



PRINCIPAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 15, 2014 | 7:30 a.m.

Hattie Mae White Administration Building, Room 1E01-02

Dr. Andrew Houlihan welcomed the members of the Principal Advisory Committee. He provided update in big items coming up and reflection points:

- **Race to the top:** the grant will help secondary school transformation. Not only high schools but also feeder schools will be impacted
- **Literacy:** The program will be evaluated and revamped. Dr. Houlihan encouraged to reflect on the first semester and to revisit with leadership team to ensure strategies are working as you think of the rest of the year.
- **Goal Settings for Students:** Helping them keep focus (set and track accomplishments).
- **Ownership of Data:** Campus staff should know how the students are doing. Teachers need to understand and align their efforts to make an impact on the students.
- **Vertical Alignment:** it is a best practice Dr. Houlihan is recommending. He encourages High schools to talk to their feeder and Middle schools to their feeder Elementary to discuss curriculum, identify gaps, increase collaboration and alignment to benefit our students.
- **Bench Strength:** how are principals working with their leadership teams? How do you empower them to develop capacity?

Dr. Houlihan opened the floor for principals concerns:

A principal expressed concerns about A&D: struggle between leadership groups. Dr. Houlihan stated that campuses need to develop a culture where teachers understand the purpose of A&D. He encouraged principals to be proactive, to have conversations with SDMC, to have strategies of development in place, to have teachers collaborating, etc. A principal shared that PPA is perceived as termination. Once teachers understand it is about growth and best practices to enhance instruction, the attitude at the campus changed. Dr. Watson added that how we use and how we communicate matters. A&D is a tool. PPA is a form for development. He encouraged principals to foster culture of development, particularly around first year teachers.

A principal expressed concerns regarding turnover in HR partner. Dr. Watson stated that his department is looking at career path to address this issue. He also mentioned that they are considering changing the model to one contact in HR per campus to navigate recruitment, appraisal, compensations, etc.

A principal mentioned EdPlan training and suggested collaboration with campus plus academics and IT to see what is needed in the field. Dr. Gohl stated that we have come long way to improve glitches. Campus Online is not available anymore. His department will continue to provide training. Past training had no attendance. He also stated to let his department know about what reports are needed from EdPlan. Regarding reading initiative, he also stated that guidance might not apply to your campus; you need to adjust without changing the intent of the program.

Communications was asked about their response, which talks about how to interact with the department and wonder if the redbook has been updated. Ms. Davila stated they will check.



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Principals asked about the Principal Meeting Agenda to be sent prior to the meeting day. Dr. Houlihan stated that the intention was to send the agenda the Monday before the meeting so that principals can plan their day accordingly.

Finally, there was a question about social studies and science curriculum in middle school. Teachers are following guidance and no growth is shown; which raises the question about alignment between curriculum and expectations. Dr. Gohl stated that his department will work on this.

ITEMS SUBMITTED

Academics - Daniel Gohl

- Lead teacher program: This year, there has been little communication between the curriculum departments and campus identified lead teachers. In the past, this program has linked valuable information between curriculum and campus teachers. This year, teachers have not received emails about upcoming meetings, and meetings have been canceled with little to no notice.

Response: Elementary Curriculum supports schools with a content-area lead teacher program. Each year principals are asked to identify a lead teacher for specified content areas (see 8/19/13 Academic Services memo), and the Curriculum managers arrange a series of five lead teacher meetings during the school year. The 2013-2014 schedule of meetings is posted on HISD eLearn and the Curriculum Department web page. The meetings focus on rigorous, standards-based instruction and campus curriculum implementation. Lead teachers, as content-area liaisons between schools and the Curriculum Department, also receive ongoing content-related communication and professional learning to be shared with campus colleagues in support of effective instruction at the lead teacher meetings and through email distribution lists and digital professional collaboration sites such as Edmodo.

The Curriculum managers have continued to communicate with identified lead teachers throughout the year, including the use of emails and eTRAIN notices about upcoming meetings. In some cases, schools have not submitted the name of a lead teacher, in which case personal communication with a lead teacher is not possible. However, managers have tried to reach out to schools that did not submit the name of a lead teacher. Also, the meeting schedule and eTRAIN registration for all the lead teacher meetings are posted online.

Two recent lead teacher meetings were cancelled because of temporary Curriculum Department staff reassignments: the ESL meeting on December 3 (CU2377) and the Social Studies meetings on January 8-9 (CU1186). Both the ESL curriculum specialist and the Social Studies curriculum manager have been temporarily assigned to Jefferson Elementary as teachers, and therefore they were unable to prepare and conduct these recent meetings. A substitute presenter for the ESL meeting had been arranged with PSD, but an unexpected illness forced a last-minute cancellation. In both cases, notices were sent out by email and through eTRAIN.



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Business Operations - Leo Bobadilla

- Principal signature required for all completed Maintenance work - Maintenance is now requiring that principals sign off on the maintenance work order requests once they are completed. I'm in an old building and we always have maintenance issues so I am being stopped quite frequently to sign off on these. The plant operators used to sign off. Can we find out why that has changed? Is anyone else having this issue? I am submitting the issue to my area manager to see what her response is.

Response: The procedure of allowing Plant Operators to sign off on work orders was changed to ensure that the principal is satisfied with maintenance work done at his/her campus. The new procedure is to have the Principal **or his/her designee** sign off on the work performed. If the principal so chooses, he/she may select another campus staff member, including the Plant Operator, as his/her designee.

- HISD Police department: I was informed by the police department that they are short staffed; however, if I wanted to hire them with overtime they could assist me on my campus. Shouldn't they be providing support?

Response: The HISD Police Department has units available for assistance such as:

- Safe School Unit - This unit will visit the school and assist with developing a traffic plan
- "Close Patrol" - Officers can patrol and check on school event locations on an available basis during their uncommitted time.

Additionally, if a principal wants a full time officer present, the police department will request officers to cover the assignment on an overtime basis which is funded through the requestor's budget. Please be advised that this is not a guarantee that someone will be able to work the assignment due to the limited number of officers available to cover the assignments.

If you have any questions or specific information is needed about police coverage at any events, please call the police department at 713-842-3715 and ask for a Lieutenant or Chief Mock directly.

Communications - Tiffany Davila

- Poor communication: Example: Principals are always the last to know. I was looking at the HISD Daily Press Highlights email and saw one that caught my attention with this headline, "Local 2's questions lead to lockdown policy changes within HISD". I guess they'll get around to telling principals about policy changes like this at some point. It would seem that a policy change impacting something as important as lockdown procedures would have been immediately broadcast to principals. Why not?

Response: HISD's communications team is working hard to improve the way it communicates with principals, understanding that it's critically important for our principals to have important information about the district or their school before the general public whenever possible. We are also working hard to support principals during crisis situations. Over the past two months, the team has written over fifty school-level communications (e.g.



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call-outs, letters to parents, website banners, etc.) to assist principals so they can focus on more urgent items. In the mentioned case of the lockdowns, the media headline is misleading. Here is the district statement that was provided to media at the time:

"The safety and security of our students is our top priority at HISD. As such, we understand that parents and communities need to be kept well informed of any potential threats on or near our campuses. In the case of school lockdowns, our practice is to reach out quickly to affected schools and offer full communications support to principals. And while our local news services play a very important role in our communities, we feel that the direct contact from the principal to parents is the most important and first communication mode that the district should use.

Once parents have been notified of the lockdown or threat, HISD communications immediately thereafter will respond to media requests. Again, we understand the important role that media can play in keeping our community informed. As communications evolve and the speed that news travels increases, media partners are becoming ever more important to school district communications. Moving forward, HISD will look for additional opportunities to partner with local media to keep the community better informed."

As you can see, there is no mention of a "policy change" in the statement. Rather HISD's communications team agreed to confirm lockdowns or threats with members of the media immediately after supporting our schools with parent communications. Previously, lockdowns were generally not confirmed, in order to avoid generating increased media activity that could be disruptive to the school (e.g. media crews on-site, media helicopters, media calls to the school). Naturally, students having cell phones in the classroom has increased the speed of communications in general, and we have to take this into account when situations are unfolding. With these changes, we will continue to evaluate how and when we confirm information with the media related to school lockdowns. Our primary focus, though, will always be to support our principals in managing lockdowns or any other developing situations in our schools.

Finance – Ken Huewitt

- "Past Due Reminder" notice sent moments after task was sent to principals - We received an email regarding the Approva re-certification. Two minutes later, we received another email with this heading (copied verbatim with the same red, bold, all caps):

***** PAST DUE REMINDER *****

How can something be "Past Due" two minutes after the first email was sent? Most of us pride ourselves in making sure we do things in a timely manner. This is beyond asinine and is insulting given the massive amount of work we principals have on our plates at this time of year (November 18). There needs to be a universal apology sent out to principals. This was requested from one principal but never acknowledged.

Response: I sincerely regret the error occurred. I understand from my staff that the error was due to a configuration glitch in the Certification Manager application. As a result of this issue, and in order to prevent this from happening in the future, new procedures are being put in place. I recognize your efforts to timely complete request from Central Office and



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thank you for bringing this issue to our attention. You can be assured this issue has been resolved.

Human Resources - Rodney Watson

The three questions below are all related to the School Leader Appraisal System. This system was created by the Schools Office. Human Resources (Human Capital Accountability and Academic Services (Research and Accountability) provide guidance to ensure that the metrics developed by the Schools Office are within the guidelines of the federal grants that pertain to school leader appraisal. In addition, Research and Accountability currently provides support to the Schools Office by populating the data needed for the metrics selected by the Schools Office as part of this appraisal system.

- Please remind departments of the procedures of going through Academic Services. We are enculturated to know that anything important comes out as a memo through Academic Services. The request regarding the School Leader Scorecards did not go through this and it has something that is due. We either have policies or we don't.

Response: The Human Resources Department is well aware of the Academic Services Memorandum process and uses it routinely. In regards to this particular incident, the Schools Office informed Human Resources as to when the information and the scorecards were to be communicated to school leaders. Unfortunately, the ASPIRE Award notifications were released before that date and school leaders began to direct questions to the Schools Office and to Human Resources. It was the decision of the Chief School Support Officer and the Chief Human Resources Officer to publish the School Leader Appraisal scorecards as soon as possible and to not wait for an Academic Services Memorandum in order to address the questions of school leaders in a timely manner.

- Principal and AP scores cards: will we be able to appeal them, especially our AP's whose scores were hurt because they didn't get credit for McRel?

Response: The School Leader Appraisal System used for school leaders is patterned after the Board Monitoring System used for the Superintendent of Schools. The calculation of the scorecard metrics, as with the Board Monitoring System metrics, are based on data provided from multiple sources. The metrics are calculated and populated. There is no appeal of the calculated metrics.

The Schools Office reviewed the 2012-2013 metrics for the School Leader Appraisal System and decided to remove the only two metrics that were not based on quantitative data from the 2013-2014 system to bring the system into even closer alignment with the Board Monitoring System.

The assistant principals'/deans' scores were not hurt by the removal of the McREL indicators. The weights were redistributed and calculated. In several cases assistant principals'/deans' benefitted from this redistribution. The manner in which the assistant principals'/deans' scorecards were calculated for 2012-2013 is the way all school leader scorecards will be calculated for the 2013-2014 school year.



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- Principal's Scorecard: I would like a training to determine how the percentages were calculated. It appears easy enough, but my calculations do not result in the same answer.

Response: Assistant Superintendent of Research and Accountability Carla Stevens has offered the following dates and times to provide training on the calculation of the School Leader Appraisal scorecards. Ruth Yonamine Bobba will coordinate with this training.

- ASPIRE: The high standard for receiving ASPIRE bonus pay has become a demoralizing initiative. The afternoon ASPIRE award information was released, the majority of my staff came into my office. Obviously, those teachers with very high composite scores received a big bonus, while the majority of the teachers received nothing. Achievement scores were very good, but we know that is only a small part of the formula. It is important for the "front line" employees to understand the formula so that targeted efforts can be made to improve the results. Everyone has received several opportunities to for ASPIRE Award training, but in the end, no one can explain how the formula works, or what factors in the formula need to be targeted to improve performance. In all fairness to the hard work that teachers do, training should be provided with this in mind.

Response:

- 1) "The high standard for receiving ASPIRE bonus pay has become a demoralizing initiative." -- **12,571 employees received ASPIRE Awards based on the standards set for the program.**
- 2) "Those teachers with very high composite scores received a big bonus, while the majority of the teachers received nothing." -- **Each teacher with a composite score of 1.00 – 1.99 received \$5,000. Each teacher with a composite score of 2.00+ received \$10,000. There is no limit on the number of teachers with EVAAS who can receive an award based on composite growth – any teacher who meets the CGI goals gets an ASPIRE Award.**
- 3) "Achievement scores were very good, but we know that is only a small part of the formula." : - The Individual Performance ASPIRE award for teachers is based solely on the teacher's own value-added composite cumulative gain index (cgi). Achievement scores are different from value-added scores; typically represented by passing rates or percent of students meeting a standard, these scores do not factor into value-added results.
- 4) "It is important for the "front line" employees to understand the formula so that targeted efforts can be made to improve the results." : - In terms of the "formula" for the ASPIRE award, it will take a simple training session to show how teachers can get awarded under the 3 different strands adding up to an ASPIRE award. However, asking for a formula for value-added analysis is a different matter. Since value-added results are affected by many factors, it will not be easy to "teach the formula" and knowing the formula will not necessarily provide a direct link to improved instruction because of the complexity of the statistical processes used in value-added analysis. Rather than focusing on "teaching the formula" we should aim to help everyone on the campus learn how to use the value-added data to improve instruction.
- 5) "Everyone has received several opportunities to for ASPIRE Award training, but in the end, no one can explain how the formula works, or what factors in the formula need to



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be targeted to improve performance.” : - Again, it seems that ASPIRE is being confused with value-added analysis. ASPIRE award training is easy and can be done quickly. We agree that learning how to use the results of value-added analysis to improve instruction is important **and the district will be looking into making value-added training more accessible and effective.**

6) “In all fairness to the hard work that teachers do, training should be provided with this in mind.” – **We are committed to conducting more training on EVAAS in an effort to increase awareness and understanding of the value-added concept, its measurement and application.**

- Why does it take such an excruciatingly long time to hire a December graduate who can start on the first day we meet in January? In the past we have been able to do this. Why can we not now?”

Response: When an offer has been extended to an upcoming December graduate, the following needs to occur:

- They need to graduate;
- They need to take the exam;
- The university needs to recommend the candidate (at times a lengthy wait time);
- We are then able to invite them to a staffing session, perform background check, etc. to get them hired.

Information Technology - Lenny Schad

- PeopleSoft: The HELP desk can't assist with some of the issues with PeopleSoft and the response we get is unacceptable. For example, a principal sent in this HELP request via email: “I am trying to run an Authorized Position Report from PeopleSoft. With Internet Explorer 9, I get a symbol that looks like a hand with a pointed finger and an exclamation point in it. It appears for a few minutes and then disappears. How do I run this report as an Excel file?”

This is the response the principal received with a notification that the ticket was resolved: “We at the Helpdesk do not have access to any reports that Principal's (actual quote; note the poor grammar) have access.” This is an unacceptable response. No effort was made to resolve the problem the principal was experiencing. At the very least there should be a step-by-step user's guide for principals to access for this and all other systems we utilize.

Response: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Although it is true that it is hard to support systems that we do not have access to, there are many things that we could have done to assist:

- We can remote in to the customer's computer to see what they are seeing,
- We can escalate to someone else in the IT department that can assist,
- and to your point we can point them to resources where they can get the answer.

There are SO many things that could have been done here to help this Principal.



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Rest assured that we will provide some additional guidance to the service desk representatives on how to handle situations like this in the future.

- We are still experiencing some difficulties with PeopleSoft. I don't know what the actual problem is but my static group doesn't always appear when it's time to approve payroll yet it is inputted correctly. It's there whenever I have to approve late pay. Just this morning, I had a TEACHER come to me with her check stub stating that is she an hourly employee. When I contacted my HR person, she said that she was paid correctly but her title is incorrect on her stub. I know that all these things are supposed to be in sync and I don't want any issues later with TADS or ASPIRE.

Response: Post go-live of the PeopleSoft 9.1 upgrade, there were various issues recognized and addressed as it relates to static groups. Currently, we are not aware of any outstanding items. Keep in mind that the "timeliness" of entering time is very important along with being "inputted correctly". If time is entered prior to the cut-off for regular pay, it will appear for approval. If entered after, the time will appear for approval in late pay.

Other data correcting efforts were completed by HR along with post go-live issues. One effort in particular was related to the portal and check information being displayed there. Portal issues have since been resolved as well with data displaying accurately. The application is in sync per confirmation from HR and Payroll business owners.

School Support - Drew Houlihan

The Office of School Support has heard a lot of questions regarding the Principals' scorecards. We wanted to state that we are hearing the comments and as a response, we will collaborate with other departments to create a training to explain the 2013-2014 scorecards. In addition, please expect a short presentation during the School Office breakout sessions regarding the 2013-2014 scorecards main changes.

Student Support - Mark Smith

- Summer School - I'd like summer school information as quickly as possible. We didn't get this until May last year. Teachers and others need to know how to plan their summers, and since we do summer school ever year, it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that it is coming. In fact, it would be nice to get a schedule of all summer trainings and events prior to Spring Break.

Response: Summer school plans (dates, trainings, curriculum, etc.) are being finalized and details will be released in February. At the beginning of the school year, forty-percent (40%) Summer School set-aside budgets were reserved in preparation for the 2014 summer school program. There will be no additional funding sources available beyond the current allocations. The Department of External Funding will be providing each Title I campus with a spreadsheet indicating the 40% summer school set-aside amount (CC1). These funds will be available to campuses to address intervention needs prior to summer school and thus potentially reducing the number of students qualifying for summer school.