

Strategic Direction Initiative Report

Core Initiative: 1. Effective Teacher in Every Classroom

We are committed to improving student achievement across our district, and research tells us that teachers are by far the most important school-based factor in determining a child's academic success or failure.

What was our progress over the previous semester?

There were several major accomplishments this period, one of which was securing grants from private foundations, including the Laura & John Arnold Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as a substantial, five-year Teacher Incentive Fund grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom core initiative. We also launched the Effective Teacher Initiative website at www.hisdeffectiveteachers.org.

Recruitment, Selection and Retention

Principals are already identifying hiring needs in order to inform recruitment efforts in the spring and proactively working with the recruitment team to create a pipeline of talent to fill teaching positions. Fall recruitment efforts have included 38 college events, 8 informational sessions, 12 webinars and a screening blitz for current vacancies. Approximately 90 teaching candidates passed the initial screening phases. We are continuing to seek positions for displaced staff and to build a talent pool for the coming school year. Also, in the past, we have had separate recruitment and selection criteria for our teacher ACP candidates. We are in the midst of recruiting and selecting our class of ACP teachers for the 2011-12 year. We have aligned the selection criteria for this program with that of our teacher hiring. All of the people that will be admitted to that program will have completed and been successful in our rigorous teacher selection process, thus, ensuring when these people complete their ACP program that we will want to hire them at our schools.

Teacher Appraisal Design

The district launched the design of a new teacher appraisal system. Several thousand individuals have participated in the design process for the new teacher appraisal system through Shared Decision Making Committees, the District Advisory Committee and the Working Groups. Three of the four cycles in the design process have been completed to date. The fourth and final cycle will be completed in March when the SDMCs make final recommendations for consideration by the DAC. SDMCs and the DAC identified 9 types of criteria that were grouped in three larger categories: Student Performance, Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations. SDMCs and the DAC

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provided specific recommendations on the detailed criteria under Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations. With input from the SDMCs, the DAC is building a recommendation on Student Performance criteria. Based upon recommendations from the SDMCs, the DAC built a preliminary set of process-related recommendations as well. As the next level of detail within the appraisal design work, we have launched five working groups comprised of teachers, principals, parents and other key stakeholders. These working groups are charged with detailing the tools and instruments necessary to implement the new system.

Professional Development

We are continuing to explore a more aligned approach for how teachers access centralized professional learning activities so that they are more focused and aligned with the district's priority for promoting job-embedded learning. Therefore, we are developing a delivery structure for providing professional development to support teachers where they need it most – in their classrooms. In addition, we are responding to the expressed need from teachers to better understand EVAAS and how the value-added data and information can be used to inform and improve instruction. For example, last fall we continued to offer Saturday trainings for teachers on EVAAS at which several hundred teachers participated. Also, SIOs are using the Staff Review Process discussions with principals and Individual Professional Development Plans of teachers to inform and shape professional development needed at the central, school and classroom levels.

Career Pathways and Differentiated Compensation

We have a strong need for retaining our most effective teachers. One way to do this has been through rewarding excellence in the classroom through the ASPIRE Award Program. We completed the 2009-2010 Fall Confirmation Period and the ASPIRE Award Payout Summary totaling nearly \$40.6 million. Another way to retain our most effective teachers will be through the creation of career pathways for teachers that do not necessarily require leaving the classroom entirely. Exploring the viability of new, differentiated roles for teacher leaders that may include: (1) Mentoring new or struggling teachers; (2) Serving as the grade or department chair; and (3) Delivering or coordinating professional development. Given the budget challenges, we are further examining how we may be able to create these opportunities for teachers. Through the Staff Review Process, principals and SIOs are identifying potential future leaders and Human Resources is using the list as a starting point for creating a pipeline for teacher and school leadership position. As part of the Teacher Incentive Fund grant, we will be exploring how we may be able to pilot some new roles for next school year with the hopes of a larger roll out the subsequent year.

Where do we stand today?

We continue to improve and inform our recruitment efforts to find highly qualified, highly effective teachers. A talent pool is already being developed for the coming year, as well as a pipeline for future leaders to participate in our leadership development programs.

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Furthermore, we have been analyzing our previous recruitment results to utilize those sources that have yielded the best teachers. Our efforts to design a more robust, fair teacher appraisal system will be completed in the coming months. We are preparing for the public comment period and the final phase of the design process with SDMCs and the DAC. Finally, we are presently working to develop a more comprehensive, yet streamlined organizational structure for teacher professional development that provides for more job-embedded supports, yet balances central-office led training and development efforts.

What have we learned?

We continue to realize the value of engaging our stakeholders in our efforts to ensure effective teachers in every classroom. From assisting us to find the best teachers to providing feedback on proposed evaluations, input from our Board, our teachers, our community, and our staff ensures that we don't miss anything. People provide feedback from all different directions.

In addition, we have realized the importance of tracking critical information now on the hiring efforts that we have underway. As we try to analyze prior results, we recognize that the data that we captured was not enough to do as thorough an analysis as we would like. We are now capturing more information that will allow us to better determine our most effective sources.

Finally, we have learned that we can never over-communicate an initiative. Teachers want and deserve direct communication through multiple channels. The Effective Teacher Initiative website has served as a "go-to" place for information on the teacher appraisal design effort. The bi-weekly direct emails to teachers and the weekly eNews issues have helped to apprise them of the the work. Instructional consultation and other meetings with the teachers associations have also shed some light on ways to better communicate and engage teachers within the initiative and help to alleviate some of the concerns and misconceptions along the way.

What are our priorities for the next semester?

Over the next period, we plan to begin implementation of Kenexa the Talent Acquisition system for rollout prior to the 2011-12 school year. This system will allow principals a more effective system in screening candidates for their individual campuses. Through scenario-based budget planning, a risk we've identified is the amount of work relating to servicing any displaced teachers into the staffing process with the schools. To mitigate this risk, an integrated effort with the Data-Driven Accountability core initiative is under way to redesign our vacancy tracking process to allow for more accurate reporting and focused staffing efforts.

Following a public comment period in February we will return to the SDMCs and DAC to review a final proposal as we work on putting forth a revised evaluation system to the School Board in April. In the future, we will be working to identify data sources that can be used to create the metrics by which all campus-based and centralized professional development will be evaluated

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ASPIRE Award determinations will be finalized and paid out in January, and a more formal kickoff of the career pathways and compensation work will begin, including defining teacher leadership opportunities and associated compensation. A process will be designed through the Professional Development(PD) clearinghouse to collect data relative to school-based teacher support and development and the results in student performance. Training will be scheduled for principals and campus leadership to define strategies and resources that principals can use to provide professional development for all teachers.

Strategic Direction Initiative Report

Core Initiative: 2. Effective Principal in Every School

What was our progress over the previous semester?

Design and implement a rigorous and fair principal appraisal system

We have developed a working partnership with Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). We are in the process of identifying pilot implementation participants. The McREL Principal Evaluation System is built on the following premises:

- The primary job of the principal is to ensure high quality instruction for every student, in every classroom, every day.
- This system focuses the evaluation of principals on behaviors and practices most likely to ensure high, within-school instructional quality.
- A personnel evaluation system should be supported by related professional growth and development resources.
- Personnel evaluation should be ongoing and systemic, resulting in continuous growth and improvement.
- An analytic rubric with performance indicators and a rating scale is at the core of the evaluation system.
- Multiple data sources, including artifacts and evidence, will be used in assessing educator performance.
- The system will provide the basis for educator performance goals and professional development activities.

Selected SIOs, principals and their assistant principals will participate in a pilot implementation plan. District-wide training for assistant principals and principals is scheduled to begin in July, 2011.

Implementation of quality assurance standards and recommended practices to guide principals' decision-making with high expectations and clear accountability

We have initiated a draft document that describes quality assurance standards and recommended practices that will be used by principals to guide them in their day-to-day decision-making at the campus level.

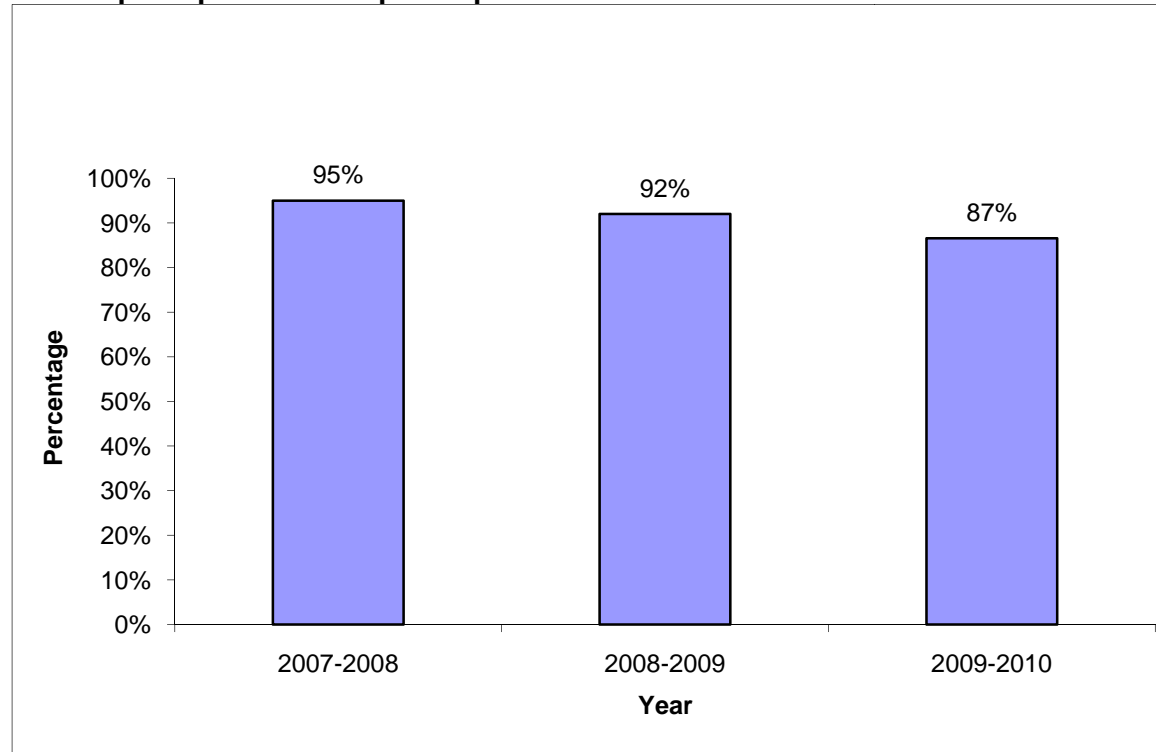
Strengthen recruiting and staffing policies and practices to attract top talent

During this period, we concentrated our efforts in three key areas: developing our internal talent so they will be ready for administrator positions in the future, cultivating our internal candidates that are ready to assume principal positions, and traveling to conferences and schools to recruit experienced external principals.

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The graphic below shows our percentage for top principal talent retained. While we are doing a good job to retain current administrators, we are aggressively seeking external candidates and identifying internal candidates.

Percent of principals in the top two quartiles of EVAAS value added data who are retained



Interpretation: For this metric, the campus value-added composite cumulative gain index was used to rank those who were identified as campus principals as of the fall semester of the school year. All campuses with value-added scores were included in the denominator count.

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Our internal development efforts included initiating a partnership with the University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Program (UTCULP) that will yield a pipeline of 24 individuals who will be ready to serve in district-wide leadership positions. We also conducted a Leadership Summit with inspiring speakers in an effort to continue to attract internal candidates for district leadership positions.

Our work to recruit externally included visits to conferences and schools to look for Leadership talent. Since this is HISD's first venture to recruit from the national and state leadership organizations, we have been learning which organizations, schools and events are the right ones to attend. Our efforts this fall have been focused on attending these events to meet potential candidates and to network with the leaders of these organizations so that they will assist us in our recruitment efforts. We have had good results from these events as we have met over 60 candidates and have six that have made it through our screening process. These people will be considered for leadership positions, as we have openings this spring.

Rice Education Entrepreneurship Program (REEP)

We have three primary reasons behind our efforts to forge a stronger relationship with the REEP program., We want to ensure that current potential leaders in HISD remain committed to the district. KIPP and YES leaders and other districts attend intend to inspire these people to come work at their organizations We need to develop our pipeline of future leaders by encouraging HISD employees to attend this program and recruit candidates from the program for our leadership positions. We have already held two events with the current REEP participants and alumni to share our Strategic Direction and help them understand the exciting things happening at HISD. One of these events included one of our SIOs sharing motivational stories of his leadership experiences at HISD. We are also holding special interview sessions for interested candidates from their program.

Talent Acquisition System

Finally, we are holding our kickoff meeting with Kenexa, our vendor, next week. We are very excited about this implementation as it will allow us to better search our applicant base and current employees for job openings. It will also allow us to communicate more effectively with our applicants and track and report the results of our recruitment efforts.

Establish a comprehensive instructional leadership program to develop and retain top talent

We worked with external partners to expand the opportunities for current employees to participate in new or current credentialing and certification programs that would lead to principal certification. We currently have active partnerships with The University of Texas, Rice University and the University of Houston-Downtown. We are in the planning stages of program development/partnerships with University of Houston-Central and Texas A&M University. In addition to providing opportunities for employees to earn principal certification, we are also actively working on other areas that support principal development and principal advancement. We are engaged in conversations with

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Harvard University and The University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business to develop customized training for veteran administrators.

Additionally, we have tentatively scheduled trainings resulting from a principal survey that identified strengths and weaknesses of current support for principals. A series of training sessions under the broad topic “Performance Management” will roll out this spring. This training will align with the training content for Staff Review and will reinforce important skills and lessons learned. Staff Documentation and Investigations training for principals and assistant principals is also ongoing.

Session topics include the following:

- How to Engage in Meaningful and Effective Discussions about Teacher Performance
- Scheduling Observations and Feedback Conversations
- A Strategic Review of Student Work: How Student Outcomes Can Drive Instruction and Development Conversations
- Tools, Tips, and Tricks for Tracking and Managing Performance

The district has launched an ambitious “grow-your-own” model for leadership development. New administrators participating in the model will spend three years in a mentorship program. This effort is referred to as the Leadership Development Framework and includes mentoring, coaching, learning seminars, job-embedded professional development, and reflective practice. The Leadership Development Framework includes targeted and specific development and training for 52 first-time assistant principals and deans, 34 first-time principals and 56 aspiring principals.

Through the efforts of Human Resource Talent Acquisition; Leadership; and the Elementary, Middle and Secondary School Offices; 56 candidates will begin a rigorous “readiness” program on January 27, 2011. The readiness cohort consists of 19 elementary candidates and 37 secondary candidates. These administrators will participate in structured seminars that are designed to accelerate effective leadership development by providing them with the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed to serve as principals in HISD. The curriculum for the cohort includes opportunities for self-development (resume writing, interview practice with feedback), along with components designed to improve instructional leadership, professional development planning, data analysis, resource allocation, human capital development and operating systems focusing on increased student achievement. HISD Business and Finance Services, Facilities and Maintenance, and Procurement Services will also provide training as part of the readiness program. There is tremendous stakeholder involvement in the new “grow-your-own” model for district leadership development.

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In addition to professional development for principals, the district is also providing additional training for central office administrators. A Hiring Managers Series launched in November 2010. This training is designed to provide managers with tools and supports that directly improve the district's hiring and retention processes. Session topics include:

- Strengths-Based Management
- The Hiring Process
- Developing a Work Location Onboarding Process
- The Employee Appraisal and Documentation Process
- Meetings that Matter
- Building High Functioning Teams
- Technology Tips and Tools for Managers

The sessions were developed through collaborative efforts by Human Resources (Talent Acquisition, Leadership, Professional Development, Professional Standards, Compensation, and Rewards and Accountability) and Budget and Finance Departments.

Create a safe and secure environment conducive to learning in all schools

We conducted research to identify the characteristics of a central database that can best meet the needs of the district in tracking and monitoring safety violations/breaches.

Where do we stand today?

Our course remains consist with the data communicated as part of the Human Resources Management Oversight Report. Refer to Board Monitoring Report, December 2010.

What have we learned?

We are learning to do a better job of looking at the range of leadership development interventions and programs including feedback, appraisal processes, on-the-job experiences, and formal learning seminars to determine the effectiveness of current components in enhancing performance, knowledge and expertise at the individual, group and organizational level. We have also learned to do a better job of identifying and designing more web-based and web-enhanced courses to accommodate schedules and improve cost effectiveness.

What are our priorities for the next semester?

In conjunction with Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) we will finalize the principal appraisal rubric that will be used in the pilot implementation program. We have scheduled training for SIOs, principals and assistant principals participating in the

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pilot group. We are solidifying the work plan and timeline for full development and implementation of the new principal appraisal system. District-wide implementation training is scheduled for July and August 2011.

During the next reporting period, we will complete the draft of standards and recommended practices, present the draft document to various constituencies and deliver a final draft of standards and practices to the Superintendent's Cabinet for review and feedback.

In the next period, we will continue to work with the University of Texas and Rice University to support the leadership preparation programs at each institution. We will also attend additional external recruitment events sponsored by diverse national education associations. In addition, we will begin working with core teams to implement a district-wide Talent Acquisition system.

In the next period, we will share our findings with key constituencies. Schools will continue to utilize the Safe Schools Department on issues that pertain to Safe Schools Choice Options (SSCO). The Safe Schools Department acts as an advocate, utilizing police reports from HISD Police and data from Federal and State Compliance to monitor schools to reduce miscoding of safety violations.

Strategic Direction Initiative Report

Core Initiative: 3. Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports

What was our progress over the previous semester?

Equity in access to educational programs

Substantial progress has been made in the last semester toward providing better access to quality educational programs throughout HISD. We recently completed a plan for Advanced Placement(AP) Strategic Goals and it is allowing us to move forward and offer more AP courses. Funding remains a challenge with increased AP offerings but grants are being written and secured (Dell Grant) to help meet specific AP goals. It is clear that the district is planning, training and creating critical friends that will provide dramatic increases in AP offerings for the 2011-2012 across all sections of the school district.

Currently, the International Baccalaureate program is somewhat misunderstood by those HISD schools that have most recently become interested in providing IB to their students. Information regarding implementation and the format of the International Baccalaureate program was provided to HISD schools in Fall 2010. The following schools will contribute to the continuation and the growth of the IB program in HISD; Lamar and Bellaire High Schools will continue to offer their programs, although Bellaire is reporting a possible increase in the number of diploma candidates for the 2011-12 school year. Lanier Middle School will continue to offer IB; Fondren Middle School will submit its IB application April 2011, and Harvard Elementary School is in its final phase of the IB authorization process.

HISD's AP initiatives have provided new AP Teachers with several professional development opportunities including New AP Teacher Orientation in August 2010, as well as AP Fall Seminar and the AP Mentor Program. All new HISD AP teachers and teachers from low performing schools (AP qualifying scores 0-10% of all AP exams) were assigned to an HISD AP Mentor in Fall 2010 and were invited to attend the AP Mentor/Mentee PLC meeting in December 2010, which 84% of identified teachers participated in.

HISD was also awarded the Michael and Susan Dell Grant in November 2010. Although Beginning of Course Assessments were not administered in Fall 2010 due to the timing of the award, other components of the grant were implemented, including, the New AP Teacher Orientation, the AP Mentor Program and AP Fall Seminar.

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Twenty-one HISD Middle Schools will be adopting the SpringBoard math curriculum for all 6th-8th grade students. This Pre-AP curriculum, designed to prepare students for the Advanced Placement program, will offer students a rigorous curriculum and raise the level of rigor for HISD Middle School students.

In support of better equity and access, as related to the district magnet programs, we have been very successful in issuing an **RFP**, securing a quality vendor, Magnet Schools of America, and providing a quality evaluation product to guide new directions. As this process moves forward, it will lead to increased options for students and parents to choose a greater variety of quality programs.

Several of the alternative schools are in the process of re-evaluating services as well as re-purposing the mission of the schools. Notably, The Contemporary Learning Center is one of the early success stories in securing a \$4 million dollar grant from the state. In an effort to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the Alternative Schools Department, HP Carter Career Center was closed due to under enrollment and overstaffing. Carter students were re-enrolled at Contemporary Learning Center (CLC) or their home school in December. Additionally, the YWCA daycare facility formerly housed at HP Carter, moved to the CLC campus. This streamlining of campuses will result in a \$1.2 million savings for fiscal year 2012.

The Alternative Schools Department established contractual agreements between Odyssey House and St. Michael's schools (Catholic Charities). In the Odyssey House agreement, HISD will provide education for 19 students living in a residential treatment center for substance abuse. At St. Michael's (housed at MC Williams Middle School), 72 immigrant children between the ages of 5-17 years receive daily instruction.

Additional progress includes:

- CLC began implementing school improvement strategies outlined in their Texas Title I Priority School (TTIPS) grant.
- The Alternative Schools Department consolidated four programs onto the North Alternative Elementary School at the Chatham Campus.
- The Advanced Virtual Academy/ Twilight Schools (AVA) opened at seven campuses strategically located throughout the district to recapture dropouts and support their efforts to graduate.

Develop and implement an aligned standards-based curriculum and assessment system

New scope and sequence documents have been developed and the use of formative assessments on a three week “check cycle” has been implemented in the district. This more frequent monitoring of student learning will yield results in the state testing calendar and will tie classroom instruction to common curriculum standards.

HISD continues to develop, improve, and implement a quality curriculum and assessment program. Best practices suggest that frequent assessment used to inform instruction is critical for ensuring individual student needs are met. While funding for a robust assessment system has not been secured, interim assessments have been developed in-house and are being administered on an ongoing basis (approximately every 2-3 weeks). They provide data needed to inform teachers of how well each student is learning. Data is used to identify instructional gaps, district-wide trends, and intervention recommendations. The result of this analysis was shared with teachers.

Curriculum development included the revisions to current district instructional planning guides, the creation of scope and sequence documents for core courses at all grade levels, and the introduction of a district-wide course catalog. In addition, curriculum resources called “Blueprints” have been developed for reading and math in grades kindergarten through high school. These Blueprints define the critical standards all students must master to be prepared for the next grade level and have been vetted by teachers and principals. They will also be reviewed by parents. In addition, comprehensive curriculum professional development offerings were attended by thousands of teachers.

Plans for an instructional materials clearinghouse are in development. HISD is creating an electronic application and process for identifying district recommended products that have the potential to improve student performance.

The budget shortfall is hindering plans for professional development, critically needed curriculum audit work and the building of a comprehensive managed curriculum and assessment system.

Implement Response to district-wide intervention model to provide early, effective assistance to children who are experiencing behavior issues and are having difficulty learning

All core academic teachers have received materials and IAT/RTI charts to assist them in the classroom. Strategies have been developed to promote behavior modification during placement, enhance communication, and monitor progress. An Action Required Memorandum and evaluation instruments have been disseminated throughout the district.

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The Safe Schools Manager has made presentations to schools and groups in the district. The Safe Schools Department has personnel to load IAT/RTI information for parents onto the website(completed December 2010). Safe Schools has been meeting to develop a strategy to promote behavior modification during placement, enhance communication with schools, and to monitor progress once the student has returned to the regular educational setting.

Apollo 20 Plan

The Apollo 20 plan is on track with all positions hired and The Office of Apollo 20 successfully opened. All Apollo core team training has been completed. Clear scientifically based strategies are being successfully deployed through the Apollo schools.

Vibrant new leadership and faculty are bringing energy to the schools. Early indicators of success are present at all Apollo schools and the realignment of resources is increasing instructional time for staff and students. It is paying off with notable academic outcomes.

Emphasis of doubling the instructional time around critical math and reading skills are providing time for student re-teaching and foundational learning in the academic basics. Professional Learning Communities have been established at each site. Formative assessments in three week cycles are enriching the discussions within these communities around student learning. District assessment data is being constantly monitored for mastery and used to individually track student mastery. Constant coaching and staff development is provided at all Apollo campuses.

Implement a comprehensive literacy (reading) program in grades pre-k through 12

Phase 1 of Literacy Plan work has been completed. Plan development for reading has been well received by the critical stakeholders in the district and the Phase 1 Literacy Plan enjoys support from the principals and teachers of the district.

Reading documents have been developed, so that parents know what students should be able to do by the end of each grade level, K-12. These documents will be widely available in a variety of formats in support of the parents' role of assistance in student reading development.

The district has launched an ongoing training initiative to facilitate quality implementation of new reading adoption. A district-wide textbook selection committee has also been established process for new reading adoption beginning in the fall of 2011.

To meet the reading needs of all students, HISD must provide district-wide, rigorous, instructional reading standards and support for students as they transition from grade to grade. The foundation for a comprehensive PK-12 literacy plan has been developed outlining the

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expectations of what is needed for quality literacy instructional programs. This research-based, data-informed framework was developed in collaboration with expert reading consultants and a district committee representing the diversity of the district. The literacy plan has been vetted by instructional departments, the principal advisory committee, campus literacy coaches, and leaders of the Academic Services division.

The University of Houston reading researchers in the Texas Institute of Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) division is prepared to partner with HISD to develop grade level reading standards to be used to identify above-, on-, and below-grade level readers. Funding for this initiative is being explored. The district partnership with TIMES will be a three-year effort to develop standards, training, instructional resources, and a data platform that will interface with the HISD data warehouse.

Implement a comprehensive Numeracy/mathematics program in grades pre-k through 12

New scope and sequence documents for math K-12 have been developed for math and disseminated district wide to support a comprehensive approach to math instruction. In addition, we have implemented the Renzulli Learning Program at all elementary campuses.

Further the district has developed Phase one of a PK-12 mathematics plan. This plan also enjoys full support from our principals and teachers as they helped with its development.

Instructional specialists in math are coaching teachers: modeling lessons, co-teaching, and assisting in lesson plan development. Curriculum managers and specialists are supporting schools with the implementation of intervention programs. We have also begun ongoing teacher leadership training for math lead teachers and department chairs in order to maximize impact of a standardized math curriculum.

Dramatic new formative assessments have been developed. They will be administered by teachers approximately once every three weeks. This continues to pull our classroom instruction focus back to a comprehensive, standardized math curriculum. This new interim math assessment data is beginning to drive instructional change in math teaching.

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Where do we stand today?

Equity in access to educational programs

One hundred percent of the former HP Carter students are currently enrolled in HISD schools – the majority is attending CLC. Pregnant and parenting CLC students are receiving additional community support since there is a licensed daycare center on the property along with parenting classes taught by licensed professionals.

In January, 91 new HISD students began instruction at Odyssey House and St. Michael's School (at MC Williams). Students receive instruction through on-line courses via Connections Academy along with face-to-face instruction from HISD teachers.

CLC began TTIPS grant implementation by starting the extended school day program in January. School hours are 8:25 a.m. to 4:55 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:25 a.m. to 3:55 p.m. on Friday. Teachers have begun intensive professional development training on data analysis provided by Region IV and HISD content specialists.

Currently, those schools that are considering implementation of international baccalaureate (IB) will have the opportunity to attend IB training at Rice University this summer. Additionally, there are a few schools, such as Clifton MS and Rodriguez ES, that are in the process of considering adoption. Information and guidance will continue to be provided to all interested schools within the district vision for IB growth.

AP professional development, including AP Exam Preparation Workshop and AP Leadership Institute (HS and MS AP Leadership Teams) will be offered February 2011 at Rice University. In an effort to celebrate AP teaching, AP Celebration Saturday will be held in February 2011. Laying the Foundation End-of-Course Assessments will be administered in May to all Pre-AP students. In addition to the AP professional development and the LTF EOCs, new Pre-AP teachers will participate in Laying the Foundation Training dates set for June 2011. Currently, we are working on the SpringBoard contract for approval for the 2011-12 school year.

The MSA Magnet Program Review was released to the public on Friday, January 7, 2011. All documents which included the final report, four attachments, and additional supporting documents were posted on the HISD website and shared with local media outlets. All HISD principals received the report and participated in an informational meeting to review the MSA Magnet Program Review findings and recommendations. The principals were asked to meet with their faculties, PTA/O, SDMC committee, and all other stakeholders to share the report and its findings. They also received a School Feedback Form and were asked to submit all comments, questions, concerns, and recommendations to the Office of School Choice. The feedback forms are coming in and are being compiled.

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On Monday, January 10, 2011, MSA presented the report to the Board and Superintendent of Schools. The Board participated in an open discussion with MSA about the findings, data, recommendations, and report quality. MSA clarified questions and collected additional data from the Board and administration. During the monthly Magnet Coordinators Meeting on Thursday, January 13, 2011, the Magnet Coordinators received the report and an overview of the findings and recommendations. They were also asked to review the report, share it with the schools and community, and assist the principals in gathering comments and recommendations. The information must be submitted on the school feedback form.

Currently, MSA is in the process of editing and revising the report based on input from the Board, additional data analysis, and school input. The report is expected to be submitted on Monday, January 17, 2011.

Implement a comprehensive numeracy/mathematics program in grades pre-k through 12

HISD continues to develop teacher capacity to provide high quality, differentiated instruction in mathematics. Instructional specialists were hired and provide coaching and mentoring at the campus level. Specialists receive ongoing professional development opportunities to support capacity building efforts at the campus level. This professional development facilitates quality campus teacher leadership training and one-on-one coaching support. Specialists assist teachers in analyzing results of the interim assessments and determining instructional next steps. During the fall semester, customized training was provided to all sixth grade teachers to increase content knowledge and pedagogy. Targeted assistance was provided to sixth and ninth grade tutors at Apollo schools to equip them with multiple instructional strategies to enable student success.

What have we learned?

The Alternative Schools Department must be proactive in monitoring and “right sizing” the existing school structure and program offerings. School consolidations and closings are extremely emotional events and must be considered very carefully. The decision to consolidate or close a school should go forward only after the school community has had ample time to process the proposed change AND has had the opportunity to provide input on future plans for the school site (e.g. repurposing, selling of property, etc).

In reference to the TTIPS grant process, grant proposals must include input from a large cross section of the school community. Newly appointed principals must be brought up to speed on grant objectives, action steps, etc., immediately after their appointment. In an effort to stay in compliance with the grant guidelines, it is recommended that the principal include in the grant proposal, compensation to hire at least a part-time grants administrator or project manager.

What are our priorities for the next semester?

CLC stakeholders are in the process of reviewing effective school models for the school re-purposing in Fall 2011. There is definite urgency to present viable options for the community vetting process in time for an anticipated board approval in Spring 2011. CLC must continue the model selection process while still adhering to the year one TTIPS grant guidelines. This requires keen attention to implementation plans, grant details and deadlines.

Additionally, there is a high priority request to provide additional funding for Liberty HS. The school has been in a persistent deficit spending cycle for several years. The Chief Financial Officer has met with the SIO and principal to address the issue.

The district must now evaluate the MSA Magnet Review report, gather and synthesize all school and community input, and formulate its recommendations to the Board. The Board and Superintendent must then make a determination on the recommendations submitted. Therefore, the following work will occur in support of the administration's efforts to put forth a recommendation with regard to Magnet Programs:

- Phase II- Present MSA report to the Board, Community, and schools for feedback (January –February)
- Phase III- Synthesize feedback and formulate recommendations (February –March)
- Phase IV- Present recommendations to the Board (March)
- Phase V- Develop an implementation plan based on the Board-approved recommendations (March-April)

Even though this project is only focusing on the review of the Magnet Program, the district must be sensitive to and make sure that it reflects needs of the entire district and community. Any decisions made with regards to the Magnet Program must address the impact of all 300+ schools and ultimately the 204,000 students we educate.

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The AP priorities for next semester include creating district-wide guidelines for IB, focusing on Middle Years Programme (grades 6-10), completing the Fondren MS IB application in order to submit by April 1, 2011, and continuing to meet the requirements of the Dell Grant

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for AP and Pre-AP for Spring 2011. The AP/IB Team will continue to review and assess AP program effectiveness at each HISD secondary school, examining AP/Pre-AP professional development needs.

The Advanced Placement Program's initiatives are on track and will be offered in Spring 2011. Although the Dell Grant requirements of Beginning of Course assessments were not administered, End-of-Course assessments will be administered prior to June 30, 2011 to all Pre-AP MS and HS students and will be used as a benchmark for the training that will be offered to new Pre-AP teachers.

Creating guidelines for the International Baccalaureate program is essential as we continue to create ways in which to assist HISD schools that are IB authorized and those that are considering IB.

We also plan to increase awareness and commitment for HISD AP High School and HISD Pre-AP Middle School designations. The Middle Schools Office will focus on exposing HISD Middle School Math teachers from participating middle schools to targeted information regarding the successful implementation and rollout of the SpringBoard program for Spring2011. The SpringBoard program adoption and implementation will require staff development and training from Spring 2011 through the following academic year.

The Alternative Schools are on track to provide effective and efficient schools and programs to address the unique needs of our alternative school students. We are focused on supporting successful existing programs while expanding the menu of options to include new and innovative approaches to alternative education. We solicit the board and community input and approval related to new schools and programs that are submitted through this repurposing process. We anticipate school/program change proposals to be submitted to the board in early Spring 2011. Funding to support the new initiatives, as well as proposed schools, will continue to be a challenge in these extremely tough economic times.

Strategic Direction Initiative Report

Core Initiative: 4. Ensure Data-Driven Accountability

Build robust systems and processes that enable easy access to and use of key data to inform decisions and manage high levels of performance district-wide.

What was our progress over the previous semester?

Accomplished foundational work in each key strategy so next steps can focus on further integration with the initiative and implementation:

Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure

Currently, critical data on student and teacher achievement is housed in various locations, requiring extensive manual effort and time to pull together relevant and useful reports for informed decision making by leadership across the district. To remedy this, HISD will create a central repository (data warehouse) where all critical data will be stored. The initial bids for this effort were received and are ready for presentation to the Board for approval in 3Q10. Currently, a majority of the funding for this initiative has not been approved. Initial analysis of employee and student subject data areas indicates that a one-to-two year effort to clean and structure data is required before a sustainable data repository can be built.

In support of a 21st century learning environment, HISD needs to develop a special type of instructional application called a collaborative environment, which will allow students, teachers, and administrators to work online more productively across a common platform. A successful collaborative system pilot was conducted. This solution is ready for scaling to the whole High School as an expanded pilot test.

New contracts for PCs, servers and printers secured 10-30% price improvements in support of expanding technology usage throughout the district. In order to support the transition to new IT architectures, HISD must revamp its existing IT architecture in areas such as network connectivity and information security to ensure that the supporting infrastructure in place is safe, secure, and easy to access. A high-level network design and architecture for a new network was completed and RFPs (Requests For Proposal) to support were released. Work continues to secure federal (eRate) funding in support this effort. Initial planning and firewall funding was secured as part of the Information Security Program. Initial efforts for the Information Security Program have begun. Work on a RFP for a Student Assessment system has begun.

Develop and implement performance management tools and practices for decision –making

Considerable work has been accomplished through the Apollo group and others to develop the Board Monitoring System metrics for presentation to the Board, so that going forward, efforts will be focused on implementing the new system. In addition, the existing performance management work in the central office has continued and serves as a strong foundation for developing performance metrics for key leadership in the next period. Accomplishments include extending the Dell grant expiration to continue central office performance management work with Battelle for Kids, and expanding the non-teacher employee appraisal pilot (ePerformance Phase II), which was launched December 3rd 2010 for managers.

Design effective and efficient business processes and procedures for optimization of resources and results

After several weeks of brainstorming, we now have a final draft of the Supplier Questionnaire and the qualification process known as the IPQP Form. This form is intended to qualify prospective suppliers and to gain a better understanding of the products and services they supply. The prospective suppliers responses will determine the district’s testing of products and services with the objectives and applications of the district’s curriculum. This form was designed by subjects/topics that we felt were required for the district’s best educational interest. Currently the IPQP Form includes the school subject and the learning category, along with subcategories. Following the IPQP Form, we agreed on a set of possible questions which the suppliers would have to answer when registering to do business with Houston ISD.

Where do we stand today?

Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure

Most initiatives are in the early stages. The Data Warehouse many of the efforts require funding to secure qualified resources and implement the projects. Some funding has been secured for the initial phase of the Information Security Program. The district needs to initiate a data quality program in support of creating a central data repository that will be used to pull together relevant and useful reports to inform decision making by leadership across the district. HISD needs to determine the priorities for IT infrastructure projects and feasibility given current resources and funding.

Develop and implement performance management tools and practices for decision-making

The employee appraisal pilot approved by the Board in 2009-2010 was expanded to additional groups and the district is preparing staff for the annual appraisal activities. In order to further integrate performance management tools and practices into other decision-making areas, closure is need on the Board Monitoring System metrics to cascade into decision making frameworks.

Design effective and efficient business processes and procedures for optimization of resources and results

Period: September - December 2010

SAP Team and Procurement Services will work together on placing the IPQP Form and questions online for testing protocol. Once this is completed, the Curriculum Department will test and determine what products/services meet the expectations of the district. In addition, the team will develop a supplier ScoreCard for all supplier submittals. The supplier ScoreCards will then be placed live on the portal for schools to access. We will also develop a methodology to remove unacceptable products/services/suppliers for not meeting the intended results or usage. The Curriculum Department will also develop a business process for testing supplier submittals.

What have we learned?

Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure

Initial analysis of employee and student subject data areas indicates that a one-to-two year effort to clean and structure data is required before a sustainable data repository can be built. For instance, historical student records are not in consistent formats throughout the district. Data such as course, teacher, transcript and state coding elements are not consistently represented, preventing effective data analysis. Each school can have different class period structures. Resources are being recruited to initiate the data quality effort.

HISD must revamp its existing IT architecture in areas such as network connectivity and information security to ensure that the supporting infrastructure in place is safe, secure, and easy to access. Significant issues exist with the security of our current network.

Develop and implement performance management tools and practices for decision-making

The supporting efforts are highly integrated among each other as well as the other initiatives. Challenges in one area affect the efforts in other areas.

Design effective and efficient business processes and procedures for optimization of resources and results

We have a better understanding of what our schools need to perform at their very best. In addition, we know the route we need to take to create and implement a proper business process when selecting a supplier to do business with the district.

What are our priorities for the next semester?

Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure

In order to move forward, the district needs to secure funding for the Data Quality and Data Warehouse programs and hire initial data quality, data warehouse and business intelligence resources. HISD also needs to review pilot results of student/teacher collaborative system with Chiefs and complete necessary work to reach next school level rollout. Additionally, we plan to implement new PC, server and printer pricing and contracts, securing 10-30% price improvements. Finally, we will continue to work on funding for network and network security improvements.

Period: September - December 2010

Develop and implement performance management tools and practices for decision -making

With clarity on the Board Monitoring System, revisions to existing metrics can begin. Additionally, the Performance Management employee evaluation pilot will conclude and be launched for use district-wide.

Design effective and efficient business processes and procedures for optimization of resources and results

In the next period we plan to finalize the IPQP Form along with the supplier questions and place them on the district's portal. Next, we plan on testing the protocol for products and services submitted for testing. Finally, we plan to develop and place on the portal, the District's Scorecard application for schools to comment on the success or disappointment in the products and services they have experience with and place that information on the portal for other campuses to view prior to their acquisitions of the same products and services.

The following *Strategic Direction Initiative Report* answers the question: Are HISD's results translating into major improvement on key levers for change? It measures HISD's progress, leading indicators, learning, and priorities for each Core Initiative.

Measuring success

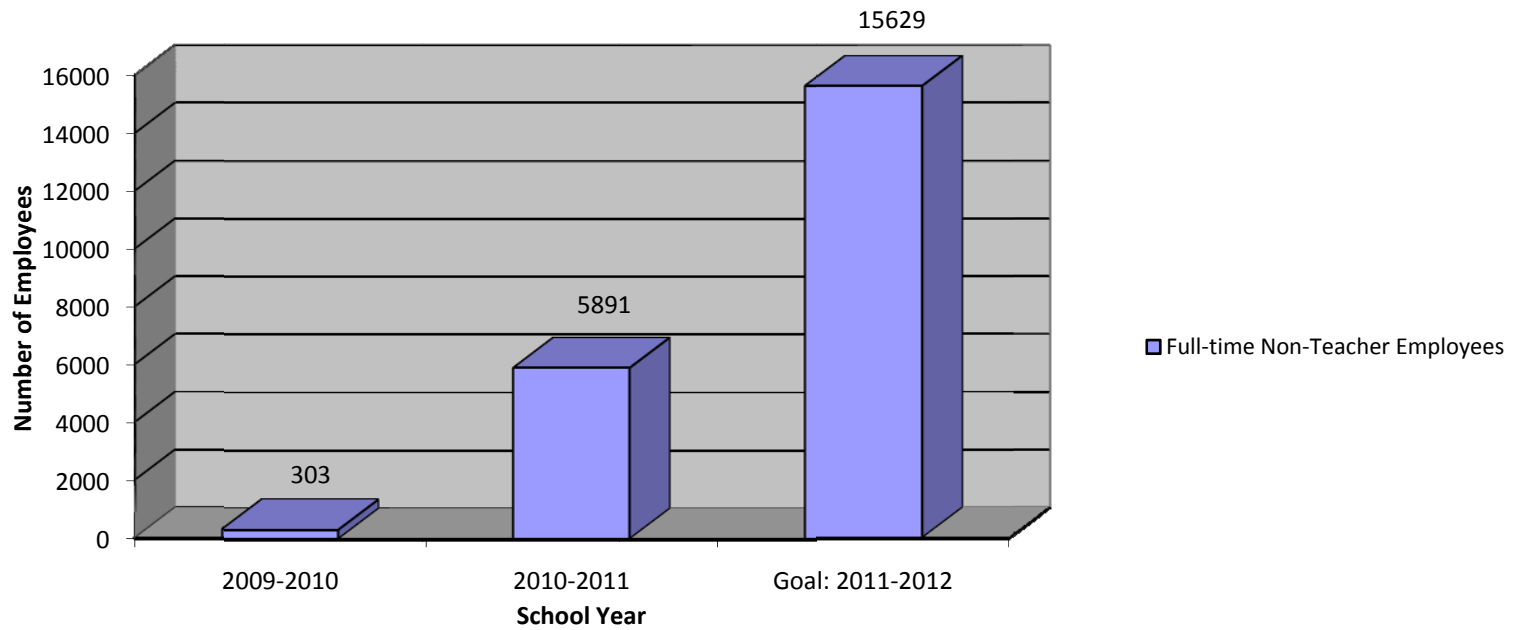
Bottom-line metric: Number of programs meeting Board standards

To ensure that this initiative is successful at creating an environment where every major decision across the district is made using real-time data to support student success, an annual evaluation of the major programs at HISD will be made against standards laid out by the Board. Board decision on Board Monitoring System metrics and any related standards are required in order to begin collecting data.

Supporting metrics

To ensure that HISD is making progress against the Performance Management key strategy within this initiative, we have tracked the participation in the employee evaluation pilot. This additional participation increases the success of the district-wide roll-out planned for the 2011-2012 school year.

Performance Management Non-Teacher Employee Evaluation Pilot Participation



The majority of the efforts in support of this initiative require funding to secure qualified resources and implement projects. The district needs to initiate a data quality program in support of creating a central data repository that will be used to pull together relevant and useful reports to inform decision making by leadership across the district. Additionally, the district needs to determine priority of IT infrastructure projects and feasibility given current resources and funding.

Period: September - December 2010

Key Issues Requiring Board Awareness, Feedback and Decisions

Initial analysis indicates that the data warehouse initiative will cost approximately \$7MM the first year, and \$3.4MM the second and third years to complete the implementation and \$1.8MM per year on an ongoing basis. Given current budget discussions, do we want to continue with the effort? Effort cannot move forward without funding. Given the elapsed time since the initial RFP was issued, it must be go out for new bids so the costs may change slightly.

Resources are being recruited for the Data Quality Effort. Difficulty obtaining resource funding has delayed the start of the effort. This effort will require substantial business resource involvement and changes to ensure successful data standardization.

Initial planning and firewall funding is secured (\$2MM) with an additional \$13MM under discussion. This additional funding will be required to ensure success.

Although a large amount of implementing a Modern Network will be funded through E-Rate (Federal funds), a significant amount of money is still needed. The matching funds required for E-Rate funded schools are estimated around \$10MM. The funds required to upgrade schools not funded through E-Rate are estimated at \$12MM-\$20MM.

Strategic Direction Initiative Report

Core Initiative: 5. Culture of Trust Through Action

What was our progress over the previous semester?

During the development of the Strategic Direction, parents, staff, students, and community members said time and again that in order to be truly engaged with the district, they need access to relevant and timely information as well as clear channels for two-way communication. Existing structures and processes were insufficient to engage internal and external stakeholders in a meaningful way and required a revamping of the district's communications efforts. By implementing the activities outlined under the main elements in Core Initiative 5—Culture of Trust Through Action—we are putting communications structures and processes in place that are more inclusive, more interactive, and more transparent.

Core Initiative 5 calls for enhanced efforts to disseminate information to and from stakeholders using a variety of media. To improve communications through the web portal, a complete redesign of the main pages of the district website was completed. The new website makes information easier to locate, presents users with a more engaging experience, and provides more opportunities for two-way communication. The site was developed with feedback gathered through surveys and focus groups that included parents, staff, students, and members of the broader community. The HISD news update, which can be viewed on the HISD TV channel and on the website, has been completely revamped to be more engaging and its content aligned to the core initiatives of the Strategic Direction. A print marketing brochure was developed that encourages parents to choose HISD for their child's education. In addition, the first series of "Updates" for community and staff, available in three languages in print and on the web, have been developed and focus on the 2011–2012 budget process.

In addition to enhanced two-way communication through the website, opportunities for feedback from stakeholders also have been expanded through print media. A postage-paid feedback card was included in the Welcome to HISD publication that every family received at the beginning of the school year. In addition, Strategic Direction publications included a website address and phone number for readers to provide comments on the publication, as well as a QR barcode that they could use with a smartphone to access the Strategic Direction website. Postage-paid budget comment cards also have been produced in three languages and distributed to schools, trustees, and cabinet members. Over the summer, a card with parent liaison phone numbers and other district contact information was mailed to every HISD family. More recently, a "Connect with HISD" card was created to inform community members about the variety of ways they can get information about and communicate with the district.

We are establishing structures and protocols for disseminating information to and from internal and external stakeholders. To keep stakeholders informed and up-to-date about the work of the Board and district-wide initiatives, we have put in place standardized processes for publicizing Board of Education meetings and meeting outcomes that strategically integrate a variety of media. These include press releases, web postings, eNews blurbs, Twitter postings, and video coverage as appropriate. In addition, the redesigned Board of Education web page includes a more user-friendly calendar feature and meeting descriptions.

To build capacity of staff and support school leadership in their efforts to communicate effectively with their school communities, a Principals' Resources page has been created on the employee portal to give principals easy access to information that will enhance their communication with staff and parents, including key messages and talking points. Principals are being provided with materials such as fliers, scripts for Connect-Ed messages, and newsletter blurbs—all in multiple languages—to support communications around critical issues, including the budget process and magnet review. To strengthen web communications at the campus level, we have identified a third-party solution to help schools manage their websites more effectively and efficiently; the first cohort of schools that will be using this service has been identified and introduced to the product. A training module has been developed for school-based bilingual Spanish-speaking clerks, secretaries, and VIPS to help strengthen their translation and interpretation skills. Working with staff in Professional Development, we are exploring ways to adapt the community partnerships training model for staff to a webinar format.

We are stepping up our efforts to communicate with staff, parents and the broader community through face-to-face meetings. The first Community Conversation meeting, coordinated by the Department of Strategic Partnerships, was held on November 9, 2010, and focused on the budget and legislative agenda. The department is coordinating an additional series of Community Conversations about the budget during the month of January for employees and the community, as well as community forums about the magnet review. Guidelines have been developed and prospective members identified for the African American Advisory Council and Latino Advisory Council that are being established. Fifty Parent Prep Academy workshops were conducted by the Department of Parent Engagement through December 10 on topics including internet safety, reading, nutrition, preparing for college, and computer literacy.

We are defining and implementing methods to evaluate the effectiveness of our communications. During this semester, we have been working to review and revise the questions in the biannual parent and community survey, which will be administered by phone and online later this year. A standardized evaluation/feedback form has been created for use at community and employee meetings and includes questions aimed at finding out whether attendees feel that they had the opportunity to participate and have their questions answered.

Where do we stand today?

The following data are encouraging as a preliminary measure of the effectiveness of the activities we are implementing under Core Initiative 5:

- Included postage-paid feedback card for first time in *Welcome to HISD* publication.
 - 903 cards were returned
 - 88% thought it was easy to read
 - Percent that thought it provided information they needed about:
 - Attendance zones and enrollment—88%
 - The wide variety of school choices available—86%
 - Grading and report cards—88%
 - Resolving problems at their child’s school—86%
 - How to be more involved in their child’s school—86%
 - 89% liked the calendar and useful numbers page
- As of January 17, 2010, 84 budget comment cards have been returned and 30 email suggestions/comments have been sent to CFOcomments@houstonisd.org
- Nearly 150 comments have been posted on the magnet review web page
- More than 400 individuals responded to an online survey requesting feedback on the proposed redesign for the website
- More than 100 staff, parents, and students participated in focus groups to provide input on the new site
- 57 individuals attended the first Community Conversation on November 9; based on data from the feedback surveys, 100 percent of participants who completed the survey agreed that they had the opportunity to participate and have their questions answered. Participants commented that they would like to have more town hall meetings and that the desire to bring the community together is appreciated.
- For the period November 1, 2010 to January 20, 2011, there were 14,898,975 unique page views to the HISD home page, an increase of 338,144 (2.3 %) compared to the same period last year.
- 350 parents have attended Parent Prep Academy workshops held between October 10 and December 10.

Period: September - December 2010

What have we learned?

By creating enhanced opportunities for two-way communication, we have learned that HISD employees and the community are eager and willing to engage in meaningful dialogue with the district. We have seen firsthand the importance of soliciting input from stakeholders during implementation of key activities—comments and suggestions received through focus groups of employees, parents, and students, as well as during the two-week site preview period, allowed us to make important changes and improvements prior to the official launch of the new site. We will continue to build trust by strengthening our efforts to connect with staff, parents, and community through face-to-face interactions. Principals are key conduits of districtwide information, and we will continue to work in partnership with them to strengthen communications to families.

What are our priorities for the next semester?

During the next period, we will continue work on developing a district strategic communications plan. We are planning to convene the first meetings of the African American Advisory Council and Latino Advisory Council, and hold the initial training sessions for school-based Spanish-speaking clerks, secretaries, and VIPS. We also will complete the restructuring and consolidation of the community database. Fact Sheets on HISD programs and initiatives are being prepared; the first set is expected to be completed and posted by the end of January.

The first phase of the website redesign project, which has been completed, includes the main website pages as well as the Spanish-language site. Redesign of department sites, the Vietnamese site, and the employee portal will be part of the next phase of development. We will continue to make improvements to the main website pages as we monitor site traffic and receive additional feedback.

We will continue efforts to strengthen the employee electronic newsletter, to plan and conduct trainings on writing for staff, and to convene a communications advisory group that includes internal and external stakeholders.

Building on the positive response of parents and community members to the Community Conversation forums, we plan to expand this initiative and hold “Ask HISD” sessions in neighborhood locations where parents and community members can ask questions and access school district information and resources. We will launch a Twitter feed in Spanish and a Spanish weekly newscast, to be aired on the HISD cable channel and on the website.