



## PRINCIPAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 5, 2014 | 7:30 a.m.

Hattie Mae White Administration Building, Room 1E01-02

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Dr. Grier welcomed the members of the Principal Advisory Committee and opened the floor for principals concerns:

A principal stated that the window to answer in iStation is too short for younger students. It is not enough time for a kindergarten student to respond.

Dr. Grier acknowledged the comment and expressed his concern regarding reading scores not going up. He stated that students cannot succeed without reading. He posted the question about implementation with fidelity to principals. Some principals stated that they are using iStation with fidelity however, they are not seeing results. They stated it is not engaging. It doesn't tell the student if they made a mistake. Dr. Grier clarified that iStation is a diagnose tool; it is not meant to be interactive or to move students. iStation is not to be the teacher. iStation is a tool that provides data from which teachers can differentiate and guide their instruction. A principal added that iStation is a tool for diagnose but still a teacher needs to complete the diagnose listening to the student for fluency.

Dr. Grier referenced to the fact that different schools are currently using different pedagogies which creates a difficult situation in terms of continuity in a district like ours where there is a high mobility rate. He said Academics will be bringing principals and teachers to focus group to find consensus on what to do about literacy. He stated that the District curriculum was revised by a third party and the response was that our curriculum is rigorous and aligned to STAAR. The question then is what is happening at the classroom level.

A principal stated that teachers need to plan around data and collaborate. There needs to be time in the schedule for PLC. He stated that teachers usually have descriptive lessons and they work in isolation. Another principal stated that iStation is a tool that helps teacher diagnose kids. It gives teachers information to plan lessons and interventions.

Dr. Grier posted the following question: "If your job is on the line, what would you do different? Do we know what to do different? This applies to all core subjects, not just reading" A principal responded that she would focus on lower grades. A lot of resources go to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up. More needs to be done at the K-2 levels.

A principal stated that every school is different. There needs to be enough help so that principals can focus on "school". Schools need social workers, counselors, psychology services. Schools need to be set up differently because they are different sizes and have different programs. Dr. Grier stated that each principal decides how to spend their resources. There is flexibility around school budgets to set up the structure each campus needs. Yes. Schools are different but approach can't be different because of mobility.

Dr. Grier asked principals their opinion regarding Neuhaus training. Principals agreed that it is good for students that are struggling. If the kids are doing ok it is not as useful. A principal stated that principals need to clarify their expectations to their staff. Neuhaus and iStation are not the curriculum. Teachers get confused what to use. There are many competing programs. A principal stated that curriculum is lengthy and at his campus they use PLC time to go through data to help teachers plan their lessons. Dr. Grier agreed that we need to help the teachers understand what needs to be taught.

A principal raised concern regarding special education self contain classes. Dr. Grier said that we will look in to where kids live and where kids are attending.

A principal inquired about School Wire and requested to be notified ahead of time so that they can plan their budgets. Dr. Grier agreed.



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Regarding Dual Language, principals stated that parents are excited. Dr. Grier stated that it will be implemented in PK-K and let the program grow a grade level each year. Principals requested more information to be better prepared to explain the program to parents; who are wondering why this is not offered in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades.

Dr. Grier asked about the principals' experience regarding early notification. They said that it helps knowing which teachers are not planning on coming back to the campus the next school year. They said it would be helpful to know which teachers have opted for early notification. Some might communicate to HR but not to the campus about it. Dr. Grier stated that HR will work on getting this list out of campuses. He added that if they know about an upcoming vacancy, it is very important that principals hire soon. Highly effective and ineffective teachers come from the same places. The difference is when they are hired. Teachers hired earlier tend to have higher performance. We need to fill positions by May 31<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Watson added that there are no experienced teachers available. We need to develop our teachers. The pool checks for minimum requirements. Principals need to check for a good match, a sample lesson plan, etc.

### ITEMS SUBMITTED

#### Academics– Dan Gohl

- SharePoint access for assistant principals – I delegate the DLA testing to my assistant principal who cannot access SharePoint. I have to download everything and forward it to her. This is a very inefficient way of doing business.

Response: We will ensure that all assistant principals that need access will gain access. Please send the name of your assistant principal or designee to: Dawn Oliver ([DOLIVER2@houstonisd.org](mailto:DOLIVER2@houstonisd.org)) and copy Nancy Gregory ([NGREGORY@houstonisd.org](mailto:NGREGORY@houstonisd.org)) and Michael Cardona ([MCARDON2@houstonisd.org](mailto:MCARDON2@houstonisd.org)).

- Test Materials Center Issue – When my testing coordinator attended training yesterday, the participants were not allowed to enter the training room until 2 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. She arrived 15 minutes early and there was a line around the corner in the hallway. The participants were required to stand in the hall until 12:28 p.m. for a 12:30 p.m. meeting. By the time everyone was able to get into the room and get settled, the meeting was late getting started (scheduled start time was 12:30 p.m.). This has happened on two previous occasions. Additionally, one of the APAs was very rude. She even referred to herself as the meeting “bouncer”. This isn't true for the other APAs who were very polite and helpful. The rude person is always this way at these trainings. If I knew who her superior is I would call that person but I cannot find out who's in charge.

Response: Student Assessment apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused. Due to the snow day on Tuesday when TELPAS training was initially scheduled, many campuses didn't receive an e-Train notice which stated to come in Friday in place of Tuesday's training. To ensure that those who signed up for the session had a seat due to limited space, the line became lengthy that Thursday afternoon. Additionally, we sincerely apologize for any rude behavior displayed by our staff member and have taken corrective actions to prevent such future occurrence. Please submit any Student Assessment related issues and concerns to Julia Amponsah-Gilder, Sr. Manager/District Test Coordinator or



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Dr. Leng Fritsche, Assistant Superintendent – Assessment & Analytics. We strive to ensure the best service is provided to all of our customers.

- TDS is reassigned - For next week please share my concern about my TDS being sent to a low performing school. While I understand that this was an emergency, we are now in testing prep season and I need her. My campus is small; I have no AP or Instructional Coordinator. I need my reading TDS so that our students have the best chance at success. I have inquired with my SSO and chief several times but never seem to get a definitive answer. I have heard that some TDS were already sent back to their schools and I want the same support for my students. There are teachers in the teaching pool that are certified and would probably accept a long-term sub position to get their feet in the door. Also, there are other campuses that are not at-risk like mine and that have more resources than me (I have not budget to hire any support) that could loan their TDS.

Response: A number of Teacher Development Specialists, Curriculum Specialists, Special Education Program Specialists, and Multilingual Specialists have been assigned to provide support on elementary campuses, as substitute teachers, where there is an ongoing investigation due to testing irregularities. Academic Services is well aware of the challenge this provides to campuses in need of this valuable support. Because this is an ongoing investigation there is no definitive date as to when TDS will be returning to their assigned campuses. The district is continuing to explore solutions and alternatives in order for TDS to return to their campuses as soon as possible. Academic Services will provide updates to campus leaders that have been impacted as solutions are determined and/or when TDS will be returning to their assigned campuses.

### **Business Operations - Leo Bobadilla**

- Apparently HISD is eliminating the Quality Assurance Analyst position (facility scheduling and planning). Stanley Richardson, my guy regularly visits my campus and has assisted me when I have needed help whether it be outstanding work orders, shoddy workmanship etc. I am very disappointed that the liaison between us and management is being eliminated. He is the only person I see on a regular basis that makes things happen.

Response: No final decisions have been made regarding positions.

### **Human Resources - Rodney Watson**

- PeopleSoft codes – Some of the codes we use have changed. No one ever informs us of these changes when we try to use the code we've used all year (i.e.: We use one of our parents to do tech work for us or to assist in the Library. Going back to last year we've used the PeopleSoft code DXPA2. Now we can't yet there was no information about any change sent to us.)

Response: There have not been changes to any TRC in the upgrade from PS 8.8 to PS 9.1. Some old TRC's that have not been used for years were made inactive. Please note that this TRC is limited to certain reporting groups and another TRC may need to be used if



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DXPA2 is not in the group for the employee being reported. If problems persist, please contact the payroll department.

### Information Technology - Lenny Schad

- Why are schools expected to pay for Schoolwires? \$1020 was taken out of 11-6399 for Reimburse IT for Schoolwires and Principals were not notified. Decentralized budgets require that we have a complete understanding of our expenses are able to make choices when it comes to spending.

Response: During the 2012-2013 school year, all schools received training and created websites in our district-supported content management system, SchoolWires. During that transition, HISD covered the cost of web hosting and support for individual school websites at 100 percent. Historically, this expense had been associated with the individual school's budget.

With all schools now functional in SchoolWires, the cost of hosting school websites will return to the schools' budgets. Because we are all using the same CMS, schools will receive a discounted annual cost ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,100. This will be charged to the school budget during the month of January.

HISD will continue to provide technical support and open labs for SchoolWires.

Should you have any questions regarding this or any other budget concerns, please contact your school budget analyst.

- There has been a big push in central office to support our schools. I cannot say that this is the current situation. My staff has reported to me that when they have called with questions or needed assistance, the response they receive is condescending and at times rude. There are so many responsibilities for campuses and my hope is that we continue to be a team and support one another. I would like to know if there will be a survey done this year about central office support departments? It seems that when they were instituted in the past, there was an effort to be more service oriented.

Response: The district will be conducting the "Your Voice" customer satisfaction survey again this school year in May. When Campus Administrators (e.g. Principals, Asst. Principals, Deans, etc.) receive their survey, as was the case last year, there will be an opportunity to provide feedback on specific central service departments.

Customer Service is the focal point of the Information Technology department. If your interaction with IT (with the service desk, field technician, etc.) is not handled to your satisfaction, we would like to hear from you. Please contact, Preeti Burns, Director IT Customer Services or the Service Desk at 713-892-7378.

- Plethora of SharePoint emails – I received 73 email notifications from the automated SharePoint system beginning January 21 through yesterday. Why can't they send one email telling us to check our SharePoint site with a list of all of the items rather than sending 73?



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Response: The automated SharePoint emails (i.e. alerts) are managed by the individuals providing the SharePoint content. It is suggested to contact the owners of the content to provide feedback to address the frequency of the emails.

- Technology issues:

- Apple server for schools – We want to purchase an Apple server for our school but are told that it is a security risk. We have had IT professionals from industry look at our system to advise us and they assure us that it is NOT a security risk. With the latest operating system, Apple has made the server essential in a distributed network.

Response: Apple has recently stopped building physical traditional servers, and this is the platform that we cannot support. The MAC OS system does present security holes and does have inherent risks. However the server OS is still available for schools to load on their desktops to manage devices.

- Apple's Volume Purchasing Program (VPP) - Apple has this for education so you can get a discount on the iPad apps. We were told that our District Technology Department has a problem with Apple's Software License and won't allow it. As we purchase more iPads for student use, this becomes a problem.

Response: The Technology Department does not have problem with the Volume Purchase Program and has been an advocate for pursuing this program. The process is currently being reviewed in our Legal department and Apple for a contract.

- Mac issues with passwords and proxies - There is a problem on all Macs (and some PC's) where a box pops up and you have to enter the username and password over and over for 5 (at last count) different proxies, depending on which one you are routed through. The computer does not retain the information and it makes it very difficult for the kids, especially for the younger ones who constantly need the teacher to help them. It is typical to have to enter the username and password 3 different times before you can even load one web page.

Response: Please see below

- Mac issues with Google and some websites - There is a problem on the Macs where you get an Untrusted warning when going to Google or Gmail. When you accept (no less than 5 different things you have to know to click) it does not download a certificate so this happens over and over again. The end results vary depending on which proxy you are being routed through.

The vast majority of Apple pages is inexplicably rerouted to nowhere and time out. This makes it difficult when I am trying to troubleshoot a mac problem. There are many other websites this happens with also.

Response: The proprietary configuration utilized by Apple does not integrate easily into the district's environment. Therefore, challenges can be expected when connecting to the HISD network (i.e. user security, servers, applications purchasing, etc.) For example,





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Apple does not pass user credentials seamlessly to subsequent applications so users are prompted multiple times to distinguish between adult users and students. The district is working on an ongoing basis with Apple to resolve these various issues while maintaining our CIPA compliance.

I opened a ticket back in October. Technology sent someone out who confirmed it. We are in a loop where they tell me the problem is solved, and I write back saying that it isn't fixed, and they write back that it is, etc.

Response: This is a perfect example of a time to escalate the request to either the Service Desk manager 713-892-7378 or Preeti Burns, Director IT Customer Services. We will be happy to research the issue and follow through with you to make sure the issue is resolved before the ticket is closed.

### Student Support - Mark Smith

- Why is Good Friday an excused absence for students when teachers have to use a vacation day or personal business day?

Response: Good Friday is now a working day (make-up day). Any employee requesting time off on a working day should submit a request identifying the reason and the leave bank. It is up to the campus leadership to approve any requests. If an employee takes the day off and does not have any leave time they will not be paid.

Students must be marked absent whenever they are not in attendance at school. They are either excused or unexcused. Religious holidays are excused absences for students.

There is no correlation between student attendance policies and teacher leave policies. Both are covered by the following policies:

This is from DEC(LEGAL) for employees:

The District shall reasonably accommodate an employee's request to be absent from duty in order to participate in religious observances and practices, so long as it does not cause undue hardship on the conduct of District business. Such absence shall be without pay unless applicable paid leave is available. 42 U.S.C. 2000e(j), 2000e-2(a); Ansonia Bd. of Educ. v. Philbrook, 479 U.S. 60 (1986); Pinsker v. Joint Dist. No. 28J of Adams and Arapahoe Counties, 735 F.2d 388 (10th Cir. 1984)

This is from FEC(LOCAL) for students:

1. All absences shall be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed satisfactorily, absences for the following reasons shall be considered days of attendance for this purpose:
  - a. Religious holy days;
  - b. Required court appearances;
  - c. Activities related to obtaining U.S. citizenship;
  - d. Serving as an election clerk;
  - e. Visiting an institution of higher education [see FEA]; and



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f. Health-care appointments.