HISD Implementation Plan
DATE: September 30, 2010

1. Effective Teacher in Every Classroom

What we will do
Our district employs about 12,700 teachers in almost 300 different schools, and we are putting into place a thoughtful, bold, systemic, and comprehensive plan of action that will dramatically transform the district's human capital systems and ensure that a highly effective teacher is in place in every one HISD's classrooms.

Why we will do it
We are committed to improving student achievement across our district, and research tells us that teachers are by far the most powerful school-based factor in a child's academic success or failure. Specifically, studies have shown that students who had very effective teachers for three years in a row were able to improve their performance on standardized tests by more than 50 percent in comparison to students who had three ineffective teachers in a row (Sanders and Rivers, 1996). A similar study conducted in Dallas ISD using a different student assessment and value-added methodology found similar results, as illustrated in the chart below:

Rivers also showed that the chances for fourth-graders in the bottom quartile of performance to pass a state's standardized test in ninth grade were less than 15 percent if their fifth-, sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade teachers were drawn from the bottom 25 percent of the teacher pool, as measured by value-added data, but they had a 60 percent chance of passing if they had four teachers drawn from the top 25 percent.

Research does not show that proxies for teacher quality, such as certification, matter very much. In a recent study in the Los Angeles Unified School District, researchers demonstrated that switching from an uncertified to a certified teacher in the classroom had minimal impact on improving student achievement. In contrast, the same study showed that switching from a bottom-quartile teacher to a top-quartile teacher in the classroom improved student achievement by 10 percentage points in a single year (Gordon, Kane, Staiger, April 2006). The figure below illustrates the differential of impact based on teacher effectiveness on student performance in mathematics:

Figure 2. Teacher Impacts on Math Performance in Third Year By Ranking after First Two Years
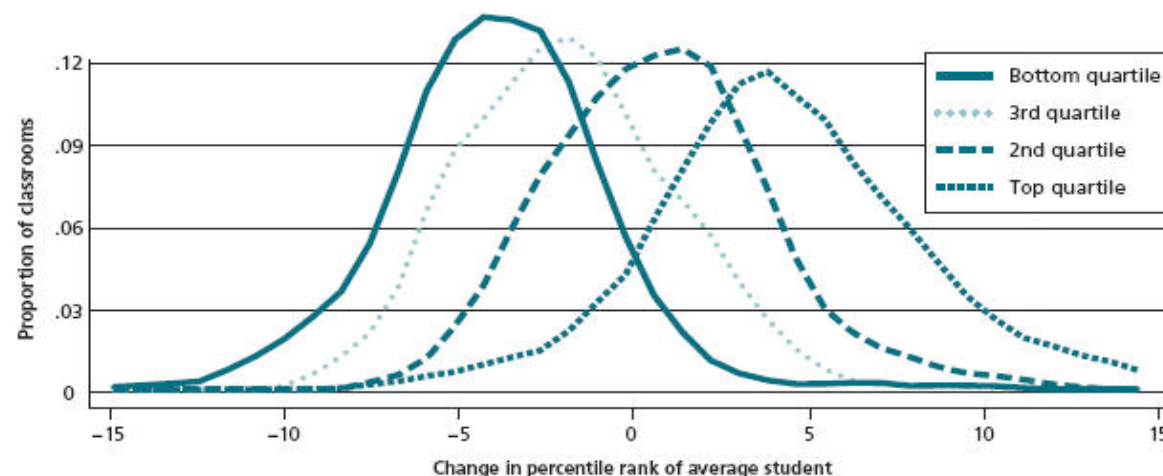
Note: Classroom-level impacts on average student performance, controlling for baseline scores, student demographics, and program participation. LAUSD elementary teachers, < 4 years' experience.

Feedback (Survey results, March and April 2010) from our students, parents, teachers, and staff confirms that improving the consistency of our teaching quality is a top priority. While there is widespread recognition that some of the finest teachers in the nation are working at HISD, other comments highlight the gaps in knowledge, skill, and ability to engage students that are also present in our teaching corps:

- *"Teachers need to know what they are teaching and I feel that most do not"*
- *"We need happier teachers. We need to make sure our teachers really want to teach our children and not just collect a pay check."*
- *"Ladies and Gentlemen, we just need to stop being offended that someone thinks we don't know it all and get busy learning what we don't know. DO SOMETHING TO HELP YOURSELVES AS EDUCATORS."*
- *"Teachers need to push students more, from the beginning of the school year. And I think they should be trained on this"*

To understand what specific changes we need to make to reach our goal of an effective teacher in every classroom, we began with an analysis of our current human capital policies and practices, including a review of our data on teacher hiring, separation, compensation, and performance (including appraisal records and measures of impact on student academic growth). We also conducted an independent, online survey of classroom teachers, principals, and teacher applicants to receive their feedback on the entire spectrum of human capital practices. Our main findings are summarized below:

- HISD's teacher appraisal and development systems do not adequately differentiate performance, identify improvement areas, or support teachers' individual needs.
- Teachers want appraisal and support processes that accurately identify their individual needs and address those needs with targeted professional development.
- Teachers strongly support including measures of student growth in their appraisals, but they have concerns about the ability of current tools to fairly and accurately measure a teacher's impact on student learning.
- HISD has missed opportunities to improve or remove ineffective teachers.
- While HISD has made great strides towards rewarding its best teachers, the district must find ways to retain these teachers at higher rates than less-effective teachers.
- Between 2007 and 2009, HISD lost teacher applicants because of late hiring timelines and flawed communication processes.
- Some preparation programs are better than others, but all produce high- and low-performers, so increased recruitment from strong programs should be paired with rigorous selection and evaluation to ensure new-hire quality.
- HISD's highest-poverty schools have the fewest high-performing teachers and more low-performing teachers, demonstrating the need to provide those schools with incentives to attract effective teachers and better tools to improve and remove low-performers.
- ASPIRE has helped HISD retain some of its best teachers, but teachers would support additional rewards for strong performance in the classroom.
- HISD teachers are dissatisfied with working conditions that directly impact the quality of their instruction, such as limited support in handling student discipline and too much time spent on non-classroom commitments

In order to ensure that HISD has an effective teacher in every classroom, our **key strategies** will be:

1.1 Strengthen recruiting and staffing policies and practices to attract top talent

Ensuring that every school in HISD can hire the best possible teacher for every vacancy will require a comprehensive approach to recruitment, application and screening processes, selection, cultivation, and hiring. We know from our self-assessment and feedback that our hiring process is ineffective in attracting top talent to the district, does not move candidates through the process expeditiously, and insufficiently "calls out" candidates who exceed qualifications of positions. This strategic work will address all of these issues.

Main elements

1.1.1 Refine recruitment and staffing practices

In the staff-review process we recently completed (see more detail in the section for key strategy 1.2), we assessed how well our principals understand the strengths and weaknesses of their staff, the quality of the data and information to which they have access, how skilled our principals are in interpreting and using this data to assess teacher effectiveness, and the degree to which they appropriately document teacher performance throughout the school year. These findings, combined with our knowledge of best practices, suggest revisions that can be made to the structure of our staff-review process and protocols and the kinds of training that we provide. Additionally, we are evaluating our current application and screening processes, looking for ways to refine the processes to increase efficiency and customer-service satisfaction. We are also developing training for HISD HR staff and principals in cultivating new-hire candidates, and we are devising a set of metrics for use in monitoring the success of these efforts. We will also design and implement an annual assessment of new-teacher hiring, using data on hiring-process outcomes and early teacher-performance indicators to evaluate the comparative quality of new-teacher pipelines and recruiting sources, gauge the rigor and accuracy of selection decisions, and determine whether the district met annual hiring goals. Another step will be to assess the efficacy of our current Alternative Certification Program and, as necessary, to develop recommendations for a revised approach to recruiting, selecting, training, and hiring alternative-route teachers. On the staffing side, we will develop and implement a policy for early teacher notification of intent to resign or retire, including training materials for principals on how to build a culture of early notification. We will also develop and implement a strategy for projecting, identifying, tracking, and reporting on school-level teacher vacancies, and we will align internal-transfer policies with selection criteria for new-teacher hiring, updating our training materials accordingly to support our new procedures and policies.

1.1.2 Implement improved teacher recruitment and staffing practices

Once we have comprehensively redesigned all of our human capital practices, we will move quickly to implement them and to put in place systems to ensure their continued use and effectiveness. This will involve training all staff on the new processes

for recruiting, screening, cultivation, selection, internal transfer, teacher vacancy, and early notification of teacher resigning/retiring. It will also involve ongoing tracking and regular evaluations of how well each element of the system is functioning, with continued refinements as necessary.

1.1.3 Build awareness and support among internal and external stakeholders
We will develop a targeted communications strategy to make sure that parents, teachers, students, administrators, central office staff, the business community, and everyone else in Team HISD understands the reforms to recruiting and staffing that we are making and has an opportunity to provide feedback, so that we are continually drawing on the knowledge of our stakeholders as we design and implement our reforms.

1.1.4 Implement a "Talent Acquisition System"
Our current Jobs system is archaic and insufficient to meet the district's demands. For example, due to the limited functionality of the Jobs system, we cannot "pre-screen" applicant credentials, so every application must be screened by our hiring team, nor does the system allow our staff to search the database of candidates by specific criteria. We will thus upgrade our technology to a new talent acquisition system that allows for timely communications, notifications, and, ultimately, tracking of the recruitment and selection processes.

1.2   Establish a rigorous and fair teacher-appraisal system to inform key decisions

At the center of our plan to ensure that we an effective teacher in every classroom is the development of a new appraisal system that will rigorously assess teacher performance, measured in significant part by student growth data, accurately differentiate teacher-performance levels, and reliably identify individual teacher strengths and weaknesses.

<u>Main elements</u>
1.2.1 Develop and implement a districtwide staff-review process for all teachers in every school
This districtwide staff review has already been completed. Its purpose was to assess the current effectiveness of each teacher in the district to provide us with base data to help us design our new teacher-appraisal system. The process had three main steps. First, principals grouped all of their teachers in one of four categories: highly effective, proficient, developing, and low-performing. In the second step, principals attended a staff-review meeting where each principal met with representatives from Academic Services, Professional Development Services, and Human Resources. A training curriculum, including sample scenarios for each category of teachers as described previously, was developed. In the third step, each staff-review team reviewed every single teacher on the respective principal's campus and made decisions on teacher contracts, while also determining additional supports to provide to teachers. We also instated documentation training for our Chief School Officers (CSOs), School Improvement Officers (SIOs), principals, and assistant principals, to ensure that all of HISD's administrators

understand how to provide timely, accurate, and thorough documentation of staff performance, and to familiarize them with the rules of the Texas Education Code relating to the types of contracts afforded to teachers, including the process, timeline, rules, and guidelines for discharging a contracted teacher.

1.2.2 In-depth review of the faculty in nine of HISD's lowest-performing schools

This review of faculty in nine of HISD's lowest-performing schools has already been completed. During this extensive review, we collaborated with outside experts to develop a "commitment conversation" protocol designed to determine which teachers would be successful as part of the turnaround effort in those schools. This protocol was used by two-member teams made up of HISD Academic Services, Human Resources, and Executive Team members who met for 30–45 minutes with each member of the nine schools' faculty. We considered this information, in conjunction with results from the staff-review process and other performance data, to decide which teachers would remain at the nine Apollo 20 schools during the 2010–2011 school year. Before we closed this process, approximately 80 teachers transferred, resigned, or retired. Once the process closed, HISD notified approximately 160 additional teachers at the nine low-performing schools that they would not be assigned to their respective campus during the 2010–11 school year.

1.2.3 Design a model of teacher competency and behaviors

A crucial element of this work will be to gain clarity and precision in our understanding of the competencies and behaviors of teachers that are most directly linked to improving student achievement. To develop our model, we will begin by researching project management models and selecting one to customize to our needs. We will also evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our current teacher competency model and related criteria, review a sample of HISD schools' missions and values related to teacher effectiveness and performance, and convene stakeholders to ask for their input, and from this determine the criteria we must include in our new model. We will then define our standards for teacher performance within each behavior and test our rubrics in a subgroup of classrooms before revising and finalizing our performance level standards and rubrics.

1.2.4 Develop measures of student learning

To assess the effectiveness of our teachers, we must develop more accurate and comprehensive ways to measure how much are students are learning. This will involve developing assessments of learning for all subjects and grade levels and identifying subjects for which we will need to create non-assessment based measures of student learning. SAS® EVAAS® data , which is based on the statistical method used by the district to measure students' yearly academic progress at the school, grade, teacher, and student levels, will be an integral part of our measurement system ; we will verify the validity of using EVAAS for performance management purposes and then design policies to implement it into our assessments for grades and subjects accordingly. We will also train our teachers and principals on our new measures of student learning. Additionally, we will confirm the set of End Of Course exams (EOCs, part of the Texas Education Agency's state testing program to assess student academic performance on core high school courses and to become part of the graduation requirements beginning 2011-2012)

to be developed by the state and develop a comparative growth methodology for new EOCs, pilot use of this methodology, and then refine our methodology and finalize our policies for use of comparative growth data for EOCs for performance management purposes, and implement its use districtwide. Another important area of work will be developing a methodology for a manager's review of student work and progress. We will develop tools and protocols to assist in manager's review, pilot and refine Methods of Student Learning (MSL), and then train principals and teachers on MSL and launch its use districtwide.

1.2.5 Define the teacher performance appraisal process

Once we have defined the structure of the teacher performance appraisal system, we must also determine the ideal process for using it. We know already from best practices that the process should encompass the full school year and includes multiple performance-review conversations between the teacher and the manager, frequent observations, and a formalized staff-review process, but our team must determine exactly how many observations are needed, how many appraisals we will conduct, what the timing of events will be, etc. We will also integrate into our process key elements of our teacher support and development efforts, including long-term planning, on-the-court coaching, and job-embedded support. Defining our appraisal process will also involve clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and authority for those charged with carrying out performance appraisal responsibilities, and identifying and policy changes or waivers we will need to permit the new roles and responsibilities.

1.2.6 Incorporate performance appraisal data into key decisions

Teacher performance appraisal data will be critical in driving key decisions that we make, from the granting and maintaining of teacher contracts to dismissals and layoffs. Specifically, we will determine which performance appraisal criteria will be used in contract granting decisions (e.g., summative ratings, scores on specific competencies) and determine the weight we will give to each criterion. The criteria we use to make choices about continuing contract eligibility will also include performance appraisal criteria. Similarly, we will determine which performance appraisal criteria to use in dismissal decisions, and with what weighting, and we will decide the extent to which performance appraisal data will inform layoff decisions. Additionally, we will incorporate performance appraisal criteria into certification decisions; this will involve both selection which criteria to use and developing process, inclusive of timelines, for how and when we will use the data. Finally, we will assess the technology demands in relation to newly proposed systems and identify our future needs.

1.2.7 Gather stakeholder input

To ensure alignment and understanding across Team HISD while making sure to benefit from our team's collective knowledge and experience, we will facilitate an extensive process to gather stakeholder input on the design and implementation of a new appraisal system, including formation of topic-specific working groups, design of a decision-making process to incorporate the feedback of working groups, facilitation of working-group meetings, and coordination of communications and logistical requirements
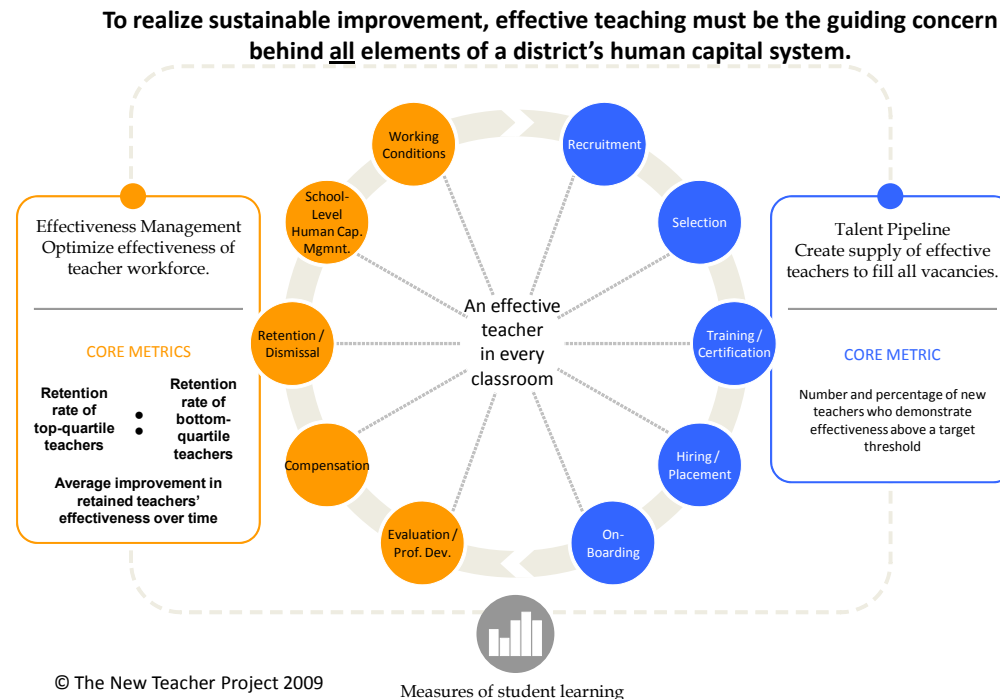
1.3 Provide effective individualized support and professional development for teachers

Increasing teacher effectiveness overall will require HISD to boost the performance of each individual teacher through comprehensive individualized support and development that is aligned with the frequent and actionable feedback that teachers will receive through the new appraisal process.

Main elements

1.3.1 Reorganize HISD's Office of Human Resources and integrate within it the Professional Development Services Department

This reorganization has already been completed. Its purpose was to create the "human" system of supports and services that are necessary to address teacher and principal concerns. We eliminated the Professional Development Services' "fee for service" structure and aligned those functions within the HR Office while creating five distinct functions within the Human Resources division: Human Capital Acquisition, Professional Development, Leadership Development, Human Capital Accountability and Rewards, and Human Resources Operations. With this structure, we are better positioned to design, implement, monitor, and sustain the many elements of human capital system transformation, illustrated in the diagram below:

To realize sustainable improvement, effective teaching must be the guiding concern behind <u>all</u> elements of a district's human capital system.

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1.3.2 Create a system of centralized support and development services for teachers

In order to provide our teachers with the supports they need to achieve their potential, we develop a stronger and more targeted set of teacher development services. To begin, we will assess our own teacher support and development needs and d identify trends in centralized teacher development services, and build from this a plan to offer centralized services for our teachers, including setting standards for the professional development we provide and providing training to our campus staff on the services available to them. We will also create a system to use performance ratings to track our teacher support and development needs on an ongoing basis. Additionally, we will clarify the roles and responsibilities for each of our departments (e.g., curriculum, human resources) in providing professional development. To support all of these efforts, we will build a system and infrastructure to implement a professional development clearinghouse (process, forms, technology, contacts, etc.) that not only houses materials but also helps us to coordinate our professional development offerings.

1.3.3 Create a system for school-based support and development

We are also committed to increasing our capacity to respond to individual school needs. This will involve an assessment of our current gaps as well as an analysis of trends in school-based teacher support and development needs. In the short-term, we are developing and immediately implementing stop-gap solutions to meet our schools' needs in the upcoming year. Simultaneously, we are developing a long-term plan, that will incorporate the successful tactics and strategies from the 2010-2011 school year, sharing proposed elements and roles with principals and teachers for feedback, developing a plan for collecting data on the effectiveness of our school-based support and development, and tracking school-based needs via performance ratings. Additionally, we will leverage high performing principals by 1) observing them working with teachers 2) having them share best practices and 3) having them develop trainings for other principals based upon new competency model. This will supplement our larger, on-going, support and training to principals and teachers. As we develop our plans, we will make sure to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school-level and district-level staff in the system.

1.4 Offer meaningful career pathways and differentiated compensation to retain and leverage the most-effective teachers

As demonstrated in the survey of HISD teachers, teachers support new career pathways and innovative approaches to differentiated compensation that will better attract and retain high-performers. By implementing a differentiated compensation model, with clear career pathways, we put ourselves in a much better position not only to retain our best teachers but also to motivate our new and improving teachers to achieve their highest potential.

<u>Main elements</u>

1.4.1 Implement the ASPIRE Award program

As a precursor to our Strategic Direction reforms, in SY 2007-08 we implemented the ASPIRE Award program. Under the ASPIRE (Accelerating Student Progress. Increasing Results and Expectations) program, principals, teachers, and other campus-based staff can earn bonuses tied to performance measures that are based on outcomes with students. Since the launch of ASPIRE, the district has garnered national attention for its use of value-added data to guide instructional decision-making and drive a system of differentiated compensation.

1.4.2 Establish career pathways

We are committed to providing our teachers with exciting career pathways so that they have opportunities to grow as leaders and educators while staying in HISD. To generate immediate impact, we will identify interim opportunities in the 2011-12 school year for teachers to take on increased responsibilities at the school level. At the same time, we will develop a plan for long-term transformation of the career pathways available to them. The process will involve generating a vision and goals for career pathways (e.g., increased responsibilities inside and outside the classroom), identifying metrics to use in selecting teachers to fill new leadership positions, sharing definitions and options with stakeholders and incorporating their feedback, assessing our technology needs and upgrading our current capacity as needed, and developing a selection process for new positions. The long-term pathways will be aligned with our new system of centralized teacher support and development services and our new performance appraisal criteria.

1.4.3 Implement a new compensation model

Complementing our new career pathways, we will revise the compensation model we offer to our teachers so that the structure aligns more closely with our goals to attract, motivate, and retain teachers that are already or have clear potential to be highly effective. To begin, this effort will include the immediate impact of awarding targeted stipends in the upcoming school year. For the long-term model, we will base our changes on a labor market analysis, identifying the marginal pay required to attract top talent, particularly to schools that are difficult to staff, and what pay structures (e.g., conditional based on performance, without conditions) that have proved to be most effective. We will also gather data on impact of ASPIRE and other financial incentive programs, as well as solicit stakeholder feedback. We will then develop various compensation models based on our research and the new career pathways, defining elements such as when/how to award bonuses and offer base-building salary increases, the optimal frequency and size of financial incentives, and possible mechanisms for freezing compensation increases for ineffective teachers. We will also assess our current technological capacity and determine which upgrades will be necessary. We will also develop procedure to ensure that salaries remain consistent with cost of living changes. Finally, we will design a communication strategy so that teachers and principals clearly understand the compensation changes and the implications of those changes.

HISD Implementation Plan
DATE: September 30, 2010

2. Effective Principal in Every School

What we will do

We are going to make sure that we have a highly effective principal at the head of every school. To do that, we will improve our recruiting system to be more aggressive in recruiting talented individuals into principal positions, starting with our own internal pipeline of best performing teachers and assistant principals and supplemented by strong external candidates. We will also provide all of our principals with the ongoing supports, careful evaluations, and individualized professional development they need while also placing all the necessary tools at their disposal to lead their schools into becoming the best in the nation.

Why we will do it

There is broad consensus among educational experts that having an effective principal at the head of every school is of utmost importance to assuring student success. The more challenging and/or underprivileged the student population in the school, the more this is true. In HISD, we have ample evidence of this, as there is broad variation in the on-track-to-college-readiness rates of our elementary, middle, and high school students, even among schools with very similar poverty levels, as shown in the charts below:

LEARNING FROM OTHERS:
RAND CORPORATION STUDY, WITH INVOVLEMENT OF NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

"Nearly 60% of a school's impact on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher effectiveness. These are the most important in-school factors driving school success, with principals accounting for 25% and teachers 33% of a school's total impact on achievement."
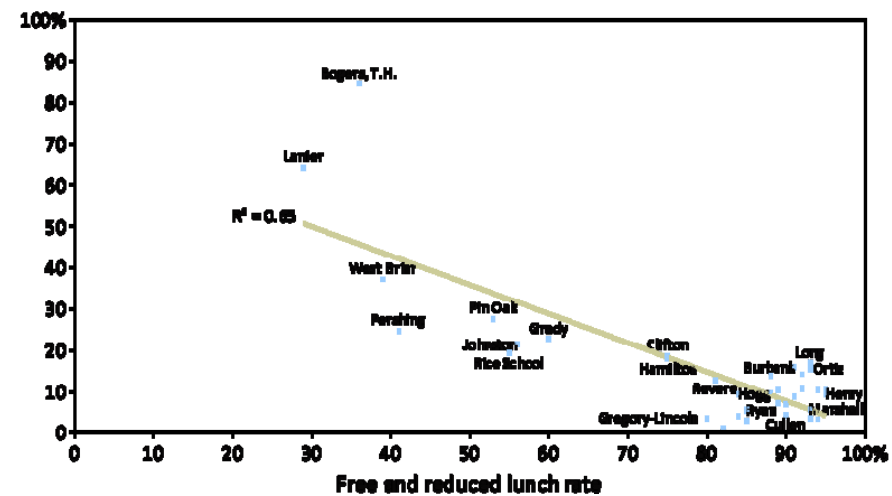
5ᵗʰ Graders:
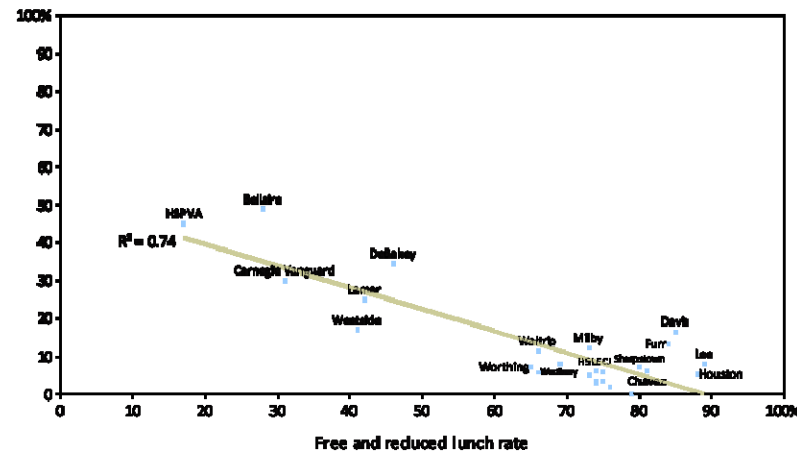
Percent of students on-track to college readiness
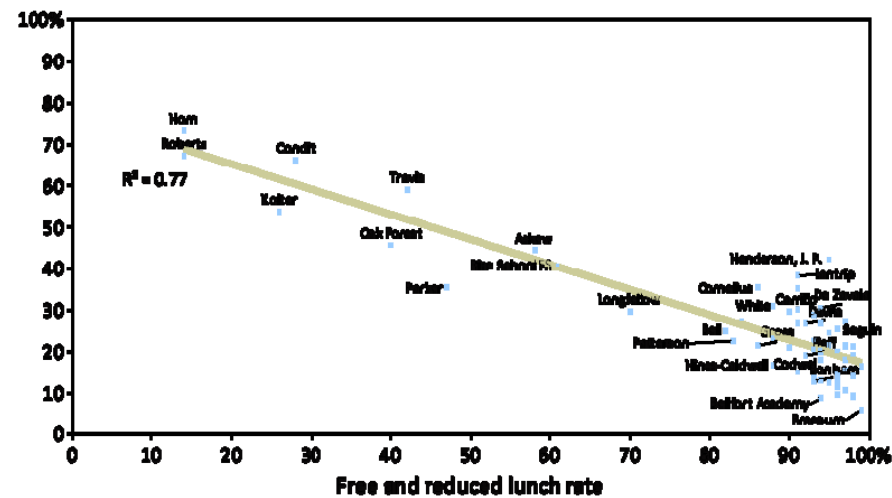
8ᵗʰ Graders:

Percent of students on-track to college readiness

11th Graders:

Percent of students on-track to college readiness

Bellaire
HSPVA
R² = 0.74
Della key
Carnegie Vanguard
Lamar
Westside
Davis
Waltrip   Milby
Purr   Lee
Worthing   Wesley   HSLECJ Sharpstown   Houston
Chavez

Free and reduced lunch rate

The variation in principal quality is also recognized by our stakeholders, who have noted that the quality of school leadership varies across the district and ask us to prioritize addressing this issue:

- *"It is important to have consistency in the administration of the schools. I recommend that each principal and assistant principal be required to serve at least 5 years in a school before being promoted or moved, if he is performing as required by the district."*

To understand what we need to change in order to reach our goal of having an effective principal in every school, we have assessed each step in our process from recruiting, to hiring, to developing and supporting, to evaluating and promoting our principals, and have identified the following weaknesses to make our areas of focus for reform:

- The current principal appraisal instrument used in HISD does not provide a measure of principal effectiveness that is as accurate or comprehensive as the leading principal appraisal tools. It also does not provide the depth of meaningful feedback required for School Improvement Officers (SIOs) and principals to understand what individualized supports principals need.
- Currently, due to lack of clear guidance from the central office, HISD's principals follow different strategies in many areas (e.g., procurement of instructional services and materials, information technology, scope and sequence of literacy and numeracy curricula, rigor of classroom offerings), with mixed results. Additionally, our principals have expressed both frustration over the amount of time they currently have to devote to certain administrative tasks, and an interest in receiving more information and guidance from the central office to help them make decisions.

- The applicant pool on which we currently rely to fill our school principal vacancies, which average 35 spots for principals and 60 for assistant principals per year, is inadequate to meet district need. This is in part due to weaknesses in our recruitment strategies and in part due to insufficient leadership development of teachers and assistant principals within HISD.
- At all teaching and administrative levels in HISD, the pathway to career advancement into the principal position and beyond is not clear, nor are the competencies needed for each step of the pathway well defined. Additionally, there is need to align the professional development that we provide more closely with the supports our campus staff need to advance along the leadership pathway.
- HISD families and students report concern over the number of incidences of bullying and other unsafe behavior in HISD schools, and also feel that HISD does not currently do enough to promote health awareness or support healthy activities on campus.

We have identified **five key strategies** that will combine to address our weaknesses while helping us to retain and develop all of the talented leaders and potential leaders we already have working in HISD:

2.1 Design and implement a rigorous, fair principal appraisal system

HISD will put in place a comprehensive principal appraisal system with metrics of performance that are aligned with the district's goals and priorities, and that enable SIOs and principals to identify and reach common understanding of principals' individual needs for development. Improvement in HISD's ability to measure how well its principals are performing will lead to better targeted and more effective professional development and more effective principals.

Main elements
2.1.1 Develop a comprehensive principal appraisal system that includes multiple performance measures (e.g., student performance, school safety, teacher support), integrates feedback from teachers and principals' supervisors, and identifies principals' individual needs
We will hire an external expert to help us develop a new and comprehensive principal appraisal system, pilot test the program and then revise it based on feedback from our teachers, principals, central office leadership, and Board, making sure that it everyone understands it and can see how what it measures will highlight needed professional development and accurately identify our strongest principals.
We will then launch the new appraisal system districtwide and train our SIOs and principals on it, so that principals understand exactly what the expectations are and how we will measure their success, and SIOs understand very clearly which skills they need to mentor principals in to help principals perform well in all critical areas.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is investing $100 million to support Hillsborough County Public Schools, some of which will go toward aligning principal evaluation and compensation with student performance and teacher effectiveness and supplying principals with better data and training to guide management, instruction, and professional development.

2.2 Implement quality assurance standards and recommended practices to guide principals' decision-making, with high expectations and clear accountability

There is an emerging understanding in the educational sector that neither fully centralizing nor fully decentralizing decision-making within a school district leads to optimal results. Instead, the school networks that are most successful are the ones that make certain types of decisions entirely centrally (e.g., budgetary rules), leave other types of decisions to be made by principals alone (e.g., how to schedule a required student assembly into the school week), but create a neither fully centralized, nor fully decentralized structure around many key decisions, instead creating frameworks and recommending best practices that guide principals' decisions without dictating them. Given the success that leading school district are having with this decision-making structure, HISD will be reviewing, revising, and clarifying the standards it sets around principal decision-making (e.g., any curriculum used in a school must be research-based and tied to state standards), as well as developing recommendations (e.g., setting a short list of preferred vendors per type of instructional material). These reforms promise to help schools and the central office work together in more complementary and efficient ways while making principals and teachers feel more supported. Costs in some areas should also fall, as we benefit from discounts due to larger business given to the highest quality vendors. Additionally, students transferring among schools will find more coherence from one school to the next, easing the transfer process. Ultimately, all this will help student achievement to rise, as principals who spend less time figuring things out on their own will have more time to devote to being instructional leaders.

> LEARNING FROM OUR OWN STAKEHOLDERS:
> HISD PRINCIPALS
>
> In a recent survey of our principals, the message that they need more support to inform their decisions came across loud and clear:
> - *"I get NO assistance. Earlier in the year, I requested a recommendation for a good program that I could use for TI/IAT with my bilingual responses. NOTHING - NO IDEAS. We had to figure it out for ourselves - I am not sure that we chose as wisely as we might have."*
> - *"A recommendation list of programs and practices would go a long way in helping to make purchasing decisions."*

Main elements

2.2.1 Develop standards and recommended practices to guide principals' decision-making

Our central office team will develop a preliminary structure and list of standards for decision-making, based on feedback we already have from principals as well as our own knowledge of the different types of decisions our principals are currently making and the resulting outcomes. We will then review our proposed structure and standards with all of Team HISD, with particular emphasis on principal input, to be sure we have capture the universe of types of decisions that they must make, and the nuances of the information they need to make them well. To help us receive this valuable feedback, we will also be working to clarify and strengthen the role of our principal ad hoc committee. Once our standards are set, we will work with School Improvement Officers to disseminate the information and implement them.

2.2.2 Align practices and policies (e.g., principal's evaluation, job description, training, career path preparation) with the new model of standards for principal decision-making

Once we have re-envisioned our structure and standards for decision making, we will work with every relevant department to ensure that their work is aligned with the new system. This applies especially to how we describe the principal position to prospective candidates, the content we use in principal trainings, and how we evaluate the performance of our principals.

2.3 Strengthen HISD's school leader recruiting practices to attract top talent

Implement mechanisms to ensure HISD has a pool of best-in-class talent to fill in principal vacancies. Every HISD school will have high quality principal leadership.

Main elements

2.3.1 Create a high-quality leadership preparation program to prepare, recruit, and select best-in-class talent internally (e.g., teachers, assistant principals) in order to create an exceptional pool of candidates to fill school vacancies

One clear priority in our upcoming work is to strengthen the pool of applicants from which we fill our principal vacancies. To date, we have struggled to find enough high quality candidates to fill all open spots. The first step in this process will be to build up our internal pipeline, which will involve simply doing a better job of identifying which teachers and assistant principals in HISD are effective and have great leadership potential. We will also be creating partnerships with outside organizations, like the University of Virginia and New Leaders for New Schools, to channel our staff with great leadership potential into programs that offer training and certification for principalship. We will also design and launch an in-house training program to develop our future school leaders.

2.3.2 Strengthen HISD's recruiting practices to attract top principal talent from sources external to HISD
To supplement our pipeline of internal candidates for principal vacancies, we will also improve our external recruiting program. This will involve developing and maintaining a database of strong performers throughout the nation, updating the questions and structure of our interview process so that it is more effective in identifying the best candidates, surveying our current principals to learn from them which of our recruiting practices and incentives attracted them most to working in HISD, and doing a general survey of recruiting techniques in other successful districts to learn from their best practices.

2.3.3 Create systems to ensure ongoing effectiveness of HISD recruitment programs
In order to ensure that our recruiting techniques do not go out of date, we will put in a place a system to do an annual review of general best practices in other district as well as an annual survey of our own principals. We will also conduct an annual evaluation of how our recruiting system is functioning, to be sure that what actually it taking place matches the recruiting system we have designed.

2.4   Establish a comprehensive instructional leadership program to develop and retain top talent
For us to fully benefit from the leaders in our district, we not only continually provide professional development, but also help them move along the career ladders so that we are extending the influence of our leaders as they deepen their expertise. To accomplish these goals, we must clarify the leadership pathway in HISD, define the competencies that are required to advance along it at every stage, and then put in place a system of ongoing development and support for our principals.

Main elements
2.4.1 Define leadership pathways/ladders for HISD staff and administrators to become principals, and for principals to advance into higher leadership roles
We will define the opportunities available to teacher/leaders for career advancement, make the corresponding adjustments to what we consider when we evaluate principal performance, align the steps through the ladder with our compensation model, solicit feedback, and then finalize and implement the new process.

2.4.2 Assess the strengths and weaknesses of HISD's current supports to principals
Before redesigning the professional development and supports we provide to principals, it will be important to establish what we are already doing well, so we can be sure to maintain it, and to identify our weaknesses, to be sure to focus on them as we reform our system. The first step will be to survey our principals to ask in what areas they are satisfied and where they feel underserved. For this we will hire an external firm, to be sure that our principals feel comfortable being honest. We will then analyze the findings, combined with our own observations and feedback received through other channels, to propose changes to create systems to address the weaknesses. We will also conduct an annual survey or principals to make sure we have early feedback on any new problem areas as they arise.

2.4.3 Provide ongoing professional development to principals who are already working in HISD, tailored to individual need while also addressing key topics in principal development (e.g., coaching of teachers, mentoring APs, and data-driven decision-making)

This work will involve the near-term step of working with SIOs and our professional development department to determine what professional development is a priority to deliver to our principals in SY 2010-11 and then deliver it. At the same time, we will implement long-term changes to our professional development program, which will involve an annual process of dividing our principals categories (e.g., excellent, proficient) based on their performance appraisal results, identify/confirming the development needs for each category by competency, targeting the bottom 15% for the highest level of support, including mentorship by a highly effective principal, and then providing the necessary training.

2.4.4 Provide new principals with a high-quality, three-year mentorship program

We recognize that new principals need particularly intense and high-touch professional development in their first years on the job if they are to be successful. For this reason, in addition to the professional development provided to all HISD principals, our new principals will participate in a three-year mentorship program in which new principals meet regularly with their mentor, who will be an experience and highly effective principal. To help design this program, we will do a survey of our principals to ask for their insight on what they needed to know / wish they knew when they first took on the principal job.

> LEARNING FROM OTHERS: NYC, CHICAGO, BOSTON, AND OTHER LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICTS
>
> Large districts including NYC, Chicago, Boston and St. Louis have created Leadership Academies to provide a high-quality alternative to university-based leadership preparation programs; NYC Leadership Academy is recognized not only for the preparation of new principals but also for its ongoing professional development and mentoring programs.

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

Feedback from our stakeholders has consistently highlighted our need to make our schools healthier and safer, with a particular focus on addressing bullying. Safer and calmer campuses will create better learning environments, while increasing health awareness and the healthy options we provide to our students are critical pieces of the preparation we give to students to lead successful lives once they move on from HISD.

Main elements

2.5.1 Set clear safety standards and performance metrics for all schools

We are lacking a clear definition of what constitutes a safe or an unsafe school. We will develop clear standards for school safety and guidelines for how to achieve them, and then make sure that meeting those standards is incorporated into the principal appraisal process to make sure our principals focus on achieving them.

2.5.2 Develop a districtwide/school-wide discipline plan

Currently, a variety of different discipline models are used across HISD schools, which complicates putting in place a districtwide system providing interventions to students with academic, social/emotional, and/or behavioral struggles. It also adds confusion to students' experiences when they transfer among our schools. We are therefore committed to employing a single discipline model throughout the district. To do this, we will review research-based options and select one with proven effectiveness, train all of Team HISD on the new system, and revise our discipline coding system as needed so that we are able to track and assess our results on an ongoing basis.

2.5.3 Support positive behaviors in schools

This work is designed to complement the efforts of the Response to Intervention (RTI) work taking place in each of our schools (see the Instruction core initiative, strategy 3.3, for more information). We will facilitate principal collaboration with the RTI steering committee to identify what procedural changes need to take place to improve the effectiveness of our RTI program, culminating in the release an "Action Required Memo" that specifies those changes, including the procedures our schools will follow as students are displaced from the regular school setting to DAEP/Special Education Process. We will also conduct a review of the social workers currently working in HISD, as well as their compensation, and implement changes as needed. We will also facilitate principal collaboration with the RTI steering committee to design social/emotional support staff training, pilot it in some of our schools, and then revise it as needed and launch the training districtwide.

2.5.4 Identify the tools and practices that schools need to attain safety standards (e.g., enhanced training of security, increased safety for after-school and extracurricular activities)

Though HISD does currently conduct safety audits, they are not clearly aligned with our safety standards, as we have not yet fully developed what those standards should be. Defining those standards is, however, part of our safe and healthy schools strategic work (see item 2.5.1, above), and as part of that effort, we will review a sample of our school safety audits from recent years to develop a clearer picture of what issues our schools are facing and what schools are doing to address them, all of which will inform the list of standards we ultimately design. We will also form a consortium of individuals representing HISD Police, Risk Management, and Safe Schools, and charge this group with conducting ongoing safety audits according to our new standards and recommending areas for action to district leadership, as needed.

2.5.5 Provide professional development and support to school-based staff regarding bullying

As stated above, bullying is a particular area of concern for our parents, as it is in school districts across the nation. We take bullying very seriously, and are committed to eradicating it. To achieve that goal, we will be building upon our existing anti-bullying efforts, which will involved forming strategic partnerships with different community organizations that can help our efforts, making sure our school-based social workers are trained in anti-bullying techniques, and teaching empathy skills and

heightened cultural competency to our staff every year. We will also work with Houston police to put in place a tip line for people to report bullying incidents and collaborate with police to develop responses to the problems that are reported.

2.5.6 Promote health awareness for team HISD and increase healthy options for HISD students

Health is a real concern throughout our nation and within our communities, and we can be doing more to increase health knowledge and provide healthy options in our schools. Our first step will be a complete audit of HISD's health-related initiatives, with particular focus on the three areas of health curricula across grades K-12, health services, and food services. This will include a review of the Healthy Kids Healthy Schools Initiative to assess how fully it is being implemented and whether it meets the current needs and demands of the community. We will then develop health standards for all of our schools and implement our new health plan.

2.5.7 Create a central data source to track and monitor safety violations/breaches

To support our various safety and health initiatives, we will need IT hardware, software, and systems to gather and report data that allows us to track how we are doing across all our key measures of success, and to assemble the data we need to decide what changes to make to improve our effectiveness. To being this process, we will assess our current IT capacity to collect data on our safety violations/breaches metrics and our results for each metric into a report. We will then create a collaborative data-sharing think-tank, including the Chair of the Houston Harris County Office of Drug Policy, representation from Law Enforcement and the Justice System, Education and Prevention, and members of our own team, among others, to monitor the data we gather and recommend action.

HISD Implementation Plan
DATE: September 30, 2010

3. Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports

What we will do

Redesign the course offerings, curriculum, assessment tests, and social/emotional supports provided in schools throughout HISD, with a particular emphasis on giving all students the same access to educational programs and opportunities, regardless of which school they attend, as well as improving instruction for students at all levels. We will also implement a set of targeted reforms in order to turn around HISD's lowest-performing schools.
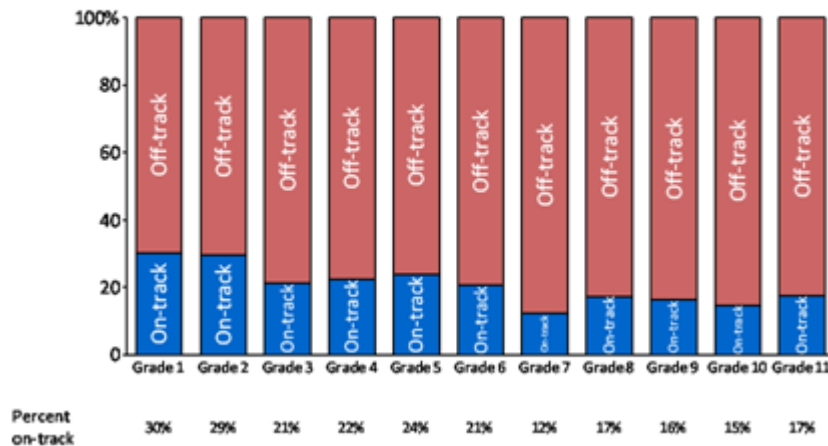
Why we will do it

HISD has a number of outstanding academic programs and supports across the district, but on the whole does not prepare students for college and career readiness. The chart on the right shows the percentage of non-special education students in HISD who tested on grade level in reading and math, as measured by the norm-referenced Stanford test. Our scores show that, depending on the grade, only about 40 to 70% of our students are reading or doing math at grade level. In addition, student EVAAS growth data show a slowing of growth in mathematics progress from the fifth to sixth grades, resulting in only 18% of HISD eighth-grade students successfully completing Algebra I. The end result is that the majority of HISD students who enroll in community college require remedial courses in their first year.

	Reading		Mathematics	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Grade	%GE	%GE	%GE	%GE
1	65	70	64	69
2	59	61	67	67
3	52	51	70	69
4	49	46	63	65
5	51	48	74	75
6	44	47	57	64
7	48	41	61	62
8	48	50	60	64
9	49	46	69	62
10	52	48	61	68
11	66	58	60	56

Stanford 10: Percent of Non-Special Education (NSE) Students On Grade Level, Spring 2009 and 2010
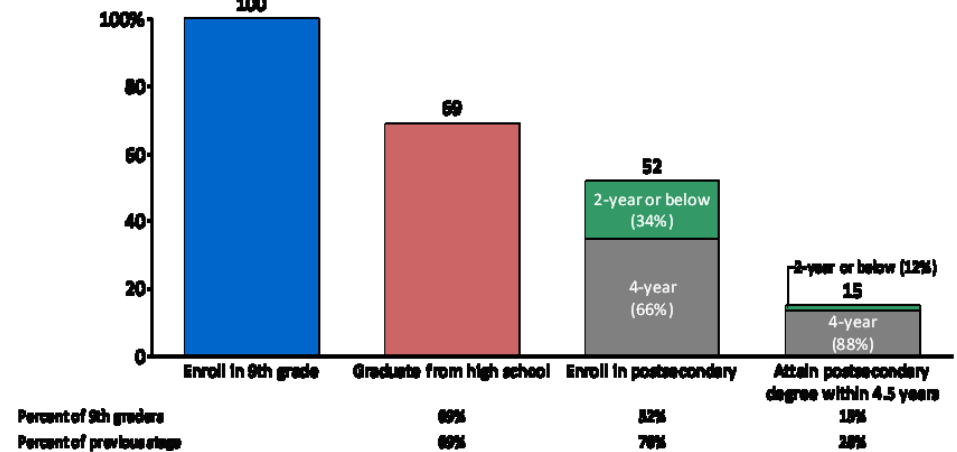
Unfortunately, even these data likely paint too rosy a picture of our current academic performance. There has been growing national interest in assessing student achievement at each grade level by measuring what percent of students are "on-track" to college or career readiness, which is done by identifying the indicators per grade level (e.g., high attendance, good course grades, rigorous course schedule, standardized test scores) that are known to be correlated with eventual graduation from high school with the skills necessary for success in college or career. As part of our strategic planning process, therefore, we conducted an on-track analysis of HISD students, and found that our students' on-track rates ranged from 22% to 30% in elementary grades, but decreased to 12% to 17% in middle school and high school grades. Consistent with these findings, our study of how HISD graduates have fared in college in recent years suggests that only an estimated 15% of HISD first-time ninth graders will go on to earn any level of college certificate or degree. See the charts below:

Percent of HISD students

Percent on-track	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
	30%	29%	21%	22%	24%	21%	12%	17%	16%	15%	17%

Percent of first time 9th graders

|	Enroll in 9th grade	Graduate from high school	Enroll in postsecondary	Attain postsecondary degree within 4.5 years
Percent of 9th graders		69%	52%	15%
Percent of previous stage		69%	76%	29%

To understand why our student achievement rates are not meeting our goals, we have turned a critical eye to our current instructional standards and supports and identified several key troublesome areas that having centralized standards and a district managed curriculum will address:

- There is substantial variation in the availability of academic programs across and within schools. For example, some schools offer 26 AP courses and some offer only one. Inequities are also apparent in access to Montessori, International Baccalaureate (IB), magnate programs, and meaningful career to technical programs, among others. Students in schools that do not offer rich and diverse programming must either take a bus to a school that does, which can be anything from disruptive to infeasible, or simply give up on participating in those programs.
- HISD curricula currently are not uniformly aligned to national standards, nor do they take full advantage of the leading technological and teaching methodology breakthroughs that enable differentiated instruction to address the needs of all learners. Additionally, the lack of coherence among different schools' curricula makes it very challenging for students who transfer among schools to make those transitions seamlessly, and indeed we find that are most mobile students also have the highest dropout rates:
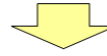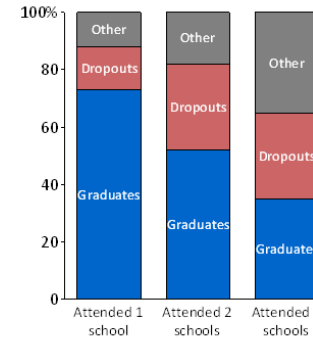
Majority of students attended one high school

Number of entering 9th graders (SY2004-05)

- Attended three schools
- Attended two schools
- Attended one school
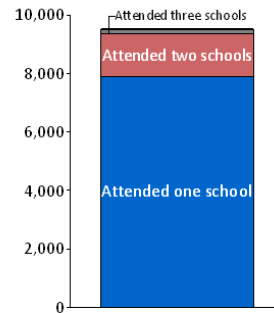
Students fared considerably worse with each school transfer

Percent of HISD students

(Attended 1 school / Attended 2 schools / Attended 3 schools: Graduates, Dropouts, Other)

Across all grades and schools, the mobility rate in Houston ISD exceeds 25%

- HISD schools currently provide inadequate support to students with learning and/or behavioral difficulties. In order to facilitate a cohesive plan that addresses student needs as they matriculate through, or transfer between, schools, the current Intervention Assistance Team/Response to Intervention (IAT/RTI) plan and procedures must be expanded to better support administrators, teachers, students, and parents in a clear, concise, and consistent manner
- Some HISD schools are particularly underperforming: nine middle and high schools in HISD have received the designation of "failing schools" from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and HISD has identified eleven elementary campuses that are also failing.

These findings from our self-assessment, particularly the need to provide more consistency of instructional offerings among schools, more equitable opportunities for all regions of the district, and instructional tailored to match individual student need, are echoed in the feedback we have received from parents, teachers, and community on what needs to change:

- *"One of our biggest issues is lack of consistency across schools."*
- *"There are inconsistencies in programming between campuses and regions."*
- *"A key issue is the lack of quality optional educational tracks for students performing above grade level."*
- *"Give each student a fair chance to experience and achieve an excellent education, regardless of where they live in Houston."*

Thus, while we are committed to maintaining our decentralized model and continuing to be a district of choice, we believe it is essential that a common rigorous instructional foundation be put in place across all schools, with established, specific approaches for addressing under-performance, so that every student has the supports required to achieve.

In order to ensure that every student has the rigorous instructional program required for college and career success, our **key strategies** will be:

3.1 Equity in access to educational programs

By setting the standards for what types of courses and programs at minimum each school in HISD must offer, and then providing the funding and supports required to increase the opportunities available at HISD schools that currently do not meet those standards, we will provide all of our children, particularly those in higher poverty areas, with much more diverse, rigorous, and high quality educational opportunities than they have had in the past. Having these opportunities in place for everyone is a critical first step in closing the achievement gap and setting our students up for postsecondary success.

<u>Main elements</u>

3.1.1 Ensure that all schools have high quality programs

There are a number of different types of special student populations, as defined by the district (e.g., English language learner, gifted and talented, special education). We currently lack a common understanding of what those populations are, much less what programs we need to have in place to serve them. In this work, we will define the comprehensive list of special populations as determined by the state and district, identify the standards that are currently in place for each of these populations, update those standards as needed, train everyone in the district on the new standards, and then implement them. We will also put a system in place for annual review of our standards, to be sure they remain up to date.

3.1.2 Broaden access to dual credit, AP, and IB, and improve exam results

We are committed to providing all students with access to dual credit, AP, and IB programs, but currently only some HISD students have the opportunity to participate in these programs. To address this issue, we will employ an AP/IB School Improvement Officer (SIO) to oversee the advanced course programs at all secondary schools, and employ AP/IB specialists to support AP/IB programs at all secondary schools. We will also create districtwide goals for all high schools around the number of dual credit, and AP and/or IB courses offered and the number of students taking exams. We will then review where each high school is now and develop an action plan for improvement. The plan must include a minimum requirement of 10 AP courses per school, methods for building/expanding teacher leadership and capacity, student support systems to improve success in courses and exams, and a plan to address community awareness of Pre-AP/AP and IB programs.

3.1.3 Increase consistency of magnet schools

The magnet schools in HISD are not all currently achieving at the same level. To ensure excellence in all of our magnet schools, we will employ an objective third-party expert to conduct a complete evaluation of our magnet schools and work with us to hold focus groups with parents and students to hear their views on standards needed for our magnet schools (e.g.,

program criteria, staffing, capacity, etc.). We will then build a process for developing the new programs we need while phasing out programs that have proved ineffective, and put in place a system of ongoing, regular evaluations so that we stay on top of what is and is not working over the years.

3.1.4 Provide opportunities for alternative instructional programs

Not every student's needs are best served by the same type of instructional program. We have many students in HISD interested in alternative programs, such as vocational opportunities or credit recovery courses at night. In order to serve these students as fully as we serve all of those pursuing a more traditional educational path, we must first define a comprehensive list of the specialized instructional opportunities we can offer and the groups of students targeted for each program. We will then review our current offerings and identify where we have gaps, and then put in place new programs while closing outdated programs accordingly. We will also undertake a significant communications effort to be sure that all students and families know about these opportunities and understand how to get involved.

3.1.5 Launch a post-secondary access effort

Data on the performance of HISD graduates in college is not encouraging. Though our enrollment rates are relatively high, only a fraction of the students who enroll ultimately will earn any sort of certificate or degree. We also have only a limited range of programs and supports offered to students interested in guidance for choosing a career and finding a job after high school. In order to prepare our students better for all of the postsecondary options available to them, we will do an assessment of what we currently have in place to help students with access to career and college options, review research that others have done on best practices in this area, and then work to fill in our gaps as well as to close our programs that are outdated. We will also develop a communication so that all of the staff at HISD campuses as well as students and their families is aware of the new supports we are putting into place.

3.2 Develop and implement an aligned standards-based curriculum and assessment plan

The guiding principles for this work are that HISD's curriculum and assessment program clearly aligns to state and national standards, incorporates best-practice strategies and proven resources, addresses the needs of all learners, communicates high expectations for student achievement, is rigorous, comprehensive, effective, and valid, and is employed effectively throughout the district. By following these guidelines in our implementation of a standards-based curriculum combined with tightly aligned, frequently administered assessment testing, we will be providing every HISD teacher with the resources necessary to plan, teach, and assess instruction and student learning effectively. Such a program will improve the academic achievement of all students, while providing particular benefit to students who struggle to learn under the traditional curriculum structure, move frequently, and/or come from low-income families.

<u>Main element</u>

3.2.1 Communicate high expectations for instructional delivery and establish district-managed curriculum guidelines

The curricula used in HISD schools currently vary widely, to varying success. A lack of clarity by the district on expectations, standards, and best practices has played a large role in this confusion and lack of consistent results. We will address these concerns beginning with an analysis of existing school guidelines, district policies, and Board policy concerning a managed curriculum, conduct a gap analysis between best practices for managed curriculum policies and HISD's current policies, and develop a plan for reform. Ultimately, the Board will adopt a comprehensive managed curriculum policy, and we will make the corresponding needed procedural changes in the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) departments.

3.2.2 Arrange an independent external analysis of the district's curriculum in order to establish a well-crafted, focused, valid, and comprehensive curriculum

To help us identify the best possible curriculum for HISD, we will hire an objective, expert third-party to do a complete evaluation of the curricula currently in use in our school system and provide us with a comprehensive report of findings and recommendations. HISD leadership will then use the report as the foundation for determining what action needs to be taken to strengthen our curriculum, and then follow through on those action steps.

3.2.3 Promote academic rigor for all students by updating the current curriculum to meet standards for college and career readiness (CCR)

Our on-track to college/career success rates show that HISD does not prepare all of its students to be college and career ready. We also know that, currently, some of our schools have integrated technology into instruction in innovative ways, while others do very little to take advantage of breakthroughs in how to use technology to teach more effectively and provide differentiated instruction to all types of learners. For all of our students to be college/career ready, we need to address our weaknesses in these areas. This will involve determining what our college/career ready standards should be, taking care to correlate them with national standards. We will also conduct a thorough review of what hardware and software are currently in use in our schools, and what research tells us of instructional technology that has been proven to support student learning. This will help us develop a set of recommendations for matching effective technology with specific instructional objectives and/or student populations and then put teams together to turn our recommendations into reality.

3.2.4 Train teachers on implementing the aligned/updated curriculum, and train principals on supporting teachers in achieving campus and district goals

The best designed curricula cannot be effective if teachers do not know how to use them. It will thus be critical for us, as we are redesigning and strengthening our instructional program, to put in place ongoing and effective training for all of our teachers. As part of this effort, we will also carefully train our administrators, so that they are able both to lead the

implementation of our aligned and updated curriculum and to mentor and support teachers throughout the school year as they adapt to the new curriculum.

3.2.5 Identify a robust assessment system that will provide customized predictive and diagnostic assessments that are aligned to the district curriculum's scope and sequence

We do not have in place an effective, aligned assessment system to help teachers know, in real time, how well each student is learning the current material and where he or she has gaps. Best practices in this area are clear – frequent assessment tests are a key driver of successful differentiated instruction, catching problems early, and enabling all students to succeed. We will thus hire an external firm to collaborate with us to develop a complete assessment system that matches HISD's needs and a strong training program for all teachers and administrators, culminating in a districtwide launch of our new system.

3.2.6 Establish a clearinghouse that identifies high-quality, research-based instructional materials aligned to the district's curriculum

There are many different instructional materials offered to school districts, some of which have great potential to improve student performance, but we currently provide insufficient support to our teachers and principals to help them identify what is available, and what is likely best to work for their respective school. To address this issue, the curriculum and procurement teams at HISD's central office will be collaborating to develop a clearinghouse of vetted materials for all of our schools to use. We will convene a team of campus-based and central office personnel, who will decide on the criteria to use to evaluate instructional materials, put a system in place to conduct those evaluations, publish a menu/catalog of "approved" products, services, and vendors, and work with technology and research to be sure it is easy for teachers and principals to order those materials, and to upload their own reviews of those materials, once they've used them in their schools, so that other teachers have easy, central access to what their colleagues have learned.

3.2.7 Pursue an online platform for curriculum management and access

Experience in other districts makes clear that, for a managed curriculum policy to be successful, all teachers and leaders within the school district must have use of an online platform for curriculum management and access. We will work with an external vendor to design and implement a customized system to meet HISD's needs.

3.3 Implement Response to Intervention model districtwide to provide early, effective assistance to children

The purpose of this strategy is to address the challenging demand for improved student performance and accountability in the face of growing numbers of students with learning or behavioral difficulties. To achieve this goal, HISD will expand the Intervention Assistance Team/Response to Intervention (IAT/RTI) process that will support principals as effective instructional leaders and assist teachers to provide knowledge and support to meet all students' needs. A significant component

of this work will be training, as even interventions with the greatest empirical support cannot improve student outcomes if campuses do not implement them accurately. The impact of these efforts will be proactive classroom management, greater academic achievement, and improved behavioral and social competence.

Main elements

3.3.1 Train teachers and principals on how to diagnose students' needs and differentiate support within the classroom
A large component of this work is training teachers and principals so that they can implement Response to Intervention processes in their schools. To lead this work, we will form an Intervention Assistance Team/Response to Intervention (IAT/RTI) steering committee comprised of representation from School Support Services, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, school-based personnel, English Language Learner (ELL)/Multilingual, Dyslexia, and School Improvement Officers (SIOs). This committee will lead evaluations of how schools are currently using IAT/RTI as well as current training materials, and then select training materials and design a training program that provides all needed information while taking care to fill in current gaps. The training program will follow a train-the-trainer model, so that each HISD campus has at least one person on staff that is qualified to train his/her colleagues on RTI approaches.

3.3.2 Implement a school-level approach to designing holistic intervention strategies for helping Tier II students and accurately referring Tier III students
The IAT/RTI steering committee will create an "Action Required Memo" for each campus that directs each school to have its own functioning IAT/RTI committee to address students' academic and/or social emotional needs, beginning with a needs assessment on the first day of school, and creating a safety-net that will guide them toward success from the very beginning. The committee will also ensure that the educational and social/emotional needs of every child in low performing schools are assessed, and that an IAT plan is developed for each student, at the start of every school-year. Additionally, the steering committee will annually review approaches for Tier II students, continually updating the district's best practices list and sharing it with all campuses.

3.3.3 Improve district-level solutions for Tier III students
HISD is committed to trying Tier II solutions and keeping students in regular school whenever possible before referring them to alternative school placements. Thus, an initial piece of work for Tier III students will be to review school plans/solutions at the district level to ensure that our full suite of strategies are in place and functioning appropriately before a child is referred to a Level III intervention. For students appropriately referred to Level III interventions, we will create strategies to mitigate recurring academic and social emotional risk-behaviors that act as barriers to academic success, pilot them, and replicate the successful ones districtwide.

3.3.4 Provide tactile materials and supports to assist all teachers in determining strategies to meet student academic/social emotional needs and challenges
We will purchase Mentoring Minds IAT Flipchart for every core-subject district teacher and copies of the Pre-intervention Referral Guide (four copies per regular HISD school), and distribute them to all of our campuses.

3.3.5 Improve the instructional climate by offering technology-based applications to identify research-based strategies and solutions to meet the social/emotional needs of students
HISD does not yet take full advantage of the technological applications available to help serve the needs of Tier II and Tier III students. With this work, we are committing to bringing proven technologies into our classrooms. The first step will be to meet with an outside expert to help us develop an interactive online Pyramid of Intervention online application tailored specifically for HISD students and teachers. We will simultaneously be developing and piloting the content for our Pyramid of Intervention approaches. Once the content is finalized, we will work with the web designer to post it on the HISD portal and train our teachers and school leaders on how to use it.

3.3.6 Articulate the Intervention Assistance Team/Response to Intervention process for parents
We understand the importance of keeping parents engaged and aware of our efforts on behalf of all students with academic, social/emotional, and/or behavior struggles. To serve this goal, we will create and disseminate to all schools in the district a communications plan, called the IAT/RTI Toolkit, which they can use as a reference when speaking with concerned parents. We will also create an interactive IAT/RTI website for parents, create and disseminate to all parents an IAT/RTI brochure in district-identified major languages, and conduct parent trainings, in order to have in place multiple channels to reach parents with this information.

3.4 Apollo 20 Plan

The purpose of this strategy is to implement a three-year Transformation Intervention Model to achieve dramatic student achievement in HISD's campuses that have been identified as failing. Given that research and experience in school turnaround have demonstrated many times over that moderate measures (e.g., more professional learning for teachers) do not succeed in improving failing schools, the Apollo 20 Plan calls for deep and wide changes, including considerable staffing changes and extensions to the school day and year. The effort will be led by a designated School Improvement Officer and an Apollo 20 Core Team. These reforms have the potential to help all Apollo 20 schools achieve large improvements across all measures of student achievement, including test scores and graduation rates, by the end of three years.

<u>Main elements</u>

3.4.1 Build Apollo 20 Core Team

The Apollo 20 Transformation Intervention Model will be led by a team of turnaround experts. We will designate a School Improvement Officer to lead the transformation of the Apollo 20 schools, aided by literacy, numeracy, and data specialists.

3.4.2 Research and identify proven approaches for low-performing schools

School turnaround is a heavily researched field with a number of examples of efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, to learn from. We will build our own transformation model on the lessons to be learned from others. This will involve secondary research and in-person visits to models of particular interest to HISD, followed by training of the Apollo 20 Core Team so that they in turn can train Apollo 20 campus staff on the identified proven approaches.

3.4.3 Implement a school-wide transformation intervention model that would begin with the 2010–2011 school year (e.g., increase learning time for staff and student support, allow operational flexibility for governance)

Implementing turnaround will take great leadership and particular focus on outreach and continued transparency, as the actual work of turnaround can be controversial and divisive in schools and their communities. To that end, from the beginning of the turnaround process, we will hold Community Outreach Forums and design a system, assemble, discuss, and respond to feedback received in these forums, and design a community outreach and feedback system to operate throughout the years that we are implementing the turnaround model. For the turnaround work itself, we will recruit, place, and retain teachers and principals with track records of success while moving out of the Apollo 20 schools our weaker teachers and leaders. We will also develop new teacher and principal evaluation systems and design a corresponding merit based compensation system. Other changes will include job-embedded professional learning, high dosage in-school tutoring, and additional blocks of reading and math for middle and high school students.

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

In order to meet the reading needs of all students, HISD will provide districtwide rigorous instructional reading standards and support for students as they transition not only through grades and but also into English. This will involve identification and alignment of resources to create a clearly defined system of assessment, instruction, learning pathways, and monitoring tools for a districtwide PK-12 literacy model with the flexibility to provide different approaches for students depending on their individual needs. It will also provide for consistent support for teachers, administrators and district instructional support personnel. The impact of this work will be that every teacher will have the research-based knowledge and skills necessary to assess students' reading abilities, utilize data, and prescribe and deliver appropriate reading instruction for each student, while every student will be reading at or above grade level and on track to having the foundational reading skills necessary for future college or career success.

Main elements

3.5.1 Develop a comprehensive PK-12 Literacy Plan to ensure all students have the necessary literacy skills to be college and career ready

Right now, we are far from our goal of having every student in HISD reading at or above grade level. To get us there, we need a vertically aligned, rigorous PK-12 Literacy Plan. The work to develop this plan will begin with speaking with external reading researchers and identifying research-based best practices and then cataloguing and assessing HISD's current literacy programs (e.g., Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment (TMSFA), Language!, 6+1 Traits writing, McRel Vocabulary, Word Generation, Texas Adolescent Reading Academies (TALA), Literacy Millionaire Club, High Frequency Word Evaluation (HFWE), etc.). We will also identify key grade-level focal points, especially in transition grades, and build from all of this information and research our new Literacy Plan. Finally, we will communicate our Plan to all schools and families and design the steps needed to implement it.

3.5.2 Establish PK-12 reading standards across the district to be used in the identification of above-, on- and below-grade level readers

In order to set up our teachers and school leaders to succeed with our new Literacy Plan, we must be very clear on the standards we will use to measure success, and train them on the associated skills so that they have the tools they need to meet those standards. We also must ourselves gain clarity on what the reading standards are for each great that are correlated with skills needed for college and career readiness. The first step in this work will be to hire external researchers to help us develop grade level reading standards. Once we review, adjust, and finalize the standards suggested by the researchers, we will develop campus and parent resources to build their awareness and understanding of these standards, and create a training program for teachers and administrators.

3.5.3 Develop and implement an aligned districtwide student literacy pathway to meet the needs of individual students at each grade level

It is important to acknowledge that students with academic, social/emotional, and/or behavioral struggles (called "Tier II" and "Tier III" students) will be in particular need of differentiated literacy support if they are to thrive. To provide them with that support, we will develop into our framework and implementation plan for literacy instruction a menu of intervention program options tailored to Tier II and Tier III students. Each campus will be trained in the various interventions and able to select the programs that best fit its needs, which will include counselors placing students into appropriate reading classes. In addition to guidance on how to select and order programs, each campus will also receive support with program staff development and master scheduling.

3.5.4 Implement PK-12 standard districtwide screening and progress monitoring reading assessments to ensure students read on- or above-grade level

To facilitate differentiated instruction and make sure that we catch any difficulties that students are having with our literacy curriculum early, we will purchase and customize PK-12 numeracy formative assessment tests, communicate with campus personnel so that everyone understands what changes are happening and why, then train campus personnel to administer screening and progress monitoring assessments, and then implement a districtwide literacy assessment testing system.

3.5.5 Provide differentiated and ongoing training to teachers, campus leadership teams and district administrators on how to implement, monitor and support literacy framework

To ensure that our new Literacy Plan is implemented accurately by everyone, we will design and implement a comprehensive training program for campus teachers and leaders. To do this, we will hire elementary and secondary Literacy Instructional Specialists who will coach teachers and leaders, as well as model best practices techniques in the classroom, in order to ensure that HISD campuses are implementing literacy best practices (and Literacy Plan/Components when completed) with fidelity. We will also develop the requirements of Foundations in Reading courses for elementary and secondary ELA/Reading teachers and then hire an external vendor to help us design and implement a Foundations in Reading training program.

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

Team HISD will increase teacher capacity to provide high quality, differentiated mathematics instruction. We will deliver an equitable system of support so that every student receives first-class, research-based, forward-looking mathematics instruction, and every teacher, administrator, and parent has the tools and support needed to fill their role in this system. As a result, student achievement in numeracy will increase at all levels, students will be prepared to transition successfully from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school, the number of students successfully completing Algebra I in the eighth grade will increase, and students will graduate high school with the foundation in math they will need to succeed in college and careers.

<u>Main elements</u>

3.6.1 Provide equitable instruction by establishing districtwide Numeracy targets to ensure that all students are college/career ready

Right now, we are far from our goal of having every student in HISD doing math at or above grade level. Developing numeracy targets for every grade will help us to improve. To do this work, we will research best practices in mathematics curricula, assess the strengths and weaknesses in our current curricula, and work in teams to develop and implement a numeracy plan for the district that has tight vertical alignment from grades PK – 12. We will also implement an annual, districtwide mathematics competition, to promote student engagement in mathematics.

3.6.2 Develop an aligned, districtwide Numeracy Coaching Model, targeted to meet the needs of teachers and students at each grade level

To provide teachers and students with the individualized support they need to excel in numeracy, we will hire elementary and secondary Numeracy Instructional Specialists. Once trained, the Numeracy Instructional Specialists will conduct ongoing teacher leadership training for math lead teachers and department chairs so that all relevant campus staff understand the Numeracy Coaching Model.

3.6.3 Provide differentiated and ongoing training to teachers, principals, School Improvement Officers, and other stakeholders on how to implement, monitor, and support Numeracy instruction

Curriculum and Numeracy Instructional Specialists will provide professional development and coaching to teachers and support to principals, SIOs, targeted campuses (e.g., Apollo 20 schools; Algebra Readiness Grant schools), and other stakeholders. Training will encompass how to implement the district's numeracy curriculum, how to administer the associated assessment tests, and how to use assessment data to guide future instruction.

3.6.4 Develop and implement districtwide formative assessments and provide guidelines and standards of practice for targeted intervention, based on assessment data

To facilitate differentiated instruction and make sure that we catch any difficulties that students are having with our numeracy curriculum early, we will develop a PK-12 mathematics formative assessment plan and processes, creating 2-3 week unit formative assessments. Not only will teachers use formative assessment to provide more targeted instruction to the students in their classroom, but teachers, administrators, Numeracy Specialists, and curriculum staff, in collaboration with Literacy Specialists and specialists from other departments, will use formative assessment data to guide targeted teacher professional development and to monitor and support overall school performance.

HISD Implementation
DATE: September 30, 2010

4. Ensure data-driven accountability

What we will do
Build robust systems and processes that enable easy access to and use of key data to inform decisions and manage high levels of performance districtwide.

Why we will do it
Currently, relevant data on students, teachers, and achievement are difficult to access, often not up-to-date, and not always accurate. Furthermore, many people across the district lack the expertise to use data to make decisions.

This creates an opportunity to arm HISD leadership with accessible, timely and accurate data and provide them with the training necessary to understand how to translate data into action. By doing so, we will get better at making the key decisions that affect the performance of the district. Funding for this initiative is focused on Phase 1 which includes minimal training and will provide initial reports. Training beyond Phase 1 is a multi-year program of training and learning through use.

> LEARNING FROM OTHERS:
> BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
>
> The importance of comprehensive high-quality data systems is exemplified by other school districts who have successfully implemented architecture that enable frequent and accurate data sharing with schools. For example, at Broward County Public Schools, teachers create year-long student achievement goals by class and by student based on incoming students' prior achievement data and adjust teaching throughout the year through multiple mini-assessments.

Our key strategies will be:

4.1 Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure
HISD is the last of the top 10 School Districts to implement a comprehensive data management, warehousing and reporting system. Data is not standardized nor integrated across the major sources. Obtaining information requires finding a programmer who can develop a program and produce the report. This complexity makes it difficult to ensure that data in the systems maintain a high degree of accuracy. As a result, HISD will build a new data management infrastructure that will consolidate data into a single source and establish rigorous procedures and controls on data quality. Doing so will increase decision-making effectiveness across the district by giving teachers, power users and leadership easy access to timely, relevant, and accurate data and create a foundation for bringing best practices in technology to the classroom.

<u>Main elements</u>

4.1.1 Create a data warehouse with a business intelligence interface
Currently, critical data on students, teachers, and achievement are housed in various files, requiring intensive manual effort and long time periods to pull together relevant and useful reports to inform decision making by leadership across the district. Longitudinal data on students and teacher profiles are not existent. To remedy that, HISD will create a central repository where all critical data will be stored. Not only will this make data more accessible, but it will also allow more complex analysis to be done, creating more useful reports that get to the bottom-line of student performance. In addition, a user-friendly interface will also be developed that will allow HISD leadership to be able to access and run their own queries without always having to make requests to the Research and Accountability team.

4.1.2 Implement a data quality and data stewardship program
As data becomes more available and integrated into decision-making, it is important to ensure that it is always accurate at the source. A rigorous process for checking data quality and cleaning data errors does not currently exist at HISD. By implementing a data quality and data stewardship program, HISD will design a system that will put a series of controls and procedures in place to manage data quality from the point it enters the system through to generating output for reports. In addition, there will be clear ownership throughout the system, ensuring accountability for the highest levels of data quality across the district.

4.1.3 Re-skill and implement IT infrastructures that support the district
Modern best practices in technology are not currently applied to IT systems and instructional applications. As a result, HISD has a fragmented portfolio of IT systems and instructional applications, purchased at different price points, applied differently to curriculum, and not integrated into a common architecture. Therefore, HISD needs to develop a special type of instructional application called a collaborative environment, which will allow students, teachers, and administrators to work more productively across a common platform. This will enable all to store and share lessons and homework in a consistent manner and move the district into more of a 21st century learning environment.

In order to support the transition to new IT architectures, HISD must revamp its existing IT architecture in areas such as end user computing devices, network connectivity, and information security to ensure that the supporting infrastructure is in place to allow for safe, secure, and ease of access for end users. The ability to support and transition to new IT architectures related to computing devices, connectivity and information security is highly dependent on the availability of resources in the future and is a multi-million dollar cost. Without the proper funding, expectations cannot be met.

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

Currently, HISD reports on many measures of district and student performance. This proliferation of metrics affects decision-making throughout the district. For example, it is often difficult for the Board to extract the most relevant performance indicators and metrics to measure district progress and adjust policies. Furthermore, key leadership from the Superintendent down to the Department Heads do not have access to a report that provides a snapshot of the most important performance measures that they can use to drive strategy for HISD. Therefore, HISD is developing a set of dashboards that will simplify the current Board Monitoring System to report on only the most critical dimensions of district performance and create similar ones to capture relevant measures for the Superintendent, Chief School Officers, School Improvement Officers, Principals, and Department Heads. This will allow HISD to stay better informed on district progress and enable leadership to make more effective, data-driven decisions.

<u>Main elements</u>

4.2.1 Adapt Board Monitoring System to create a dashboard that provides a snapshot of the most important district performance measures

The current Board Monitoring System is very comprehensive and detailed, resulting in a voluminous set of reports and targets that make it difficult to glean the most critical indicators of district performance. As a result, HISD will create a dashboard that summarizes the most important metrics in an easy to view format. This will give the Board a powerful tool to help drive more effective decision-making that is grounded in objective data and analyses.

4.2.2 – 4.2.6 Create a dashboard that summarizes important performance metrics for key district leadership

Currently, HISD leadership must sift through a variety of different reports and/or make one-off requests to the Research and Accountability department to find relevant indicators or analyses on district, school, and student performance. The consequence is that decisions are often made without access to the information necessary to make them effectively. This gap creates an opportunity to develop dashboards that pull the most applicable metrics into an integrated view for use by different groups of district leadership to help manage performance, monitor progress on key initiatives, and drive more effective decision-making. HISD will develop dashboards for the following district leadership groups:

- (4.2.2) *Superintendent*: will contain metrics that are aligned with the Superintendent's performance evaluation
- (4.2.3) *Chief School Officers*: will contain metrics that will report on key school, teacher, and student performance indicators and track progress of major initiatives against project milestones organized by elementary, middle, and high schools
- (4.2.4) *School Improvement Officers*: will contain metrics that will report on key school, teacher, and student performance indicators for their portfolio of schools
- (4.2.5) *Principals*: will contain metrics that will report on teacher, student, and administrative performance indicators for the school under their responsibility

- (4.2.6) *Department Heads*: will contain metrics that will report on performance indicators relating to department operations and track progress of major department initiatives against project milestones
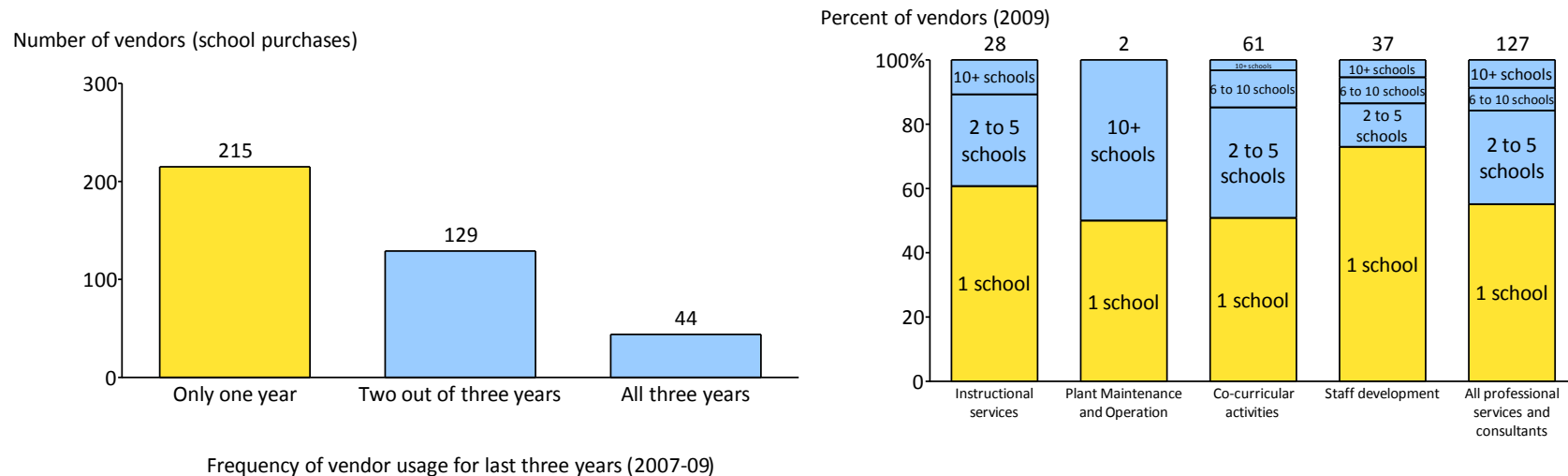
4.2.7 End User Training
The topics of end user training would include system training, scorecard interpretation (data sources, support model, as well as district response.) and data governance processes.

- (4.2.7.1) Initial Implementation Training - Conference Room Pilot – To occur in the pre-implementation phase

  A conference room pilot will be planned and managed by the project team with assistance from the Lead Business Analyst. The conference room pilot will include a select group of end users. The purpose of a conference room pilot is to review the project with a small group of end users in order to receive their feedback, address any questions and concerns and gain their acceptance of the system. This effort will refine the requirements for the ongoing, continuing training needed for users needing refresher courses, new employees hired at HISD, or existing employees changing positions.

- (4.2.7.2) Instructor-Led, Hands-On Classroom Training – Year 1 of implementation

  Instructor-led, hands-on training is envisioned for the initial, districtwide system deployment or new modules and significant functions.

- (4.2.7.3) Web-Based Training (WBT) – Subsequent years

  Web-based training can be produced in-house as is currently used for the existing, major ERP systems. Web-based training is appropriate for topics that have stable content (few changes from year-to-year), are needed by a relatively large number of employees, and can be presented in discreet segments of 60 minutes or less**.**

- 4.2.7.4 Training Product Deliverables

  a)   Custom WBT training modules for each user by role type.
  b)   End-user training manuals and job aids for each end-user role.
  c)   Classroom training including presentations for use during classroom, WBT (web based training) and Conference Room pilot instructions and facilitation guide.
  d)   Appropriate employee communications to announce availability of training opportunities and classes leveraging the district's learning management system and communication channels.

e) Rapid response e-mail during the implementation to identify issues and organize quick response to end-user problems. End-user questions will be collected from the e-mail inquiries and classroom training; assembled into "FAQ" documents and distributed to all user types and support teams.

- 4.2.7.5 Training Resources Needed

a) Ongoing integration with professional development organization.
b) Leverage existing training classrooms at key HISD locations for classroom trainings.
c) Outlook e-mail account dedicated to receiving questions and concerns from end-users.
d) Training database environment reserved for training.
e) Instructor for classroom based training. In Year 1 the Lead Business Analyst would serve in this role. In subsequent years, the content should be integrated with the district's on-boarding activities and internal role-based, required training currently facilitated through the internal professional development organization.

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

HISD's purchasing practices at both schools and central office are currently fragmented and inconsistent. As the graphic on the left hand chart below shows, fewer than 10% of vendors were used in each of the last three years. Furthermore, half of the vendors on the districts' approved list were used by only one school in the past year as shown in the graphic on the right hand side below.

Number of vendors (school purchases)

Frequency of vendor usage for last three years (2007-09)

Percent of vendors (2009)

HISD recognizes this as an opportunity to standardize the purchasing process and develop a system to capture feedback on the service levels provided by the vendors selected by HISD. By creating a more efficient procurement system, the district will realize cost savings, improve the quality of the vendors it works with, and help educators and school administrators free up valuable time they can use to devote to instruction.

Main elements

4.3.1 Design and implement effective and efficient processes for selecting, obtaining, and evaluating instructional services and materials

School leadership currently views the procurement process as bureaucratic and inefficient, taking valuable time away from other activities such as instruction. Vendor quality and contract prices are very inconsistent across the district, driven primarily by the lack of useful information about the providers that are available to schools and their track records of success. In a survey of principals, a clear need for action emerged:

"We need some means of standardization of what we purchase so that we can get economies of scale."
"I feel hampered at times in trying to acquire instructional services from vendors as the current procurement process is burdensome."
"We need consistency. There are too many vendors with too many prices."

Furthermore, principals were very open to allowing Central Services help select the "right" vendors in order to achieve greater efficiency in the procurement process:

"It would be really nice if HISD could recommend vendors based on the schools that are actually implementing the programs."
"A recommendation list of programs and practices would go a long way in helping to make purchasing decisions."
"I want to know which instructional services are proven and successful and used by other schools."

As a result, HISD is revamping the entire purchasing process for instructional services and materials – from vendor selection to vendor evaluation. Doing so will reduce the time burden on school administrators while providing them with the knowledge they need to select high quality vendors who have been pre-qualified, priced, and contracted. An important change will be the development of a simple and intuitive system that will match daily needs at schools for instructional services and materials to pre-qualified solutions, minimizing or eliminating any effort required on the part of school leadership to manage a portion of these procurement activities. Furthermore, a simple feedback loop will be developed that will allow school leadership to evaluate vendor service levels and effectiveness of purchases, which will be incorporated into refining pre-qualified solutions

and shared with schools across the district. By standardizing the procurement process, HISD will achieve cost savings and increase the effectiveness and quality of vendors the district contracts with.

4.3.2 Design processes for schools to evaluate and share experiences about vendors
As part of the simple feedback loop that HISD is designing and incorporating into the new procurement process for instructional services and materials, an Amazon-type feedback system will be developed to gather feedback from school leadership on their contracted vendors. Input on quality of service, effectiveness of materials and services rendered, and other general comments on their experience with vendors that school leaders have chosen to use will be captured, aggregated, and published in a user friendly forum that will be accessible to schools across the district. These feedback ratings will allow school leaders to make more informed choices about the vendors they select by incorporating the experience and evaluation of other schools.

4.3.3 Define a business process for procurement of services and materials off of recommended vendor list
In standardizing the procurement process for instructional services and materials, HISD has been conscious of balancing efficiencies gained with pre-qualified solutions with giving schools the choice to select vendors. As a result, HISD will allow higher performing schools to recommend new vendors to Chief School Officers, undertake a RFP process and undergo a controlled pilot. Research must be provided by schools to support their recommendations and agree to a one year or less proof of performance. Depending on the results of this process, recommended vendors may be added to the portfolio of pre-qualified solutions.

HISD Implementation Plan
DATE: September 30, 2010

5. Implement a Culture of Trust Through Action

What we will do
Put in place structures, processes, and methods to ensure that we have effective two-way communication to engage both internal and external stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members.

Why we will do it
A powerful sense of community and a shared direction among all stakeholders is crucial to the successful transformation of HISD. Yet, we know that current communication structures in place are insufficient to foster authentic engagement.

During the process of developing the Strategic Direction, we have attempted to begin the movement towards a communications approach that is more interactive and transparent. Throughout dozens of meetings, communication emerged as a clear area for improvement. Thousands of stakeholders shared concerns, ideas, and suggestions on how we can improve. Taking all this valuable feedback into account, we designed two strategies that will enable us to revamp our communication so we can engage internal and external audiences in meaningful ways and ensure we have authentic two-way communication. By doing so, we will prove our commitment to change, re-build trust and confidence, and start a new era in our communication and relationship with HISD's broad community.

Our key strategies will be:

5.1 Develop effective, timely, two-way internal communication to engage staff members

The strategic planning revealed that employees feel that the messaging that comes out of the central office is not always consistent, that mechanisms to capture their input and disseminate information are not as effective as they should be, and that communication tends to be infrequent and untimely. Therefore, one of our key strategies will be to ensure our internal stakeholders have access to information that is relevant, timely, and understandable as well as multiple mechanisms to provide feedback.

Effective and continuous communication is needed to have support within the district towards our vision, mission, and goals, and to build a culture of trust. We believe that clear and consistent communication will empower our staff as advocates and ambassadors for the district.

Main elements

5.1.1 Establish structures and protocols for disseminating information to and from internal stakeholders
An important step in transforming communication to our internal audiences will be to develop a districtwide strategic communications plan. We will standardize processes for two-way communications among the Superintendent, chief officers, direct reports, and principals through weekly reports with clear messaging. Furthermore, we will revamp our communication processes and methods to communicate and update our employees on Board meetings, district programs and initiatives, and other critical information.

5.1.2 Use a variety of methods to communicate to internal stakeholders
Keeping all our employees up-to-date with district news and providing mechanisms to gather their feedback requires using various and different channels of communication in a timely and consistent manner. One area that will be a key focus of these efforts will be the redesign of electronic communications (e.g., web portal, email documents). Other methods of communication that will be used include printed and electronic documents directing employees to information resources, and the use of the district's website to stream HISD television programs. We will also create a cross-functional taskforce to explore ways to expand the use of social media.

- "Open and timely communication is a big issue" -Staff
- "There are few mechanisms in place for soliciting or encouraging suggestions from employees." -Staff
- "There needs to be effective proactive communication. People do not feel unified because they read the information in the paper before we tell them" – Leadership
- "The district needs to speak with one voice." -Staff

5.1.3 Build capacity to ensure implementation of timely, effective, two-way communication with internal stakeholders
Our staff and school leadership must be armed with the knowledge and skills to engage with their corresponding audiences in a timely, effective, and interactive manner. We will conduct webinars on writing for a variety of platforms (e.g., print, email, and web) for central office staff and principals, and promote a revised and expanded Communications Style Guide.

5.1.4 Define and implement methods to evaluate effectiveness of internal communication
Tracking the effectiveness of these initiatives will help us measure our progress and make modifications to ensure that we stay on the right path towards developing and maintaining timely, effective, two-way internal communication. An important step in this process is to review existing employee surveys and other feedback mechanisms to ensure that these incorporate questions

regarding the effectiveness of internal communication. We will also use additional outlets, such as an online platform and employee newsletter, to ensure our employees are able to provide real-time feedback and ask questions. Additionally, we will create a districtwide employee advisory group drawing from the major areas to listen to different perspectives on how to improve our internal communications on an ongoing basis.

5.2 Develop effective, timely, two-way external communication to engage parents and community members

We also learned during the planning process that external stakeholders feel that our communications are not as clear, consistent, and frequent as they should be, that there are not enough efficient ways for them to provide input, and that we ought to create a more collaborative approach, listening to the parents and the community and working together to implement change. Therefore, a second key strategy will involve a concerted effort we to ensure that our external stakeholder have access to information that is relevant, timely, and understandable and have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the year. This will help us to re-engender trust and confidence in HISD.

<u>Main elements</u>
5.2.1 Establish structures and protocols for disseminating information to and from external stakeholders
An important step in transforming communication to our external stakeholders will be to develop a districtwide strategic communications plan. We will establish a set of standardized communication mechanisms to effectively engage and inform our external stakeholders. We will develop a standard process for publicizing Board of Education meetings and outcomes, and create Fact Sheets about HISD programs and initiatives to disseminate to the public. We will arm principals with the information and tools (e.g., web-based newsletters) they need to be able to provide regular, effective communication to parents and community. Furthermore, we will standardize the process to gather contact information from parents and community members to ensure that external communication efforts reach as wide an audience as possible.

> - "Restore the trust and confidence through collaboration and transparent communication". – Community member
> - "Keep us informed on what's going on, ask for input, and listen!" – Community member
> - "Establish various pathways to allow public feedback." –Parent
> - "Get parents involved in activities throughout the district." –Parent

5.2.2 Use a variety of methods to communicate to external stakeholders
Given the diverse needs of our external audiences, we recognize the need to use a variety of methods of communication to reach all of our external audiences. One key area of communication breakdown repeatedly mentioned in feedback gathered throughout the strategic planning process is the need for greater parent engagement. An important first step in creating effective methods of communication to parents is to launch an initiative to determine the level of parental access to the Internet, which is a crucial way of sharing information and gathering input. Doing so will allow us to appropriately allocate our resources in developing different

communication methods. We will also develop a semi-annual parent newsletter in three languages and conduct webinars for parents on district events and initiatives. Another major effort will be the redesign of our public website to improve navigation and encourage two-way communication. We will also use the website to stream HISD television programs. In addition, we will conduct quarterly informational sessions for the general community and create an African American Advisory Council and Latino Advisory Council to complement the existing Asian American Advisory Council. Furthermore, we will create a cross-functional taskforce to explore ways to expand the use of social media.

5.2.3 Build capacity to ensure implementation of timely, effective, two-way communication with external stakeholders
All our staff and leadership must be armed with the knowledge and skills to engage in timely, effective, two-way communication to meaningfully engage their respective key audiences. We will expand the Communications Toolkit for principals to include templates, strategies, and best practices for engaging external stakeholders. We will also conduct webinars for principals on building community partnerships and promoting parent engagement. Furthermore, we will provide quarterly training to school-based bilingual Spanish-speaking clerks, secretaries, and VIP members to improve translation and interpretation skills.

5.2.4 Define and implement methods to evaluate effectiveness of external communication
Tracking the effectiveness of these initiatives is important to help us measure our progress and make modifications to ensure that we stay on the right path towards developing and maintaining timely, effective, two-way communication with our external audiences. We will revise our existing parent and community survey to ensure it is received by a wide audience and is provided in English and Spanish. We will also explore additional methods of surveying parents and the community. Another way to gather feedback from parents will be the inclusion of postage-paid feedback cards in district publications (e.g., Welcome to HISD). In addition, we will hold semi-annual feedback sessions with existing advisory committees to constantly assess the effectiveness of our external communication.