Quarter: 2nd Oct – Dec 2011

Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 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. This includes a grassroots, aggressive recruitment plan, with a four-phase selection process.

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).

What we will report
The following Strategic Direction Management Report answers the question: Is HISD acting on the priorities identified in the strategic plan with fidelity? It measures HISD’s accomplishments and risks for each Key Strategy in support of the overall Core Initiative.

The Strategic Direction Management Report is produced Quarterly. Color indicators are used as an idication of whether administration is on track to accomplish a Key Strategy’s quarterly goals. A “Green” indicator means the district has made acceptable progress with respect to budget, scope and timeliness. A “Yellow” indicator means the district has identified risk with respect to one or more aspects. A “Red” indicator means progress has stopped or has a significant deficiency. As the Strategic Direction builds a foundation towards achieving the district’s goals over a multi-year period, not all Key Strategies will have information to communicate in a given period.
## Strategic Direction Management Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Initiative: 1. Effective Teacher in Every Classroom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Strengthen recruiting and staffing policies and practices to attract top talent</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Establish a rigorous and fair teacher appraisal system</td>
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<td>1.3 Provide effective, individualized support</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Offer career pathways and differentiated compensation</td>
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### Accomplishments

In this period, Teacher Recruitment and Selection focused their efforts on recruiting and selecting talent for midyear vacancies, as well as engaging potential talent for the 2012-2013 school year. Recruiters worked directly with principals to ensure that top candidates were matched by principal preference to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the hiring process. As of Friday December 9, 2011, we have hosted 56 teacher recruitment events (both public and on college campuses), and have selected 153 teacher for the pool. Teaching positions across the district are 99% staffed with only 80 vacant teaching positions.

The Associate Teachers department and has spent a significant amount of time redesigning the selection criteria for these roles. Because associate teachers represent 10% of our teaching force on any given day, it is essential that we uphold an unparallel level of quality for these employees. In this quarter, we have added 263 Associate Teachers, as fill rates continue to be in 80\textsuperscript{th} percentile.

Green indicates acceptable progress  
Yellow indicates a concern with timeline, budget and scope  
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Core Initiative: 1. Effective Teacher in Every Classroom (cont’d)

**Planned for Next Period**

For next period, in Teacher Recruitment and Selection, we will aggressively recruit teacher candidates to move towards our goal of creating a pool over 1,000 highly qualified teacher candidates for principals’ teacher staffing needs.

The Associate Teacher team will continue to screen and hire associate teachers to better meet the needs of schools. In order to seek above a 95% fill rate, we will need approximately 2,600 teachers in the Associate Teacher pool. We currently have 1,916 Associate Teachers in the pool, resulting in an 80th percentile fill rate. Both teams will work aggressively by hosting several recruitment and screening events to work towards our goals.
Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 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 a 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.

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Core Initiative: 2. Effective Principal in Every School

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<tr>
<th>Key Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Design and implement a rigorous, fair principal appraisal system</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Develop clear standards and recommended practices to guide decision -making</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Strengthen principal recruiting practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.4 Establish a comprehensive instructional leadership program to develop and retain top talent</td>
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**Accomplishments**

Over this period we have re-started an advisory group of school leaders to drive the remaining decisions regarding their new appraisal system, including the measures of student learning and the appraisal process. We have also updated the timeline to reflect January training on the new rubric and a full rollout of the new appraisal system this summer. Also, over this period, we worked to improve systems for providing support for school leaders such as the creation of four additional courses that are designed to assist with strategic decision-making related to teacher retention and development such as *Lessons Learned from File Review, Pitfalls of Documentation, Investigations (II)*, and *Contracts (II)*. We have recruited another cohort of principals who will participate in the popular Strategic Marketing Program with Rice University which equips principals with critical skills and strategies to market their schools and communities.

Over this period, we began induction support for the district’s 42 new principals, and 57 new assistant principals and deans. We also launched the first ever Teacher Leadership Academy designed to provide training and support for teachers who desire to become first time assistant principals. The cohort consists of 26 teachers. To date, two teachers have been hired as assistant principals. We also received 93 applications for the UST MBEA program; 15 potential administrators will begin the program in January 2011. Attendees will earn a Masters in Business & Education Administration as well as principal certification. Participants are expected to apply for positions as principals or assistant principals. We also launched a districtwide internship program for aspiring principals; 24 elementary, middle and secondary interns are receiving intense, personalized development which will prepare them to apply for principal positions in the spring.

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Core Initiative: 2. Effective Principal in Every School (cont’d)

Last, in this period we added 6 principals and 3 assistant principals (AP) into the pool of which, 33% are bilingual. There were 43 principal applicants and 141 AP/dean applicants during the October - December 2011 time period.

**Planned for Next Period**

Over the next period, we will work to finalize the design of the new system for board of education review and adoption targeted for this spring, continue to work on aligning practices and policies with strategic decision-making, continue our recruitment and screening efforts to increase the number of candidates including bilingual candidates in the pool and collaborate with McREL as well as the Rewards & Accountability Department to offer school leader appraisal training over six days in January 2012.
Quarter: 2nd Oct – Dec 2011

Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 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. 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.

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Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 3. Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Provide equity in access to educational programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Develop and implement an aligned standards-based curriculum and assessment plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Implement Response to Intervention model district-wide to provide early, effective assistance to children</td>
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<td>3.4 Transformation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 Implement a comprehensive literacy (reading) program in grades pre-K through 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.6 Implement a comprehensive Numeracy/mathematics program in grades pre-K through 12</td>
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Accomplishments

This fall has seen a surge in interest from our schools in both IB and AP with many new schools at all levels lining up to participate. Many orientations and workshops have launched this fall with strong participation from HISD teachers as reported in the last Management Report. In the spring, we are planning to offer AP Seminars at Rice University to 250 Pre-AP/AP teachers.

In this period we worked with all secondary magnet schools to create a common magnet entrance criteria by theme and by level. We are implementing new online data system (Program Manager) in our Student Information System to document and track applications received as well as student magnet enrollment. Outreached continued through this period in the development of a revised Magent policy.

The employment of a Deputy Chief Academic Officer and additional Curriculum & Instruction staffmembers has created a new way forward with the literacy programs of the district. High expectations for instructional delivery and implementation of the curriculum have been communicated districtwide. In collaboration with Teacher Development Specialists, assessments and associated blueprints that are aligned to the district curriculum’s scope and sequence have been created and shared with campuses.

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Core Initiative: 3. Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports (cont’d)

Curriculum documents have been updated to include alignment to the Texas College & Career Readiness Standards and to the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards. The Curriculum & Instruction department is working with teams of HISD teachers to develop a curriculum that is standards-based and formed by the work of Margaret Kilgo and Dr. Ervin Knezek. The Curriculum & Instruction department has added Special Education content specialists to the department to facilitate the collaboration between the two departments and to assist content areas in creating curriculum that supports inclusion classrooms.

Strategies for differentiating instruction and accommodating diverse learners have been added to the curriculum documents. After disaggregating the Fall District-Level Assessment, data trend documents were created and shared to assist teachers to interpret data trends in student performance on the assessed standards and to implement strategies for intervention. Curriculum & Instruction personnel are being hired to filled vacancies and provide additional support.

The Response to Intervention team has changed departments and is now housed within the Curriculum & Instruction department. Interventions are in the process of being aligned and a module within the Student Information Systems was developed by a collaborative team consisting of representatives from Curriculum & Instruction, Student Support Services and Special Education departments. Training on the HISD Response to Intervention model, use of the new Chancery module and action guidelines for Intervention Assistance Team members will take place in February 2012. Trainings on how to differentiate instruction for Tier II and III readers, special education students and ELL students have been scheduled for spring 2012 and participants are currently registering for the sessions.

The district has employed a Literacy Director to focus on literacy. We have launched ongoing training initiatives to facilitate quality implementation of new reading adoption including coaching and mentoring, model lessons, and classroom support. A district textbook selection committee has begun the process for Pre-K, language arts, and ESL adoptions. The district has committed funds to continue the program and expand to include General Education and Special Education students. Additionally, Phase 1 of the numeracy plan has been completed. The numeracy targets have been communicated in the form of “Blue Prints;” documents aligned to all state, national, and international standards, including Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, for use by parents for understanding student expectations.
Core Initiative: 3. Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports (cont’d)

**Planned for Next Period**

In the next period we plan to identify magnet schools in need of assistance and develop a plan of action. We will also develop vertical alignment between thematic elementary and secondary programs, develop curriculum alignment of "like programs" districtwide, as well as help school administrators and Magnet Coordinators develop their expertise in their program through the development of partnerships between thematically similar schools. Additionally, we are collaborating with the Elementary School Office to develop the program design of the newly Board approved Mandarin Chinese Language Immersion School.

Plans for an instructional materials clearinghouse are in the initial testing phase with the next step to present results for external review.

Literacy will continue to be the umbrella that all other disciplines become an integrated. The professional development plan schedule will be reviewed by the district leadership in January 2012. Using the recommendations from the leadership team, the Director of Literacy will recruit professional development trainers and negotiate contracts, oversee facility arrangements, and work in collaboration with Professional Services and Development and Leadership Development teams to coordinate dates for the trainings. The district made application for a pivotal state grant and expects to receive additional information in the next period driving additional work in this area.
Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 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.

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Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 4. Ensure Data-driven Accountability

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Build easily accessible and accurate data architecture, warehouse, and technology infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Develop and implement performance management tools and practices for decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 Design Effective and Efficient Business Processes and Procedures for Optimization of Resources and Results</td>
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Accomplishments

Much of the activities in this reporting period have been focused on completing the district procurement process in acquiring the business intelligence and data warehouse tools, related consulting services and E-rate funded network and system hardware for schools. At its September 2011 meeting, the Board of Education approved $5.5M for the creation, acquisition and implementation of a data warehouse, business intelligence tool, data integration tool and related consulting services. In conjunction with this, the district was awarded approximately $70 million in Federal E-rate funds to help with the upgrade of physical network and system hardware for 204 schools. In collaboration with the new Information Security Officer, hired in November 2011, a plan for instituting a Data Governance Council has been drafted along with a proposed list of participants from across the district.

Through early December, the Performance Management team has been working with departments to shore up the processes around data analysis and the development of performance goals. These performance goals will translate to the individual employee appraisal. The district has facilitated over 40 meetings with senior leaders and managers to discuss performance objectives, data measures and target goals for the year as well as conducted four Performance Management training sessions for managers to provide an overview of the performance management cycle of activities within the district.

For Key Strategy 4.3, business processes and programs have been defined and all system components are in place, however a change in leadership in both the Procurement and Curriculum areas has impacted our ability to move forward as planned.

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Core Initiative: 4. Ensure Data-driven Accountability (cont’d)

In the coming weeks and months, the team will reconvene with the new leaders to validate and verify the progress and status of what is already complete. It is imperative that all decisions, processes, systems and procedures are re-evaluated and that all parties have buy-in prior to rolling out to the schools and departments that are impacted by Instructional Products and Services.

**Planned for Next Period**

In mid-to-late January, the next period, we plan to initiate the Phase 1 data warehouse and business intelligence tool implementation activities. We will continue the HISD Network Re-design Project and begin deployment of E-rate network equipment in schools. In addition, we will deploy 51 mobile carts to the transformation schools for instructional use. Last, we will integrate the technology roadmap for dashboard development in order to summarize performance metrics for district leadership such as department heads, principals, SIOs, and district administrators.

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Strategic Direction Management Report

Core Initiative: 5. Culture of Trust Through Action

What we will do
We will 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 toward 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.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Develop effective, timely, two-way communication for internal stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2 Develop effective, timely, two-way communication for external stakeholders</td>
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Accomplishments

We launched a cross-functional workgroup to meet monthly with communications representatives from various departments to help integrate our efforts to communicate the Strategic Direction and other initiatives in a cohesive, consistent way and ensure that limited communications resources are used most effectively.

We migrated 43 school websites to SchoolWires, which provides a more focused place for parents, students, and the local community to find information and communicate with the individual schools. The school website provides faster access to the school-specific information, enabling us to build community at the local level where people are more involved and feel they can make a difference.

We analyzed the final statistics for the Back to School Fest held in August through a partnership with the City of Houston at the George R. Brown Convention Center that served approximately 45,000 students, providing free backpacks, school supplies, uniforms, immunizations, fresh produce, and other resources. Approximately $1.5 million in-kind donations and $158,000 in corporate sponsorships were raised with plans already under way for next year’s event.

We launched a content-rich multimedia communications strategy around the STAAR test. We created a communications kit for principals – with video, a PowerPoint presentation, talking points and handouts – to both ease the communications process and ensure a complete and consistent message is shared with internal and external audiences. Principals are currently utilizing those resources during meetings with parents.

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Core Initiative: 5. Culture of Trust Through Action (cont’d)

We also provided simplified, community-focused presentations for use by the Parent Engagement department – along with a STAAR overview video containing an explanation of cumulative scores. All resources, along with sample questions, were posted to our STAAR resources website and, to ensure access to all, an updated STAAR brochure was mailed out to all families in October.

We organized and covered six Community Conversations forums, where Dr. Grier heard from hundreds of parents, students, employees, and concerned citizens about what they’d like to see for their children and for their schools. Turnout varied, but on average, about 150 people attended each event and dozens engaged with Dr. Grier on a multitude of topics, which ranged from school policy to food allergies. The opportunity for two-way conversation was also an opportunity for immediate action - participants were directed to school officials who were on site and ready to help them. The Communications Office tracked the issues and reported on the status of them.

Planned for next period
We are drafting a social media policy, which will be communicated to all employees, and a social media implementation plan that will integrate those tools into our daily workflow.

We are in the process of building a prototype for the “Time to Talk” toolkit, which help parents set up meetings with other parents to share information and district-produced resources. The content has been written, and the kit will be ready for beta testing in January 2012.

We are in the process of redesigning the Friday eNews publication. We will establish a clear identity and editorial focus for the community and employee versions. We will incorporate a video player in the design of the newsletter to increase visibility of our multimedia projects, and shift toward more links and less text. We are also evaluating processes that will enable better metrics so we can maximize the use of this vehicle.