



2009 STATE OF THE SCHOOLS ANNUAL REPORT

Houston Independent School District



Team HISD
Building on Success

2009 BOARD OF EDUCATION



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Message from the Board President

The ASPIRE educational-improvement, performance-management model yielded great academic progress for HISD in 2009. After the Board of Education received the national Magna Award from the *American School Board Journal*, our newly elected President of the United States told the nation that HISD was the school system that other districts should emulate.

Just as we were making tremendous progress, the Board of Education found itself in a rather unique position when Dr. Abelardo Saavedra announced his retirement. We began immediately to conduct a national search for a reform-minded superintendent who could not only manage the seventh-largest school system in the nation, but who could also blaze new trails by creating innovative initiatives designed to meet the needs of today's students. We were fortunate to recruit Dr. Terry B. Grier.

Since September, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Terry B. Grier has brought a fresh, new approach to public-school leadership. Whether he is speaking to the Greater Houston Partnership or at a national convention on education, he always takes time to talk about the importance of how instruction is delivered in the classroom, and he leaves the audience with a crystal-clear vision of HISD's purpose: to ensure Houston's youth receive the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere.

I am honored to have served during this turning point in our district's history. We still have a long way to go, but with strong leadership in place and a talented workforce that is willing to learn new and better ways of teaching our students, I am optimistic about our future.

Lawrence Marshall

President, 2009 Board of Education



The Board of Education created **A Declaration of Beliefs and Visions** in 1990 as the blueprint for HISD's improvement efforts. The board also outlined the core values and goals that shape and drive HISD's actions. To meet the district's changing expectations and needs, the board expanded *Beliefs and Visions* in 2009 to reflect current research and progress, recommitted the district to providing all children with a high-quality education, and refined the district goals.

See details online at www.houstonisd.org/beliefs.



From the moment I arrived in Houston and assumed the awesome responsibilities of superintendent of schools of the largest school district in Texas, I was very impressed with the spirit that drives this district and this community. Every Houstonian I met immediately made me and my wife Nancy feel right at home in this great city and voiced strong support for excellence in public education.

Houston is a diverse, vibrant city as well as a great sports town, so I like to use a sports analogy to outline what I hope to accomplish in HISD. I compare the role of the superintendent of schools to that of a coach, and I call the district's employees *Team HISD*.

Just as everybody who roots for a sports team owns a piece of every victory, every HISD employee—teachers, school administrators, bus drivers, central-office support staff—contributes to our educational mission and success. One of my objectives this year is to get the entire Houston community behind this hard-working team, focused on success for every student. Because together, there's no telling what we can achieve!

This report highlights other key goals in my playbook for *Team HISD*:

Put together a great team—Because nothing matters more to student success than teachers, HISD is working to make sure every student has an effective teacher by transforming its human-capital policies and procedures for recruiting, retaining, and developing the best teacher corps possible.

Create winning strategies—HISD has had some success in lowering the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate, but *much more* must be done. That's why we're creating a variety of innovative initiatives, including credit-recovery programs and "twilight" schools for students who need flexible hours.

Call creative plays—I am committed to our being the district of choice for Houston parents and their children and continuing to provide exciting educational options such as specialized career-oriented academies and online "virtual" schools.

So please take a moment to review some of the fantastic student achievements and innovative plans presented here. I know you'll want to be a key player in supporting the outstanding teaching and learning taking place throughout this district every day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry B. Grier".

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

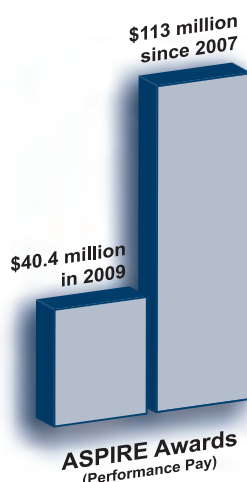


ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Working Together to Increase Student Achievement

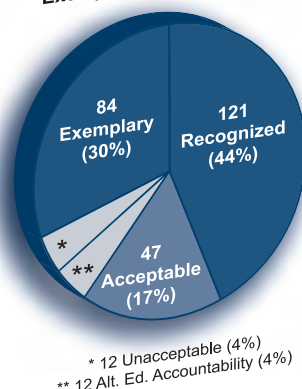
"The Houston Independent School District exists to strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston by assuring its youth the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere." This statement of HISD's purpose is reinforced by the district's number-one goal of "Increase Student Achievement."

This commitment to accelerating student achievement can be seen in the significant gains made in student performance in 2009. With the **ASPIRE** (Accelerating Student Progress. Increasing Results & Expectations) model as HISD's guide, student performance improved by both state and national standards. In addition, ASPIRE's analysis of student performance, or "value-added data," helped identify teachers who significantly improved their students' academic progress. To recognize these teachers, **performance pay** totaling more than \$40.4 million was awarded in 2009. HISD launched ASPIRE in 2007 as a way to accelerate student achievement and to identify and reward teachers for success, and as a tool for recruiting and retaining the best teachers.

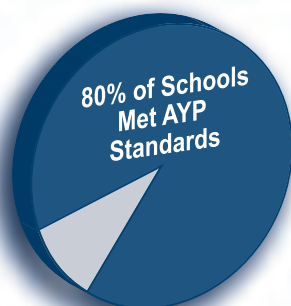


In 2009, 74 percent of HISD's schools earned the state's highest **accountability ratings** of either Exemplary or Recognized. This all-time record for HISD was the highest percentage among large urban districts in Texas.

205 Schools (or 74%) Rated Either Exemplary or Recognized

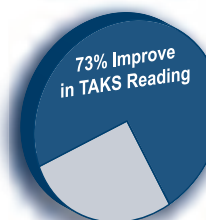


In 2008–2009, 80 percent of our schools met federal **Adequate Yearly Progress** standards for academic growth.



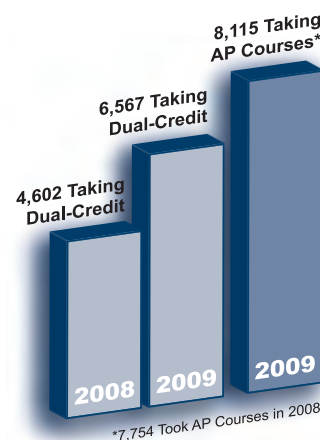
Dramatic academic gains were the result of students' outstanding performance on the **Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)**, the state-mandated achievement test that students must pass to be promoted to the next grade level or graduate from high school.

- **TAKS scores** in one or more subject areas rose in nearly 95 percent of HISD schools that had two years of data, with 75 percent of campuses increasing their passing rates in math and social studies, nearly 73 percent raising their reading scores, and 66 percent improving their scores in science and writing.



- More HISD students earned "**commended**" status on the TAKS in 2009 by displaying a thorough understanding of the subject tested. Improvements of up to six percentage points were made over the previous year, and the percentage of students reaching the commended level improved in all six areas of the TAKS.

Dual-Credit and Advanced Placement (AP) courses give students the opportunity to earn high-school and college credits at the same time. Record numbers of HISD students took these classes, giving them a head start as college freshmen and saving their parents thousands of dollars in college tuition.



ENRICHMENT STUDENTS

Students Stand Tall on National Achievement Tests

- The “**Nation’s Report Card**” math results released in December 2009 revealed that our minority and economically disadvantaged students beat the national average in every category. In addition, on average scale scores, our Hispanic students in eighth grade beat those in every school district that participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
 - **Stanford 10** reading scores improved in eight of the eleven grades tested. Math scores rose in two of the eleven grades tested, with six of the remaining grades’ performance remaining constant. Five of the eleven grades showed improvement in the language subtest.
- On the **Aprenda 3** (the Spanish-language equivalent to the Stanford), third-graders in the subject of language and third- and fourth-graders in the subject of science were all ranked at the 92nd percentile, the highest ranking for all grades and subjects. Improvement was also shown in six of the eight grades tested in reading, three of the eight grades tested in math, three of the eight grades tested in language, six of the eight grades tested in environment/science, and four of the six grades tested in social studies.

Everyone in Houston should be proud of HISD’s outstanding success in increasing academic achievement, but nobody in HISD will be satisfied until every student learns to his or her full potential.

– Charles Morris, Ed.D. | Deputy Chief Academic Officer

Reorganizing for a Renewed Focus on Schools

HISD reorganized the superintendent’s cabinet, the regional-office structure, and the Office of Academic Services to give campuses the support they need to be schools of choice by placing district resources closest to students.

- The district is eliminating the geographically based regional structure. The new structure involves the alignment of leadership, expertise, resources, and support to meet the specific needs of students in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Chief school officers for elementary, middle, and high schools will lead teams that include school improvement officers who will work directly with principals by school type to provide fully aligned support for the students at each level.



ACADEMICS

PRE-K
PARENTS
TEACHERS



SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

HISD is dedicated to becoming Houston's educational system of choice by offering a wide array of academic programs so parents and students can choose the school that best meets their needs.

Options range from early childhood centers and prekindergarten programs and Magnet, charter, Montessori, and alternative schools to early college high schools, career and technical education programs, and virtual schools!

Innovative choices for parents and students include:

- **New "twilight" schools** featuring evening classes for students who must work to support their families.
- A **High School Ahead Academy** that will get over-age middle-school students back on track to graduate on time.
- **Liberty High School** for older school-age recent immigrants.

- **Internationally recognized Magnet programs** such as DeBakey High School for Medical Professions, High School for Performing and Visual Arts, High School for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Booker T. Washington High School for Engineering Professions, and Carnegie Vanguard High School.
- **Specialty schools** such as Petroleum Academies at Lamar, Milby, and Westside High Schools; Houston Academy for International Studies; Leader's High School for Business and Economic Success; and E-STEM: Energized for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academy.
- **Online programs** such as HISD's Virtual School and Advanced Virtual Academy at Scarborough High School and the new Houston Connections Academy.
- **After-school programs** that provide a wide variety of academic and enrichment activities.



For updates on individual bond projects, visit www.houstonisd.org/hisdbond.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS, BRICK BY BRICK

Thanks to bonds approved by voters in 2007, the Facilities Capital Program is providing students with safe, attractive, inspiring learning environments throughout the district.

New Schools: 25 new-school construction projects are under way.

- 10 are being built; 15 are in the contract/design phase.

Renovations: 134 renovation projects are scheduled.

- Nearly 80 percent of projects are in the design phase.

New science equipment purchased for middle and high schools.

Safety and Security Projects: 250 campuses will receive safety and security upgrades. Improvements include:

- New security camera systems.
- Repair or replacement of fences, sidewalks, handrails, and ramps.
- Safer playground equipment featuring kid-friendly impact surfaces.

Athletics Projects: Replacement of the running tracks at Dyer Stadium; Davis, Washington, and Westbury High Schools; and 13 other schools.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Driving student achievement by placing a highly effective teacher in every classroom

When it comes to student success, teachers matter most. Therefore, it is imperative that we do everything possible to ensure that there is a great teacher in every classroom. Our parents expect and our students deserve nothing less. That is why you will continue to see and hear about the changes we are making in HISD to transform the way we are **recruiting, evaluating, supporting, and rewarding our teachers** and how we are organizing and focusing our resources and services to meet the needs of our students.

We can ill afford to lose highly effective teachers or to retain poorly performing teachers if we want to do a better job of challenging our students academically, raising their achievement levels, and preparing them to be successful in college and the workforce. Our national economy and the competition for jobs only further heighten our need to raise expectations of student and staff performance.

That is why HISD is partnering with **The New Teacher Project** and using its framework (see below) to ensure that we have the right practices and systems to ensure that there is an effective teacher in every classroom.

Performance Matters

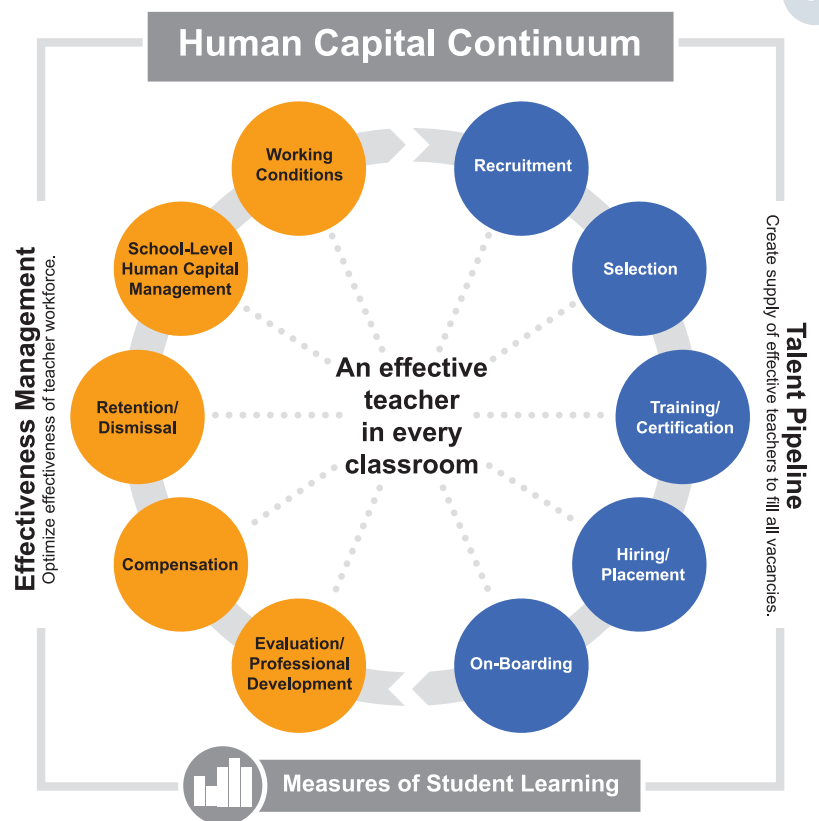
In addition, HISD is continuing to create a culture of excellence in which every employee contributes to our mission—increasing student achievement. To do this requires that we manage performance at all levels of the organization and ensure that we are providing quality services and valuable resources to our schools and teachers.

As we move through the process of transforming our human capital system, we will continue to focus on the implications that decisions and actions have on the quality of education we are providing and the impact they will have on the success of our students.

The New Teacher Project

To help put a highly effective teacher in every classroom, HISD is partnering with The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that students get outstanding teachers.

Using a proven process developed by TNTP (see diagram), HISD is aligning its human capital systems by creating a “talent pipeline” of effective teachers while “managing effectiveness” to facilitate, evaluate, and support teachers.



DROPOUT PREVENTION

Helping students stay in school and graduate on time

Dropout and graduation rates are issues that touch every state, every school district, and every classroom in the nation. HISD is no exception. The success of our students in the global marketplace depends on our ability to prepare them to graduate from high school equipped with the necessary skills to compete.

That's why HISD's campaign to transform education is designed to help *all* students to learn to their full potential, to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be informed citizens ready for college, career, and life.

Online Credit-Recovery Initiative

In pursuit of an 88 percent completion rate and 80 percent graduation rate* in 2011, HISD has launched the Online Credit-Recovery Initiative.

The Online Credit-Recovery Initiative features computer labs in every large, traditional high school in HISD, where struggling students receive supplemental learning opportunities through online coursework and tutoring on state tests and college entrance exams.

*HISD's four-year completion rate for the Class of 2008 was 80.6 percent, an increase of 3.8 percentage points from 2007. The graduation rate for the Class of 2008 was 68.2 percent, an increase of 3.9 percentage points from 2007.



Supporting the Online Credit-Recovery Initiative Are:

- **Graduation coaches** at each school who identify at-risk students as early as ninth grade and develop intervention plans to keep them on track to four-year graduation.
- **Flexible lab hours** to accommodate older students who may be holding down jobs to support a family.
- **Dropout-prevention caseworkers** who work with students, schools, and families to remove students' barriers to success and strengthen their connection to school.
- **New policies** for grading, promotion, retention, acceleration, graduation, and funding that support rigor and high standards while not creating obstacles to on-time graduation.
- **Additional programs** such as the Advanced Virtual Academy at Scarborough High School and the Eagle Academy at six high schools where students can take classes on weekends and receive counseling.

I'm really excited about the potential this type of program can have in Houston. By embracing technology we can really transform the way we teach and the way students learn as well as reach those at risk of dropping out.

– Dr. Grier in *Houston Family Magazine*



Why is this so important?

It is imperative for students to stay on track to graduate prepared for postsecondary studies or employment in an increasingly demanding job market, where research indicates a high-school dropout's average yearly earnings are less than half that of a college graduate's and one-fifth the salary of a person with a professional degree.

Over a working life of 40 years, a high-school dropout will earn approximately \$1 million versus a college graduate's \$2 million-plus, and \$4.5 million or more for persons with doctoral or professional degrees.

The impact of dropouts on cities and states includes higher unemployment and incarceration rates, loss of millions of dollars in state and local tax revenue, and increased dependence on social welfare and public assistance programs.



COMMUNITY
CAREER
READY



FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Managing public money—a matter of public trust

HISD is nationally known for its fiscal responsibility, and 2009 demonstrated the district's proven ability to support teaching and learning by managing its resources effectively and efficiently.

- The district balanced the budget for 2009–2010 with no increase in the property-tax rate of \$1.1567 per \$100 of assessed value—the lowest among the 34 school districts in Harris County—and produced a \$15 million carryover for 2010–2011.
- The General Fund budget included more funds for schools, and the per-unit allocations for enrollment were increased by \$10.6 million.
- The \$30-million salary package included pay raises of 1.5 percent to 4.8 percent, thereby increasing salaries for the eleventh straight year despite tens of millions of dollars in budget cuts over that time.
- The 20 percent homestead exemption and over-65 exemption were retained, even though expenses increased.

Declared Strong, Highest Rated

HISD maintained its high bond rating of AA+ from the financial research and analysis

firm Standard & Poor's, and also earned a rating of Aa2 with Moody's.

In addition, the district earned an "Exemplary" rating on its State Financial Report Card and received the highest rating possible from Schools FIRST, the financial integrity rating system of Texas.

Award-Winning Performance

The district won many prestigious national awards in 2009 for its financial and budgeting reporting. They include the:

- Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials International.
- Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association.
- Meritorious Budget Award from the Association of School Business Officials International.
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (earned for the thirty-third consecutive year—more often than any other school district in North America).

General-Fund Revenues, Expenditures, and Fund Balance for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2009

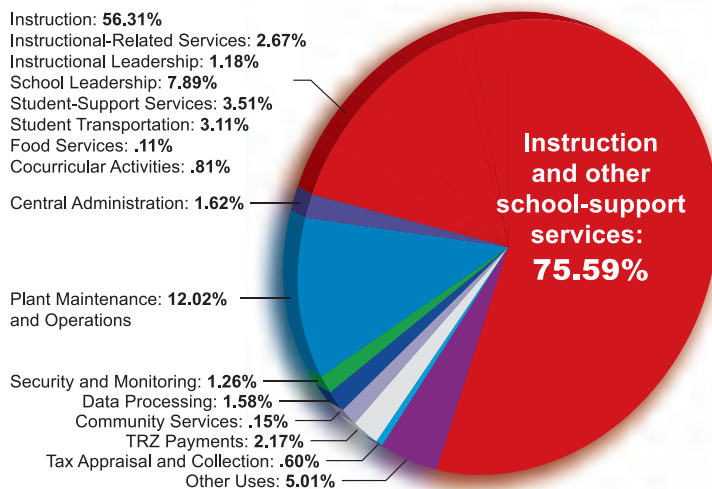
• General-Fund Revenues (including other sources):

Local:	\$1,053,654,683	(67.08%)
Other Local:	\$29,164,559	(1.86%)
State:	\$449,836,776	(28.64%)
Federal:	\$9,909,547	(.63%)
Other:	\$28,142,123	(1.79%)
TOTAL:	\$1,570,707,688	

• Total General-Fund Expenditures (see chart): \$1,616,977,652

• Ending Fund Balance: \$477,415,036

For detailed budget information, see www.houstonisd.org/finance.



Total expenditures, including other uses, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2009, were \$1,616,977,652, with instruction and other school- and student-support services accounting for over 75 percent of the total.



JOIN TEAM HISD!

As you can see from this report, *Team HISD* is working hard to build on its successes and do what it takes to make fundamental transformations that can help us give every student a world-class education.

The key members of *Team HISD* are our teachers and school administrators. Their job is to achieve the district's primary goal of increasing student achievement. It's a big, complex job, and they need help to do it. They get that help from their teammates: the Board of Education, central-office administrators, and support staff—and community members committed to improving public education.

Not everybody can be an HISD teacher or school administrator. But everybody can be an active member of *Team HISD*. With your support, HISD can have another winning season—and the real winners will be Houston's children.

– **Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.** | Superintendent of Schools

LOCAL LEADERS
FAITH-BASED
ORGANIZATIONS

There are all kinds of ways that you can become a starter on *Team HISD*.

- Donate time through HISD's award-winning Volunteers in Public Schools program.
- Become a business partner on a districtwide basis or for an individual school or program.
- Make a monetary donation to the HISD Foundation (501(c)(3)).
- Attend Board of Education meetings—or, watch on Comcast channel 18.
- Stay informed by signing up to receive *eNews*: www.houstonisd.org/subscribe.

**To find out more, visit www.houstonisd.org
or call the HISD Information Center at 713-556-6005.**





Houston Independent School District

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successes in 2009 is available online.
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