



Media Contact:

Ann Taylor, VP Marketing
& Communications
United Way Capital Area
512-225-0387 (w)
512-970-4067 (c)

FOCUS ON MIDDLE SCHOOLS AIMS TO INCREASE GRADUATION RATES

United Way Capital Area Leading Effort to Boost Student Success

AUSTIN, Texas – April 12, 2011 – With the goal of keeping students on track to graduate high school, United Way Capital Area (UWCA) and 16 nonprofit partners will roll out intensive support services at three high need middle schools next school year. The effort is being undertaken at three middle schools, Mendez and Webb in the Austin Independent School District (AISD), and Decker Middle School in the Manor Independent School District (Manor ISD). Applied Materials, Inc., The Applied Materials Foundation and IBM also are focusing a part of their philanthropic efforts in these areas to ensure middle school students are successful.

“By saturating these three schools with services customized specifically for the students’ needs, we will reach a tipping point and ultimately increase the number of students who graduate from high school,” said Debbie Bresette, UWCA President. “It will take all of us – the business community, nonprofit partners and volunteers – to reach our goal of 95 percent of students graduating from high school by 2015.” Today, 81 percent of Central Texas students graduate on-time from high school.

UWCA is investing more than \$1 million in the initiative to fund the 22 programs that are part of *Middle School Matters*, the organization’s youth education initiative. UWCA and its nonprofit partners will deliver a wide-range of support services at the middle schools, including mentoring, tutoring, behavioral health, parent education and quality afterschool programs to students at the three schools.

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UWCA's plan includes careful integration of the programs at each school with the goal of setting up students for success and making each campus more conducive to learning. Expected results include increasing attendance, test scores and parental involvement and decreasing behavioral referrals.

In collaboration with businesses, the impact becomes far greater. Contributions from Applied Materials, Inc. and The Applied Materials Foundation focus on keeping middle school students on-track academically by strengthening core academics, providing mentors, and supporting quality after-school programs in fine arts and the environment in select AISD and Manor ISD schools. IBM's efforts include in-kind contributions as Reading Companion, a Web-enabled program that facilitates word fluency, recognition and pronunciation through voice recognition software. Other IBM contributions to help bridge the language divide include Traducelo Ahora!, an interactive reading program and translation technology which enables bidirectional translations (English-Spanish and Spanish-English) of Web sites and e-mails. Volunteers from these companies have given thousands of hours to UWCA's volunteer program over the years.

Youth education is just one of the focus areas that will share \$3.4 million in UWCA's Community Investment Grants. Funding will also be directed toward early childhood education, income and health initiatives. More than 175 community volunteers reviewed and made recommendations on which programs would receive the competitive grants. UWCA awarded grants to 69 programs representing 49 nonprofit partners, including 18 new and all current UWCA partners.

About United Way Capital Area

United Way Capital Area is working hard to advance the common good by focusing on three key areas: education, income and health – the building blocks for a good life. UWCA works to create measurable change that prevent problems from happening in the first place and that empowers people to improve the quality of life for themselves and others. Our vision for Central Texas is a community where all individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income and healthy lives. For more information, please visit www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org.

About The Applied Materials Foundation

The Applied Materials Foundation, a California nonprofit corporation qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, was established in 1994 by Applied Materials, Inc., the global leader in providing innovative equipment, services and software to enable the manufacture of advanced semiconductor, flat panel display and solar photovoltaic products. The Foundation's mission is to make a positive social contribution in regions where Applied Materials employees work and live through philanthropic investments in the areas of education, civic development, arts and culture, and the environment.

About IBM

IBM (NYSE: IBM) has been a leader in corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship for 100 years. IBM puts initiatives into place that address vital issues, such as the environment, community economic development, education, health, literacy, language, and culture. To learn more about IBM's corporate citizenship initiatives, please visit: <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/citizen-ibm>.

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