

History of the Back-to-School Bash and Safety Fair

In 2005, the Parent/Family Involvement Advisory Council, a group that works with the AISD Family Resource Center and other district staff to promote partnerships between schools and families, collaborated with the Office of Educational Support and the Office of Planning and Community Relations to host a Back-to-School resource fair. The event, "*AISD Family Resource Fair: Bridging the Information Gap Before the First Bell Rings,*" provided attendees with important information regarding programs and resources offered by the District. The purpose of the resource fair was to allow parents to ask questions and obtain information about their child's school, educational program, and available resources prior to the first day of school.

The following year, the Bash expanded with a partnership with the City of Austin. The City of Austin's Child Safety Programs had collaborated with various AISD campuses on the Safe Walk to School for several years. In 2006, that partnership evolved into the *Back-to-School Bash and Safe Walk to School*. Instead of working with only one school, this collaboration enabled the City to get its message out to more students. The focus was on teaching students skills on walking safely to and from school. Also, Safe Kids Austin provided hundreds of bicycle helmets for students to wear as they ride their bicycle to school and back home. In addition, Seton Family of Hospitals and Travis County Health and Human Services provided immunizations and AmeriGroup provided refreshments. The Safe Walk to School, in conjunction with district and community resources, resulted in a well-rounded and well attended community event.

Austin School District Police joined the collaboration in 2007, thus creating the *Back-to-School Bash and Safety Fair*. Chief Pat Fuller expressed his desire for District officers and other local law enforcement agencies to provide safety training and information as part of the Bash. Events such as the bicycle rodeo, safety bingo, and self defense classes are just a few of the activities that District Police provided. The Safety Fair opened with a press conference with AISD Police Chief Pat Fuller and Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo expressing the importance of safety in schools and neighborhoods. APD's Air One, an Austin Fire Department fire truck, police vehicles and all-terrain vehicles from various departments were just a few of the safety equipment on display for students and their families to learn about. Once again, immunizations were given and bicycle helmets, bicycles and other prizes were given away. More than 2,400 people attended.

The 2008 Back to School Bash and Safety Fair marked the biggest year ever! With almost 3,000 people in attendance, students were fitted for bicycle helmets, learned how to safely board and get off a school bus, the importance of wearing a seatbelt at all times, and the importance of not drinking and driving. In addition, thanks to Travis County Adult Probation, students received free school supplies. With more than fifty vendors passing out information to attendees, students and parents were able to gather valuable information that would inform future decisions regarding their child's education.

The 2009 Back-to-School Bash and Safety Fair exceeded everyone's expectations where attendance was concerned. More than 8,000 students and their parents flocked to the Delco Activity Center to take part in the largest back to school event in the area. Several District departments and community

organizations were on hand to provide information and answer questions. Backpacks filled with school supplies were given to all who qualified. Approximately 100 students received 268 immunizations, administered by Seton nurses, on a first-come, first-served basis. Students were also fitted for bicycle helmets and 40 brand new bicycles were raffled off throughout the event.

If you have any questions about the Back-to-School Bash and Safety Fair, please contact Beverly E. Reeves, District Ombudsman and Coordinator of the Back to School Bash, at 414-9876.