

**Principals' Ad Hoc Meeting
Conference Room 3C10
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
October 28, 2009—8:30 a.m.**

ATTENDEES

Central Office: Thelma D. Garza, Mark Smith

Principals: Alvin V. Abraham, Felicia S. Adams, Mark T. Bedell, Daniel J. Breiman, Roger A. Bunnell, Elba D. Carrion, Jaime Castaneda, Diana Castillo, Joel D. Castro, Gabrielle J. Coleman, Robert Chavarria, Tiffany M. Chenier, Rhonda Cotton, Dan DeLeon, Freddy R. Delgado, Sandy J. Gaw, Rever J. Givens, Cecilia A. Gonzales, Peter Heinze, Kimberly A. Hobbs, Shirley M. Johnson, Anita Lundvall, Brian O. McDonald, Michael McDonough, Marla J. McNeal-Sheppard, Nicole Moore, Ronald L. Mumphery, Matilda Orozco, Valerie J. Orum, Cynthia A. Smith, Roslyn Vaughn, Dave D. Wheat, Alisa C. Zapata

Introduction of Members/Meeting Format

Interim Chief Academic Officer Thelma Garza convened the meeting by welcoming the principals to the first Principals Ad Hoc Committee meeting for the 2009–2010 school year. She stated that Superintendent of Schools Terry B. Grier was unavailable to attend the meeting because he was in Portland, Oregon. Ms. Garza requested the principals to introduce themselves. The meeting then continued as outlined on the agenda.

2010–2011 Academic Calendar Option

Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services Mark Smith reviewed a draft option of the HISD 2010–2011 Academic Calendar. He mentioned that this calendar has been presented to the District Advisory Committee; however, it has not been presented to the calendar committee, direct reports, or the Board of Education. Mr. Smith stated that the draft calendar was similar to the 2008–2009 calendar with 180 instructional days including five waiver days. He then asked for suggestions on options to take to the calendar committee. The following options were presented: (1) make December 17 a teacher workday, and (2) consider September 17 or October 11 for the fall holiday and make January 3 a teacher workday.

Mr. Smith stated that the calendar will probably be presented to the board at their meeting in January.

Parent Student Connect (PSC)/GradeSpeed Improvements for 2010–2011

Mr. Smith presented this agenda topic. He noted that over 30,000 individuals (two-thirds are students) have registered for PSC. He updated the group on specific enhancements for the service, namely Montessori grade reporting, non-traditional grade reporting for schools with waivers, language translation (Spanish and possibly Vietnamese), Special Education (non-traditional grade reporting), transcripts, historical information, and additional icons for parents.

Ms. Garza indicated that Dr. Grier has requested the development of a tracking template that teachers may complete for each student. Principals suggested that this could be accomplished by including personal graduation plans.

Mr. Smith asked the principals for suggestions to improve PSC/GradeSpeed. Principals suggested intervention modification, adding an "Other Comments" box, and adjusting the view access option to departmentalize for homeroom students and for the transfer of grades.

Questions regarding PSC/GradeSpeed should be directed to LaDonna Cooley at 713-556-8840 or 713-556-8865.

Strategic Plan for Reducing the Dropout Rate and Increasing the Graduation Rates

Ms. Garza stated that Dr. Grier is moving forward quickly with plans for HISD to become a Recognized district, which requires that the district has no unacceptable schools and a completion rate of at least 85 percent. To achieve this goal, the district will focus on (1) high-school credit recovery centers, (2) overage middle-school students (3) the absence rate of elementary ELL students, and (4) the retention rate of elementary-school students.

- **High-School Credit Recovery Centers.** Ms. Garza stated that by the spring 2009–2010 semester, these centers will be established in 27 high schools (all comprehensive high schools plus the Contemporary Learning Center, Jordan, Liberty, and Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice). The centers will be led by a graduation coach who will provide leadership in planning, developing, and facilitating a school-based framework to support and intervene for high-school students who are at risk of dropping out or failing to graduate with their cohort peers. The district is purchasing the necessary software and providing all necessary training; the centers will house mobile lab computers. The cost is about \$2.4 million.
- **Overage Middle-School Students.** Assistant Superintendent for School Support Services Martha Salazar-Zamora will present plans to target these students at the next Districtwide Principals Meeting.
- **Retention Rate of Elementary-School Students.** Principals stated that the multiage and looping program is a successful way to avoid student retention; this requires good teachers and training. They also offered the following comments to help reduce retention rates for Special Education students.
 - Review the 504 requirement relative to promotion in kindergarten or first grade. Do Special Education students need to fail courses to receive services?
 - Pursue obtaining a waiver for mid-year promotions.
 - Review the dropout rate of Special Education students and consider implementing summer-school programs.
 - Ensure that all Admission, Review, and Dismissal proceedings are current.
 - Link the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process through GradeSpeed or place the IAT form in the permanent folder which will follow the student.

Mr. Smith stated that an audit of the Special Education Department is scheduled to begin in January 2010. The evaluation will cover all aspects of the program, i.e., funding, district programs, staffing, student enrollment, policies, and procedures.

Concerns

Ms. Garza emphasized that HISD is a decentralized district and this decentralization allows many school issues to be handled at the regional level. She indicated that concerns submitted for the Principal Ad Hoc meeting should be limited to those topics that impact the entire district and can only be resolved at the central-office level. The following concerns were addressed: fingerprinting, statement of residence, and too much testing.

- **Fingerprinting**—Pursue a special request to see if fingerprinting can be done on Saturdays to prevent distractions from the instructional day. It may not be “convenient” for the vendors. We need a list of the individuals who should be fingerprinted.

Response: Ms. Garza indicated that the state has defined only one vendor that the district may use for fingerprinting. Mr. Smith will provide a list of staff members who require fingerprinting; these are individuals who were hired before 2007 and who have certification.

- **Statement of Residence**—Statements of Residence are bankrupting some schools while overcrowding other schools.

Response: Mark Smith requested that principals contact Student Transfer Department Manager Raphael Reyes regarding investigating questionable statements of residence.

- **Too Much Testing**—This is a concern that has been brought forward year after year. There is entirely too much testing taking place.

Response: Ms. Garza will address this with the regional superintendents at their weekly Wednesday meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.; the next meeting will be held November 18, 2009.