born. Along with math interventionist Mina Rios, Rose invited students to voluntarily participate in math games and test strategies prior to the TAKS. The result? Scores of participating students rose significantly over the previous year. Saturday Camps were promptly extended to all grades and subjects in 2009 with help from the generous support of the George and Fay Young Foundation.





Teacher of the Year



Marcia Molinar



While all of our teachers at UT Elementary are masters of their field, we congratulate pre-kindergarten teacher Marcia Molinar in particular for being chosen Teacher of the Year by her peers.

With her delicate blend of rigor and nurture, Marcia provides an ideal environment for our youngest students to prepare for elementary school. She was also selected to demonstrate best practices in the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) by holding class in the Texas State Capitol on February 17, 2009. We are grateful to Marcia for her model of outstanding teaching and the positive attention her work has brought to UT Elementary's early childhood education program, which is accredited by the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).

Along with Marcia, four other teachers were nominated by their peers for the Teacher of the Year award: **Mary Ledbetter**, **Eunice Tanco**, **Rose Tran**, and **Laila Wakim**. We thank them all for their service and dedication to the school.

Star of Texas Award Winners

A Texas-Size Thank You to Mickey Klein & Marina Walne

This year we bestowed our highest honor — the Star of Texas Award — on two friends who have been tireless UT Elementary supporters for many years.

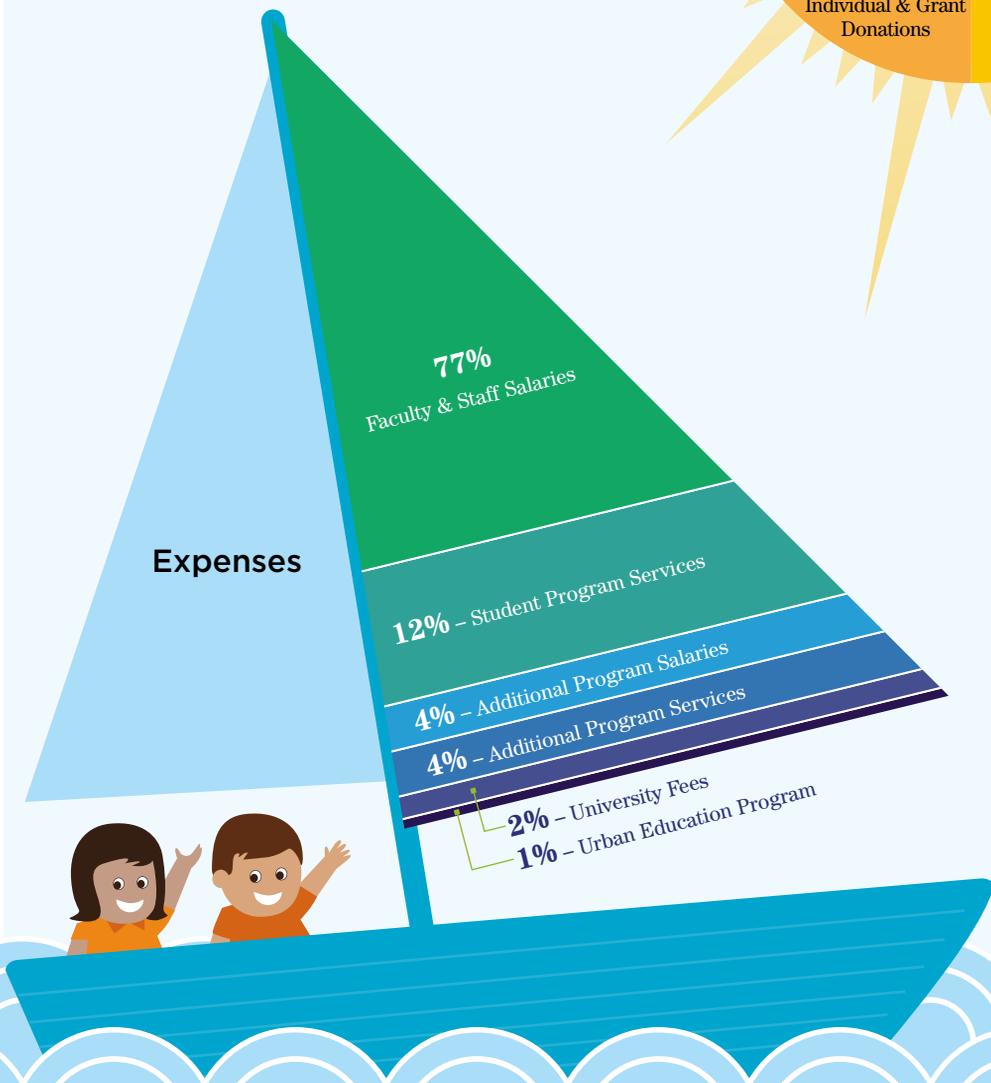
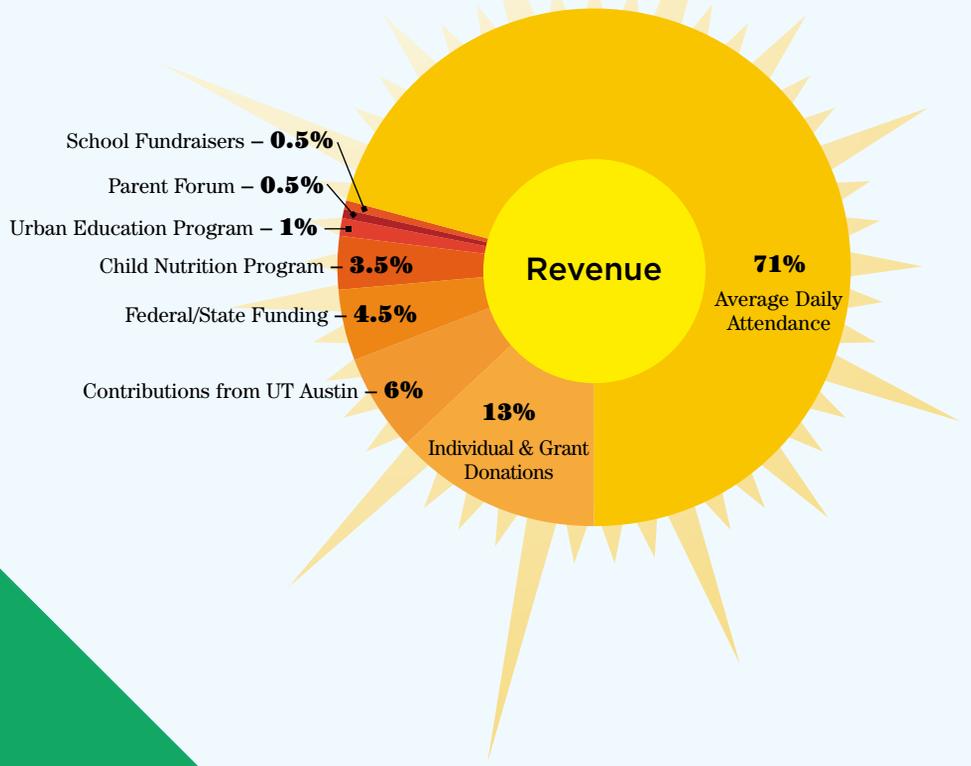


Michael Klein — Mickey to his friends — is one of the school's biggest fans. He has supported our instructional programs, helped pay for support staff, provided materials, and even sent our fourth-grade class on an educational trip to SeaWorld for the past three years. Most importantly, he volunteers often with the fourth-graders on their academic skills, and he recently began working with first-graders as well. Mickey's wife Jeanne is also a huge advocate for the school.

We cannot express enough how much we appreciate Mickey and Jeanne Klein.

Dr. Marina Walne started working hard for UT Elementary when it was just an idea. She was a key writer in the initial charter proposal to establish the school, and she also wrote our first business plan. As executive director of the University of Texas System's Institute for Public School Initiatives, Marina serves on our management board and development council, and is an adviser to UT Vice President Gregory Vincent, Education Professor Ed Sharpe, and our CEO, Ramona Treviño. Thank you, Marina, for helping create our school — and continuing to encourage us every day.

Revenue and Expenses 2008-09



UT Elementary 2008-09 Donors

(Contributions received September 1, 2008 – August 31, 2009)

\$25,000+

The Dell Foundation
KDK-Harman Foundation
The Klein Foundation
Michael & Jeanne Klein
Perry Lorenz
The Tapestry Foundation of Mary
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\$1,000–\$4,999

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Run-Tex Sportswear

\$500–\$999

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Capital City African American Chamber of Com-
merce

*Note: End of term indicated in parentheses.
Terms end June 30.*

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(Contributions received September 1, 2008 – August 31, 2009)

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