

REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Office of Superintendent of Schools
Board of Education Meeting of September 8, 2011

SUBJECT: BOARD MONITORING SYSTEM—GOAL 1, SECTION B: IMPROVE DROPOUT RATE AND COMPLETION RATE

At the February 11, 2010, meeting, the Board of Education approved on first reading a revised Board Monitoring System in order to efficiently maintain and measure Houston Independent School District's (HISD) goals and core values. The monitoring system was designed to give district administrators clear direction on how to meet the board's expectations in these crucial areas.

Board Policy AE(LOCAL) requires that "[T]he administration shall report to the Board of Education on each goal and core value using the specific method and timing set out."

In reference to the district's **Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement**, the attached report provides information regarding section **B: Improve Dropout Rate and Completion Rate**. The policy states that "*the administration shall provide the Board of Education with a report on the progress being made to decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates. The report shall include data depicting the district's dropout rate and graduation rates as compared to the state averages. In addition, the report shall include analysis of these data by all students and various student groups.*"

The attached report provides the annual dropout rates, graduation rates, and Completion Rate I for the district and state for all students and student groups. The district's targets have been included for each measure in the graphs.



Board Monitoring System: Indicator B

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) exists to strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston by assuring its youth the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere. In fulfilling this goal, HISD's Board of Education has designed a program to systematically monitor the district's goals and core values. The Board Monitoring System will report on each goal and core value on a routine basis. The goal currently under review is to improve the dropout rate and completion rate among students as measured by the Texas Education Agency (Goal 1, Section B).

Findings

Annual Dropout Rate (Informational Purposes Only)

- In the 2009–2010 school year, the annual dropout rate (grades 7 and 8) decreased from 0.6 percent in the 2008–2009 school year to 0.5 percent (Figure 1).
- HISD's dropout rate of 0.5 percent exceeded the state's dropout rate of 0.2 percent (Table 1).
- The dropout rate for the district is back to an all time low of 0.5 percent since implementing new standards in 2006. The annual dropout rate has steadily decreased since the 2005-2006 school year.

Four-Year Longitudinal Completion Status (Informational Purposes Only)

- The longitudinal four-year completion status tracks a cohort of first-time ninth-graders to find out their status after four years. Students can only belong to one cohort and can only be assigned one of four statuses: graduated, dropped out, received a GED, or they continued by enrolling in school for a fifth year. These four statuses are computed into rates which total 100 percent.
- HISD graduated the highest percentage (74.3%) of students since the state started tracking cohorts.
- The percentage of students who graduated in the class of 2010 cohort increased over the class of 2009. The graduation rate for the class of 2010 was 74.3 percent, which is 4.3 percentage points higher than last year's graduation rate of 70.0 percent (Figure 3).
- The percentage of students in the ninth grade cohort who dropped out of school by the end of four years decreased from 15.8 percent for the class of 2009 to 12.6 percent for the class of 2010 (Table 2). This is the lowest rate the district has seen since Texas adopted federal dropout definitions.

Four-Year Longitudinal Completion Rate I

- The Completion Rate I is made up of the graduation rate plus the percent of students continuing in school after their fourth year in high school. This rate is used in state accountability system to assign the district and campuses a rating.
- HISD's Completion Rate of 86.6 is the highest percentage of students completing in the district since adopting the federal standards in 2006. The district continues to work towards the goal of 95% (state exemplary standard) by increasing completion rates over the last four years.

Five-Year Graduation Rates (Informational Purposes Only)

- HISD's All Students and each student groups' five-year graduation rates are lower than the state's five-year graduation rates for the class of 2009 (Table 3).
- The largest graduation gap between HISD (76.4) and the state (85.1) is the All Students group with an 8.7 percentage-point difference.

Figure 1: HISD's Annual Dropout Rate for All Students in Grades 7–8 2004–2005 to 2009–2010 Compared to the State

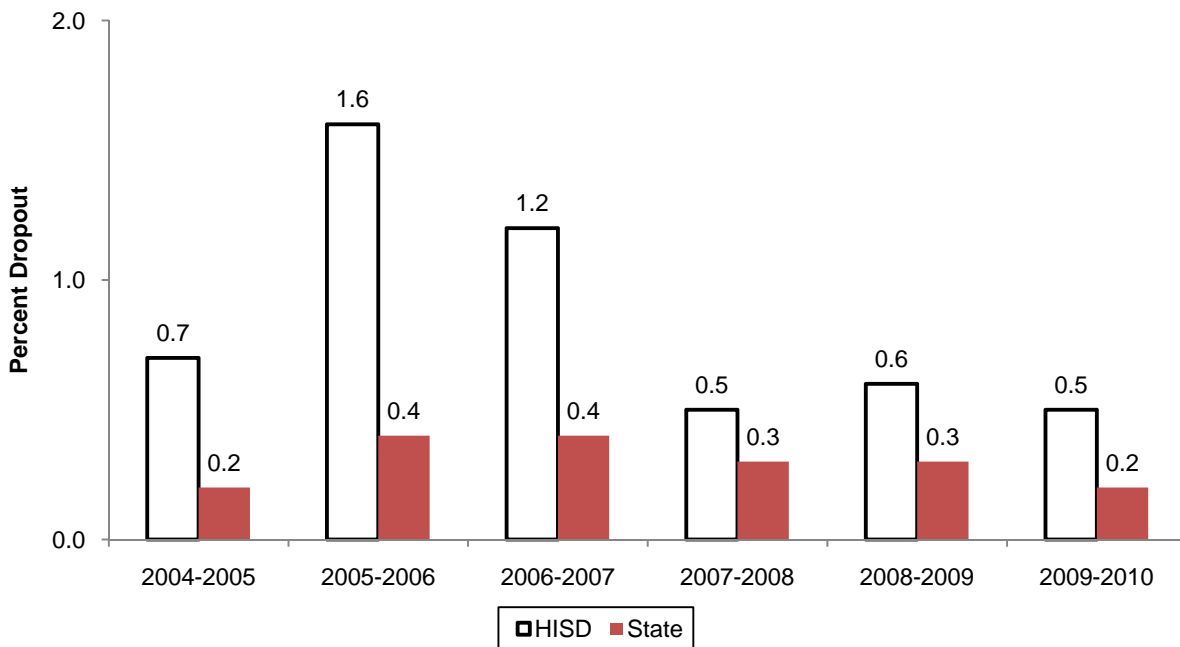


Table 1: Annual Dropout Rate for Grades 7 and 8 for HISD and the State by Student Demographics, 2006–2007 to 2009–2010

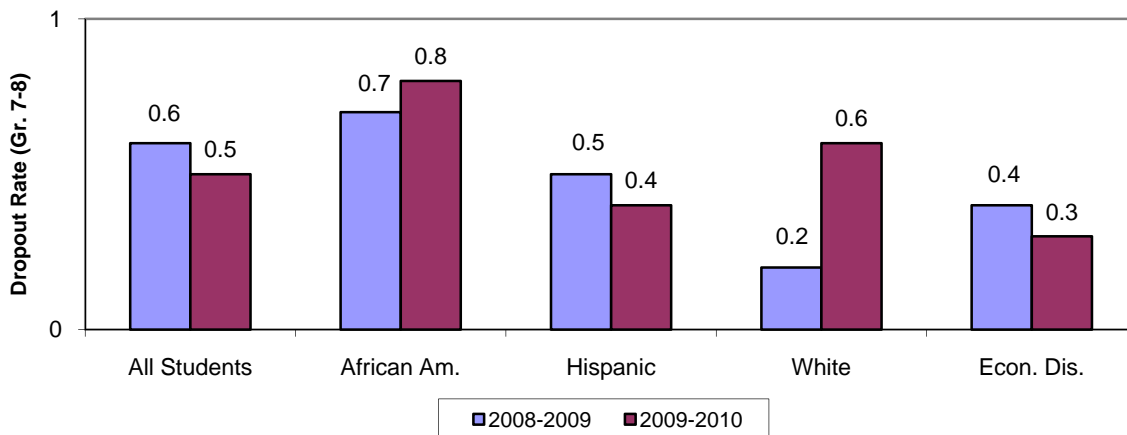
| | 2006–2007 | | 2007–2008 | | 2008–2009 | | 2009–2010 | |
|--------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | HISD | State | HISD | State | HISD | State | HISD | State |
| All Students | 1.2 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| African Am. | 1.4 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.4 |
| Hispanic | 1.2 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| White | 0.7 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
| Eco. Disad. | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.2 |

Note:

$$\text{Annual Dropout Rate Grades 7 and 8} = \frac{\text{Number of seventh- and eighth-grade students who dropped out at any time during the school year}}{\text{Number of seventh- and eighth-grade students who were in attendance at any time during the school year}} \times 100$$

Source: Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010; Texas Education Agency, District Dropout and Completion Summary Tables 6/16/2011.

Figure 2 : Annual Dropout Rate (Gr. 7-8) for All Students and Student Groups in HISD, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010



Source: Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010; Texas Education Agency, District Dropout and Completion Summary Tables 6/16/2011.

Table 2: Four-Year Longitudinal Completion Status for HISD by Student Demographics, Class of 2008–2010

| | | 2008 | | | | 2009 | | | | 2010 | | | |
|--------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|
| | | Grad | GED | Cont | Drop | Grad | GED | Cont | Drop | Grad | GED | Cont | Drop |
| All Students | HISD | 68.2 | 0.7 | 12.4 | 18.7 | 70.0 | 0.9 | 13.2 | 15.8 | 74.3 | 0.7 | 12.3 | 12.6 |
| | STATE | 79.1 | 1.5 | 8.9 | 10.5 | 80.6 | 1.4 | 8.6 | 9.4 | 84.3 | 1.3 | 7.2 | 7.3 |
| African Am. | HISD | 68.0 | 0.5 | 11.6 | 20.0 | 68.4 | 1.0 | 12.8 | 17.8 | 73.7 | 0.7 | 11.1 | 14.4 |
| | STATE | 71.8 | 1.1 | 11.0 | 16.1 | 73.8 | 1.1 | 10.3 | 14.8 | 78.8 | 1.0 | 8.4 | 11.8 |
| Hispanic | HISD | 62.8 | 0.6 | 15.3 | 21.2 | 65.9 | 0.8 | 15.9 | 17.4 | 70.7 | 0.6 | 14.9 | 13.8 |
| | STATE | 70.8 | 1.5 | 13.3 | 14.4 | 73.5 | 1.4 | 12.7 | 12.4 | 78.8 | 1.3 | 10.3 | 9.6 |
| White | HISD | 84.7 | 1.7 | 4.7 | 8.9 | 87.4 | 1.4 | 5.2 | 6.0 | 87.9 | 1.8 | 5.1 | 5.2 |
| | STATE | 88.8 | 1.8 | 4.2 | 5.1 | 89.7 | 1.7 | 4.1 | 4.5 | 91.6 | 1.4 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Asian | HISD | 88.0 | 0.5 | 5.3 | 6.2 | 87.9 | 0.6 | 4.3 | 7.2 | 90.5 | 0.2 | 6.0 | 3.2 |
| | STATE | 91.2 | 0.3 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 92.4 | 0.3 | 4.3 | 3.0 | 93.8 | 0.3 | 3.5 | 2.3 |
| Eco. Disadv. | HISD | 65.0 | 0.6 | 14.5 | 19.9 | 74.6 | 0.6 | 11.2 | 13.6 | 76.0 | 0.4 | 12.7 | 10.9 |
| | STATE | 70.4 | 1.7 | 12.2 | 15.7 | 78.3 | 1.2 | 9.7 | 10.9 | 81.9 | 1.0 | 9.2 | 7.8 |

Note:

Grad = High School Graduate

GED = Received General Educational Development Certificate

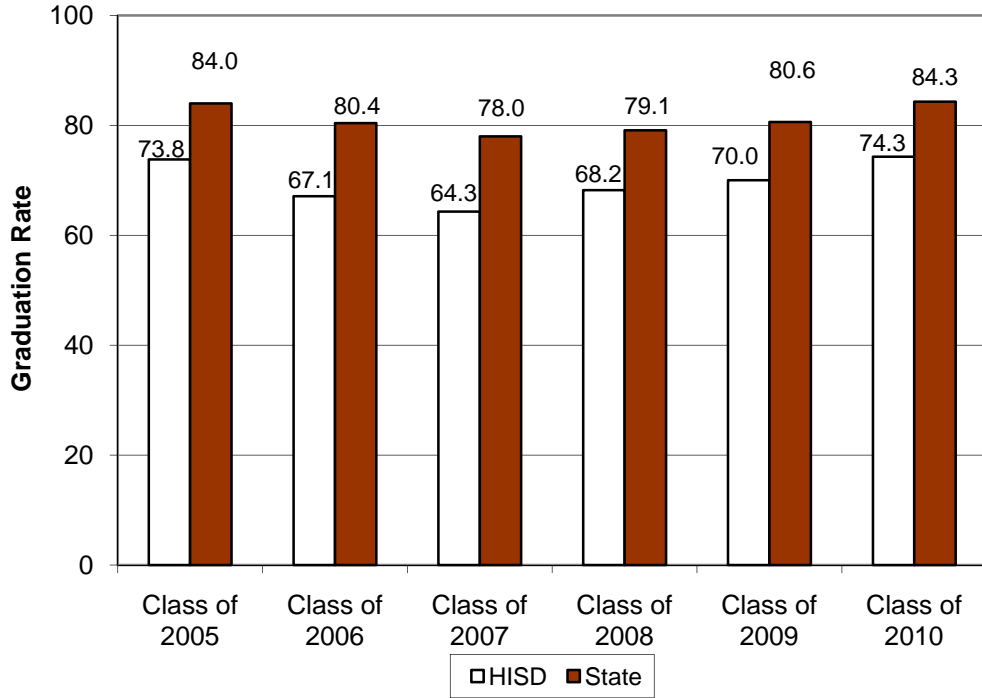
Cont = Still in school after four years

Drop = Dropout

$$\text{Longitudinal Dropout Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of students from the ninth grade cohort who dropped out before the end of twelfth grade}}{\text{Number of students in the 2006–2007 cohort}} \times 100$$

Source: Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010; Texas Education Agency, District Dropout and Completion Summary Tables 6/16/2011.

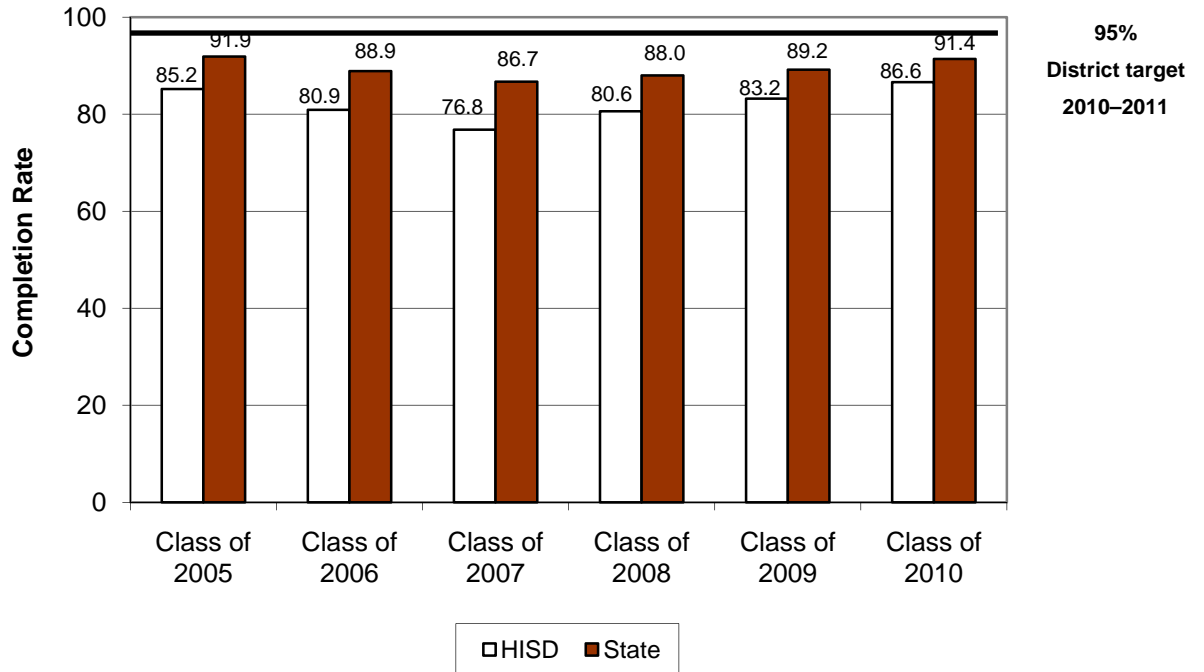
Figure 3: Four-Year Longitudinal Graduation for All Students in HISD and the State, Class of 2005–2010



Graduation Rate: Based on the ninth grade cohort, this shows the percentage who received their high-school diploma on time or earlier by the end of their twelfth-grade year.

Source: *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010*; Texas Education Agency, *District Dropout and Completion Summary Tables 6/16/2011*.

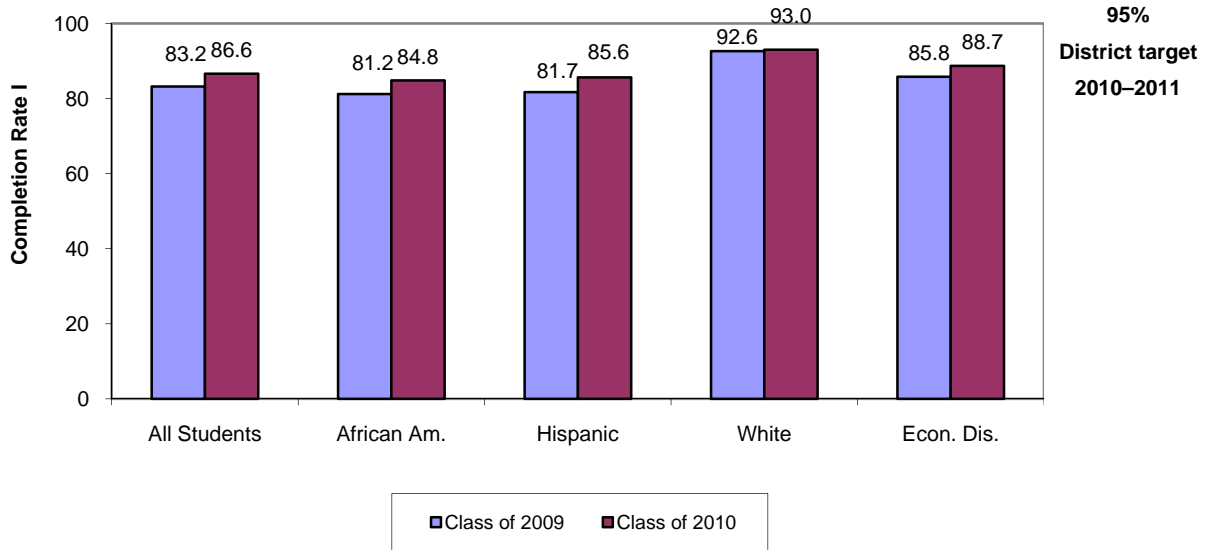
Figure 4: Longitudinal Completion Rate I* for All Students in HISD and the State, Class of 2005–2010



* Note: Completion Rate I includes graduates and continuers.

Source: Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010; Texas Education Agency, Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–10.

Figure 5: Four-Year Completion Rates for All Students and Student Groups in HISD, Class of 2009 and 2010



Note: Two completion-rate measures have been defined for Texas public-school accountability beginning in 2004. Completion Rate I includes graduates and continuing enrollment. Completion Rate I is used in determining campus and district accountability ratings. Completion Rate II includes students who received a GED and is used for rating alternative education campuses.

Completion Rate I formula:

$$\frac{\text{graduates} + \text{continuers}}{\text{graduates} + \text{continuers} + \text{GED recipients} + \text{dropouts}}$$

Table 3: HISD and State All Students and Student Groups 5-Year Graduation Rates: Class of 2009

| Student Group | HISD | State |
|------------------|-------|-------|
| All Students | 76.4% | 85.1% |
| African American | 73.9% | 78.8% |
| Hispanic | 73.9% | 80.0% |
| White | 90.2% | 92.1% |
| Asian | 90.1% | 94.7% |
| Economic. Disad. | 80.5% | 83.7% |

Source: Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009–2010; Texas Education Agency, District Dropout and Completion Summary Tables 6/16/2011.

Administrative Response:

Since 2007, the longitudinal dropout rate in HISD has decreased by 9.5 percentage points to 12.6%, while the graduation rate has increased a full 10 percentage points to 74.3%. While both rates are short of HISD and state goals, this progress is remarkable and mirrors statewide efforts to increase the number of students who graduate college- and career-ready. The causes of these positive trends lie in improvements in managing and reporting student data, and in programmatic efforts across the district. In terms of student data, significant improvements have been made in the way HISD staff monitor and track students who enter and leave the school system, improvements in the accuracy of the coding of “leavers” and students who move to other Texas school districts or who leave the state. The implementation of the “Cohort Calculator” tool allows campus staff to more accurately predict campus completion rates and to plan for strategic interventions. In addition, the work of Student Caseworkers in locating students and collaborating with campus and truancy court staff is a powerful method employed by HISD to specifically identify and target students who are at risk of dropping out, or who have already dropped out of HISD schools. Caseworkers resolve many data and coding issues for campus staff, thus empowering them to focus attention on student services.

District strategies to improve completion rates have met with success and continue to improve. The creation of Graduation Labs staffed by Graduation Coaches on high school campuses has dramatically increased the district’s ability to assist students in recovering lost credits. Graduation Coaches serve as front-line teachers and mentors, who assist students in overcoming both academic and social barriers to success. The use of the APEX Digital Learning Systems online curriculum to recover credits, obtain original credits, and to supplement classroom instruction has provided a rigorous digital curriculum to add to the multiple pathways to graduation that exist in HISD. The creation of the Twilight High School/Advanced Virtual Academy has also added an innovative pathway to the HISD menu of graduation options by providing a non-traditional high school setting, combined with a flexible schedule and digital curriculum options. These and other ongoing initiatives have provided significant momentum in the effort to reduce the dropout rate and increase the completion rate. District staff continues to strengthen district initiatives and to improve the supports that reduce barriers to student learning.