Transforming HISD: Setting a Strategic Direction for the District

Help HISD refine its vision and goals.

HISD is working to develop a long-term strategic plan for the district that will build upon the Declaration of Beliefs and Visions and provide a road map for our future. The purpose of this strategic direction is to provide clarity around our priorities of Placing an Effective Teacher in Every Classroom, Supporting the Principal as the CEO, Developing Central Standards, Ensuring Accountability, and Cultivating Stakeholder Commitment. We believe these key, overarching strategies will help HISD achieve its goals and become the best school district in America.

To develop our long-term Strategic Direction, we are working with Apollo Consulting Group in a six-month effort that started in February, 2010 and will culminate in August with the release of the final plan. The first step involved a diagnostic research effort to understand the current state of the district across a number of critical dimensions such as student achievement and organizational effectiveness. It also included analyzing other transformation efforts within HISD and across the country to ensure that the best ideas are being considered in our planning process. We have also started to gather input from members of Team HISD and we will continue to do so over the next several months.

True transformation does not happen overnight and cannot happen without the participation of every member of Team HISD. For this process to be authentic and meaningful, HISD needs all of you -parents, teachers, principals, students, the business community, nonprofit partners, and broader community members- to be fully engaged.

How can you get involved?
We have started to provide multiple opportunities for you to lend your voice through different channels and we will continue to do so over the next several months. We encourage you to regularly check our calendar to find details about upcoming meetings and events.

How can you participate right now?
Please take time to provide your input on the opportunities you see for HISD going forward by using the comments tool below. You can also send us your comments to strategicdirection@houstonisd.org

Please note: Questions included in comments will not be responded to individually. All comments are welcome and will be taken into consideration, but we will not be able to address every concern. Also, comments that are off topic or that contain offensive language or are considered offensive will be removed.

Extremely Concerned Parent! says: Monday, August 23, 2010 3:06:20 PM
I do agree the district needs a new direction but in the past school year I have had many issues with teachers and the school principal, and have not been able to make any head way in the proper education of my 2 special education children. It seems that the goal of “our” school is to ignore the needs of the children who need the most help (not only mine) and only focus on the ones who are not struggling just to get higher marks and bonuses (it's no big secret.) The only Resource teacher at “our” school was removed and one “inclusion teacher” has been left to handle all the Special Education students. In the past 2 years this “inclusion teacher” has not kept the student ARD records in compliance (I only know of my childs records, but I am sure it's an isolated case.) . Now I have 1 Special Education child at this school and proper accommodations ARE NOT available for him. Something has to be done to protect these students... these CHILDREN... from such unjust actions of staff... and this is just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, of the problems and issues my children have had to endure at "our" school.

Strategic direction? says: Monday, August 23, 2010 11:15:00 AM
I like some of the new changes to the district. However, the ones the affect teachers directly are going to take time getting used to. What would I like to know is... do teacher contracts matter any more? This new formula to critique and evaluate teachers seems unfair at best. If everyone is following a script there should be no ineffective teachers. With this new IPDI, signing a teacher contract seems unwarranted. A highly effective teacher and principal is crucial. Can we also have a highly effective superintendent? It's always easy in admin. to sit behind a desk and make sometimes absurd procedures when they are the ones who are not directly affected. This new school board and superin. are making our jobs harder well not necessarily harder but it looks like they are looking for the slightest thing to put you in an ineffective category. Is there a way to rate the superin. and place him into categories? What I would like actually like to see is Grier or any board member go in a classroom and show me what a highly effective teacher LOOKS LIKE while doing their job!!!
**Frustrated teacher** says: Monday, August 16, 2010 11:37:06 AM
How is Dr. Griers planning to have an effective teacher in every classroom when he's cutting off every possibility to use our imagination. Now, we have to go by the book. Experienced teachers know that many times we have to use other resources (some not conventional ) and improvise to help the low students. Now, everybody has to go un the same page. Don;t you know we are humans and different from one to the other? I have been congratulated and identified as a "highly effective teacher", 96% of my students pass the TAKs and grow consistently. But, now I'll have to do what someone wants me to do; like a robot.

**Recommendation** says: Sunday, August 15, 2010 3:31:25 PM
Congratulations Team HISD for doing a fantastic job of consistently moving forward. With so many people on the team I commend you for actualizing a real plan of action that resonates in addressing authentic issues as it relates to transforming a school district. If you have not already considered The Relationship Fitness Center as a part of your strategic team. I highly recommend you do. Every part of the plan success will rely on the strengths of the relationships among all parties in the district. The Relationship Fitness Center is on the cutting edge of working with organizations in assisting them with re-tooling their relationship skills tool box so that extra-ordinary results can be achieved. Give them a call. We did and it was the best investment ever. They are local in Houston. 713.278.1940.

**Special Education** says: Sunday, August 15, 2010 12:50:58 PM
I am very frustrated at the way the district is heading in regards to servicing children who have learning disabilities. I feel that cutting the budget has made it even harder for Special Ed teachers to figure out what is going on. We were supposed to be receiving our stimulus money and WE never got it. That is federal money that was giving to each school not for the superintendent to decide who gets it and who doesn't. It bothers me that my resource children are not getting the materials they need to help them be succeedfull!

**District Observer** says: Monday, August 09, 2010 7:27:32 PM
Reports are the person who will be replacing departing HS SIO Barbara Thornhill is Debrah Barham, a retired employee, SIO from....... you guessed it Guilford County. Shame shame Greg Meyers and the HISD board for allowing this blatant staffing of HISD positions with Terry Griers cronies! You are worse then our friends on Wall St! Good people in Houston and in Texas need jobs also!

**raymond** says: Monday, August 09, 2010 8:38:51 PM
Where is Barbara really going? Maybe Barbara is going to Kipp Academy or moving out of state. Shame - shame on the HISD board for allowing the mistreatment of HISD employees who are also taxpapers. To get a job in HISD, you must be (TFA) "Teach for America" or younger than 40 years old. younger.

**Upset Parent** says: Sunday, August 08, 2010 2:21:14 PM
Is it stratigically correct that a child memorized the taks released test? My child told me that this was the strategy to Ace the TAKs according to the teacher. Also I switch my preschooler to Kipp because the Pre-K teacher she had yelled to the top of her lungs according to my child and my child refuse to go back to this particular school; please give some kind of sensitivity training to deal with little people( children).

**raymond** says: Monday, August 09, 2010 8:45:28 PM
That would be a great move to see some of the well experienced and respected principals be sent to some of the challenging campus. Exchange some principals from central and place them in the south to share their expertise.

**Concerned Parent** says: Sunday, August 08, 2010 12:33:51 AM
Will any of the 20-30 year exemplary principals that have been at the same school be replaced by younger principals. And those well experienced and respected principals can be sent to the Apollo 20 schools. In order to share the knowledge.

**Concerned Employee** says: Friday, August 06, 2010 6:26:34 PM
The superintendent and our chief financial officer need to make sure that Board Policy is being adhered to in regard to employee in-district travel reimbursement. With the reorganization employees are being herded all over the district from the field offices to HMW to complete their work. This has created quite a burden in terms of increased auto expenses. The district has redefined my job, given me a new office, demoted me one pay grade and asked me to drive all over Houston to fulfill my job responsibilities. Board Policy DEE(LOCAL)- X and Board POLICY DEE (Regulation) Compensation and Expense Reimbursement. If you ask me to use my employee owned vehicle to travel to multiple locations in the district to complete work for you. which I will gladly do, you must pay me mileage.

When supervisors are asked to sign the properly filled out travel reimbursement forms, the supervisors refuse to sign the forms. They are changing our work locations each week at their whim.

One fears the loss of their postion when bringing this topic up.

**Zulema Terrones** says: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:46:19 AM
Ahora EN ESTE ANO ESCOLAR YA NO VA ESTAR LA MAESTRA DE PPCD Y LA VA HA REMPLAZAR CON UNA CO-TEACHER , CREO QUE EXISTE UNA GRAN DIFERENCIA

HA UNA MAESTRA PREPARADA PARA NINOS DE EDUCACION ESPECIAL CERTIFICADA HA UNA CO-TEACHER NO LO PUEDO CREER POR FAVOR MANDEN HA ALGUIEN QUE TENGA ESA ESPECIALIZACION EN EDUCACION ESPECIAL NO SABEN EL RETROCESO QUE SERA PARA NUESTROS NINOS ESTE ES UNO DE TANTOS CAMBIOS TERRIBLES QUE TOMO LA ESCUELA BONNER SÓLO PARA CURBR EL ESPACIO DE UNA MAESTRA Y TENGO UNA JUNTA DE ARD Y PEDIRE UNA MAESTRA Y VERE UNA VEZ MAS QUE NO HAY AYUDA Y MUY POSIBLEMENTE COMO EN OTRAS VECES NO VA HA ESTAR PRESENTE LA PERSONACION POR FAVOR PISO ME AYUDEN CON SUS ORACION PARA QUE ESTO SE PUEDA SOLUCIONAR GRACIAS

zulema terrones says: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:30:32 AM

Por favor se ha hablado de la seguridad para nuestros hijos y la escuela bonner elementary no me ha podido ayudar ha poner un asistente en el bus de educacion especial, el Sr. Samuel Sarabia muy amablemente escucho el incidente que le paso ami hijo ya que no lo bajaron donde lo tenian que bajar, estado sin saber de el por una hora, si se comunicaron de la oficina de region 4 y gracias a la intervencion de el pude hablar con la Sra. Hefty encargada de educacion especial dandome malas noticias que no es suficiente que mi hijo tenga AUTISMO para un asistente yo no dudo de la capacidad de ninguna autoridad solo necesitamos saber MAS DEL TEMA DE TRANSPORTACION solo pido las regulaciones de transaportacion para saber exactamente a lo que por derecho le corresponde a todos los ninos de educacion especial y evitar por todod los medios una tragedia y no solo beneficiar a mi hijo sino a todos los ninos que viajan el el bus que tiene diferentes habilidades GRACIAS

process says: Friday, July 30, 2010 10:36:25 AM

Develop a communication plan to include highlights of the SIO meetings which are accessible to all employees. By sharing the needs, requests and goals of the schools with all employees we have a higher probability of fulfilling them by utilizing every resource in HISD.

Dedicated teacher says: Wednesday, July 28, 2010 4:24:30 PM

As a dedicated teacher in the early grades I feel we need to provide tutoring/intervention to students when they are identified by the teacher as needing it. It should not require months of documentation, IAT mtgs, and then a Referral process to get them help. If we give dedicated, trained assistance to these students in the early grades it will (of course) increase academics but also build confidence and self-esteem. All of these will build a strong student who enjoys learning and feels accomplished. Providing the extra support in the early grades will eliminate many of the problems encountered down the line by passing on students who have not mastered their current curriculum.

CONCERNED says: Saturday, July 24, 2010 7:10:03 AM

Why isn't there any information since JUNE 17, 2010? What happened, did the process stop or did you guys just stop updating the Public on what is happening?

Guest says: Wednesday, July 14, 2010 3:35:09 PM

Good changes are good. But it all starts with teacher's and faculty not having patients. Patients is what they don't have. Move them out.

o.sab.80 says: Friday, July 09, 2010 10:58:40 AM

Iam happy that u care about our opinion. i think that the persons who work at the front office should be more nicely when a parent has a question., also the persons who worked as a teacher aid & help at the cafeteria area shouldn't screem at our child real loud ,like teachers they shoul know how to act when kids are noisy

G.Hilty says: Thursday, July 08, 2010 7:27:20 AM

I think the schools/ district could save a lot of money if schools were required to “shop” for furniture at the warehouse instead of having "new" things. By shopping at the warehouse those dollars could fund tutorials, personnel, software, technology upgrades etc. Schools spend a lot of money purchasing new student tables, chairs, file cabinets, office furniture, computers, keyboards etc. All of these items are at the warehouse. There were also tables, chairs, sofas etc. True some of the file cabinets looked a "little worse for wear" a coat of Rustoleum spray paint would have them looking new again. With today’s economy, everyone must spend their dollars wisely

Ms. Wilson says: Wednesday, July 07, 2010 9:09:38 AM

I am a parent of three sons. The child left behing policy is a joke. I have been trying to get assist from the district for past four years. I was to the point on school year 2009 - 2010 and place two of my sons in private school. One advance there. The other did not because he was further behind thanks to Foerster Elementary. The private school told to me to return my child to public school because they weren't able to help him and the district would not assist them in getting the resources to help me. Since all the schools in south and west region is overcrowded and they are not honoring the transfer for siblings. I am paying for daycare to provide my own transportation and they want them at home school who is performed as well as the other school. I have called several times to get a solution to my problem and no one cares about the parents or the students. What do a parent suppose to do?
Cynthia Singleton says: Tuesday, July 06, 2010 7:40:37 PM
Hi--
I would like to suggest creating or looking for university partners to create a community based tutoring centers in some of the more challenging communities in Houston
http://onceuponaschool.org/
Watch the presentation of the TED wish. . . . .we have the talent in Houston. . . .

Katie Smith says: Monday, July 05, 2010 1:25:05 PM
Please post July activities calendar! I missed meetings because I didn't know they were happening :) Thanks!

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 3:52:07 PM
As a parent, I am concerned about the candidates for principal at CLC. I heard that none of the candidates have actually been a principal. That school needs a principal with 10 years or more experience as an actual principal. One with a super strong discipline record. With a discipline plan before school starts. Do not approve anyone without those characteristics.

Holly Davies says: Friday, July 02, 2010 10:55:17 AM
I would like to see more Montessori based schools, and more dual-way immersion programs. Given the high percentage of non-English speaking (especially Spanish speaking) students, I think HISD is missing a great opportunity to not move totally to a dual way program.

Maria i de Leon says: Thursday, July 01, 2010 5:00:33 PM
Estoy muy contenta que se preocupen por nuestros estudiantes les agradesco mucho, yo creo que deverian de tener mas personal que motive a nuestros estudiantes y a los maestros un poco de sicologia infantil porque algunas veces son muy rudos con ellos yo se que se nesecita la diciplina pero hay que saber como aplicarla.GRASIAS att Sra MARIA DE LEON

District Observer says: Friday, June 25, 2010 3:12:20 PM
Can someone in the administration tell us who Kevin Hobbs is and why he is posting jobs in every major newspaper in the country?

dedicated2 says: Wednesday, June 23, 2010 8:46:44 PM
Where is the union now? Who will be representing the HFT members who have lost their jobs? Greir nor his board members do not have a heart. They don't care about their employees. If you are from Texas, you're ignorant!

Worker says: Wednesday, June 23, 2010 12:00:59 PM
I understand and agree with the concept of placing an effective teacher in every classroom, a supporting principal in every school and the rest that you have mentioned but no one as said anything about the supporting staff that helps the school and district to run smoothly like the paraprofessionals, custodians, transportation workers and so on. How does that work group fit into your strategic direction, or are they left behind as always?

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 3:55:45 PM
If they cannot fix the problems at the top they won't get around to fixing the problems at the bottom. The favoritism in the district has to go.

Dennis Perry says: Monday, June 21, 2010 8:27:08 PM
The superintendent strategy to swap troubled students is a great idea. Another great idea would be to use this same concept regarding teachers. There are many unhappy teachers who are underperforming because of personality conflicts with administrators. Why not even the playing field by giving these hard working teachers an opportunity to shine on different campuses with administrators who are null and void of small-mindedness and reprisal. The district must take due diligence not to throw out good teachers based on false and misleading data.

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 3:57:51 PM
Excellent idea.

Situations says: Monday, June 21, 2010 2:30:09 PM
It is becoming more and more obvious that it is some people in the HR department leaving defensive comments as well. Just let the people have there say, it's ok, no one is saying they have all the answers, people are just speaking opinions. So lets stop with the gotcha moments by reading over people comments and trying to spell and grammar check, as long as you understand what they are saying is all that matters.

Becky says: Sunday, June 20, 2010 10:14:26 PM
I am concerned that the "4 year college graduation rate" is somehow seen as a failure. I received an excellent education from a private school in my hometown and graduated near the top of my class. It took me 5 1/2 years to graduate from University. Not because of something lacking in my earlier education but because I wanted to take my time and enjoy all the experiences
college had to offer. I don’t think looking at the rate of our students who finish college 4 years after graduation is a fair measure of how the district is performing. I consider myself a successful professional, does the fact that it took 5.5 years for me to graduate college make my earlier education sub-par? Many students around the world are now taking a break between HS and college to travel and learn about the world around them, they won’t leave college 4 years after graduation, have they failed? I’m not going to pretend HISD doesn’t have room for improvement, but I take offense at the idea that: to quote the Friday e-news “We can’t wait another day—only an estimated 15 percent of HISD ninth-graders ultimately earn a college degree within four years.” I’m offended by the idea that this is a failure of HISD.

Dr M Parish, T H Rogers MS says: Sunday, June 20, 2010 7:38:05 AM
My concern is that most of our current principals are too young and inexperienced to lead our schools. Most of the principals recently hired do not know how to communicate. They stay in their office and ask the teachers to send them an email when they are approached for help or advice. Five years of classroom experience is not enough for principals to understand students, parents or teachers, let alone run a school that has a corporate connection. I think our administration and school board should think about who you make a principal and why. The place to get our principals is within the teacher ranks. People who already know how to communicate to other people and students. I think retired teachers would make good principals, instead of young people with no people skills and a lot of ego.

Concerned says: Monday, June 21, 2010 5:39:49 PM
HISD’s responsibility is to make sure students are ready for college, not how long it takes them to graduate from college. Students are not prepared for college when they graduate from high school. My daughter’s college English professor told the class he was going to teach them what they should have learned in high school.

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 4:02:13 PM
If an AP has been an interim Principal twice, yet but not promoted in either of those circumstances, do you feel they have developed their skills now to become a full Principal?

Cheryl V. Miller says: Saturday, June 19, 2010 12:32:41 PM
In my past-life, I’ve been a student in HISD & worked in HISD....currently,in HISD, I'm a,"Every Blue Moon" VIPS, & Mom of a Senior & Freshman & counting the SECONDS of my last kid's,"...5,4,3,2,1 GRAD DAY Countdown"...not just for her...but MY time to celebrate, "Who-Hoo,NO-MORE HISD FOR ME!..."Partnership,"HISD-N-ME"---is over!!?...It's Broke, but plan on givin 'em a CHANCE of REDEMPTION...Y?..cause I'm gettin' good vibes--this time--they REeally, REALLY are trying to FIX IT...Impressed With Invites to Mtgs,Asking for Input & Reg. email Reminders for us 2b 'Part of the Solution'....Have NOT attended T.H. mtgs.,but they appear 2b Sincere Attempts for Engagement, & NOT those, waste of time..."Say-What-They-Want-To-Hear/Pacify-The-Parents" Mtgs...Got the warm fuzzies 'bout this, so I Registered Hubby-n-Me for 6/22 Mtg...Think we'll take our(2) H.S. kids! OMGsh...Does this Mean..We're on,"TeamHISD"?! ;-0 ...uhmm, kinda thinkin'----- AFFIRMATIVE...guess I'll start $ellin' T-Shirts! ^..^ --cvm

Concerned says: Saturday, June 19, 2010 9:12:51 AM
Could someone please explain to me how you can take a principal from another district, elementary school I might add, place them in a low performing high school with no knowledge of HISD's policies and expect them to bring that school up to standards? I'm sure there may be a sensible reason for this, but I cannot understand this when there are qualified principals already in the district that are high school and former high school principals. This is a slap in the face to our own. We should be trying to promote the wealth and wellbeing of our own, not telling them you are not good enough therefore we need to go outside the district/state to bring in someone new. There are good, qualified people already displaced within our district but you would rather get someone who knows nothing about us. Please explain this. I am a high schooler parent and would like to know your rationale behind this as would many others.

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 4:12:08 PM
They go outside because the APs are not qualified, they were placed because of favoritism. Being able to pass a class and mid management test does not mean you can think and react appropriately. There is a reason they are displaced.

Lilo says: Saturday, June 19, 2010 8:49:51 AM
Please clarify--all HISD activities must be cleared through HISD, correct? Can competitions such as AAU sports (i.e. basketball) be held on HISD's campuses (Jones HS) on weekends-Saturdays & Sundays, with paid admission be allowed without the district's knowledge? If so, where are the monies going (besides the coach's pocket) and how is this benefiting the school as a whole? This has been going on for a while and we would like to know how this is benefiting the "Apollo 20" school (Jones HS).

Critical observer says: Friday, June 18, 2010 11:20:21 PM
Everyone has the answer. Everyone has the antidote. As I observe and read comments, it would be nice to see complete sentences and sound sentence structure from the upset teachers that did not make the cut. Perhaps your writing ability was a turn-off in the interview process? No judgements---just a Socratic thought.

Dennis Perry says: Wednesday, June 16, 2010 12:45:15 PM
Dr. Grier and the Board should be looking for teachers who will give a money back guarantee. No pass, no pay. All extra pay in addition to the Aspire Awards should be tied to student achievement; extra pay such as stipends, extended hours, Summer School, etc. There has to be Zero tolerance for principals who shows favoritism among teachers; Meeting the needs of the students means discovering the needs of the students. The needs of the student doesn't begin or end in the classroom. We need to get back to basics. Getting back to basics means more than reviewing the three R's. Getting back to basics means putting the student first. I'm a HISD Teacher and at the beginning of the school year I guaranteed a 100% passing rate on the TAKS M.

sallymatu says: Monday, June 21, 2010 1:13:30 PM
"a lot" is two words--you will see the form you are using(alot) "a lot" if you teach in high school.

situations says: Monday, June 21, 2010 2:26:09 PM
Thanks a lot for your input. I believe this is a message board so you can slow down with the spell and grammar check. I dont think we are turning this in for a grade and I am not teaching English it will be Math. Oh and by the way, where is your capitalization?

rah says: Monday, June 14, 2010 9:51:54 PM
I just attended a town hall sponsored by Sharpstown Civic Assoc. with the principals of Sharpstown High, Middle and Internation, telling us how wonderful the district's new plan is going to be for us. What I came away wondering was, at what point did the school board and administration forget that you work for us, not that we take what you decide to give us. Declining enrollments are not a cause for concern, but a means to smaller classrooms and more individual instruction (a seemingly novel concept now). You want ore parental involvement, get rid of the buses and then the parents will have to be involved. As a graduate of SHS in 1971, buses were the exception rather than the rule, and guess what, there was much less traffic than there is now. Funny how we seem to have turned out alright despite not having all the superior advantages of choice and magnet and international schools. If these are all so wonderful, then incorporate them into a unified curriculum and mandate it for every school.

dedicated2 says: Saturday, June 12, 2010 12:14:40 PM
dedicated2 says: Commit for dedicated teacher

HISD Educator says: Friday, June 11, 2010 5:30:45 PM
What is the status of CLC HS and HP Carter, both were on the transformation list but I don't see them on the Apollo 20 list???

Parent that cares says: Friday, July 02, 2010 4:24:06 PM
CLC did not make it as an Appollo school and maybe will make it as a Texas Priority School. However, there is not a plan to hire an experienced competent principal, but another "favorite". The hiring process is a farce there with one candidate being presented. I may remove my child.

Concerned says: Wednesday, June 09, 2010 3:22:11 PM
What happens to old school buildings (particularly - Hohl Elementary)when it has been determined that it is no longer feasible to keep the school open. The community could benefit from other services that could be housed in those facilities - providing they are sound structures. What's the plan? Hopefully, it won't become an eyesore.
Thank you for inviting me to your meeting last night. Like in the movie Freedom Writers or teacher like in the Spelling Bee movie. These people exist and they are the ones that we need to teach our children. They go the extra mile, they prove that all kids are worth it. It can happen and that is what we expect.

Do people who are perfect. I am trying to understand what my son will be focusing on during this month so that I can reinforce it at home. He office just told me to show up that day and they would tell me then. That day I showed up with my child approached the teacher questions about how the Summer school session worked and I really couldn't get answers, it was like some "BIG" secret, the child, (Kinder) and he is attending the 1 month Summer school session, but I counted 22 children in this one class, I asked could also go to special tutoring during the Summer break. I recently was laid off and cannot afford speech tutoring for my child, needs help with his speech, I'm not just taking him there for someone to babysit. Summer school should be explained to the parents of those that will be attending at that location. A meeting of some sort maybe in the last week of the school year. Again, I think the money should be used for tutoring during the summer or after school, hiring teachers for just that purpose. The district needs to address the younger childrens learning disabilities early and notify parents of this type of help that is available to them. If the district helps these children when they are just starting out and works closer with them & parents, hopefully as they grow older those learning obstacles or bad habits will be overcomed with good learning habits which will improve their self esteem and motivate them to want to learn as they progress in their education. I don't agree with moving so called "great teachers" to older those learning obstacles or bad habits will be overcomed with good learning habits which will improve their self esteem and motivate them to want to learn as they progress in their education. I don't agree with moving so called "great teachers" to certain schools, because those schools will be left to fail and close out and that is just not fair. Instead it should move all the students that are exceeding in their studies to one classroom(s)and the students that are failing into other classroom(s). Then help those students figure out what is causing their learning disability and work with them/parents too. Why are the good students getting punished for the other students that do not want to learn. Thank You Teachers for all that you do, plus more. God Bless You.

Custodians have two bosses. CFS and the Facilities where they work. Why not put their budget dollars in the facilities that they support so that the schools and facilities then have control over the overtime. It is impossible for CFS to maintain control over the overtime when the custodians are reporting to someone else.

I have over 20 years senior management experience with a Fortune 500 company and now 8 years teaching with HUSD. I find it almost laughable that one of the goals calls for principals to be CEO's of their campus. A CEO's responsibility is first to the shareholders and the board of directors. We need our principals to be more like General Managers with primary concern to the customers (students). Second concern is fiscal control and everyone knows that employees are your biggest expense, so pay attention to teachers next. HISD's failure to grasp this will continue the poor principal leadership we have now.

Just wanted to comment on about paying students to attend class, if the district has that kind of money, why does it not hire more teachers during the school year to break down classrooms for more "one on one" learning also as an idea the money could also go to special tutoring during the Summer break. I recently was laid off and cannot afford speech tutoring for my child, (Kinder) and he is attending the 1 month Summer school session, but I counted 22 children in this one class, I asked questions about how the Summer school session worked and I really couldn't get answers, it was like some "BIG" secret, the office just told me to show up that day and they would tell me then. That day I showed up with my child approached the teacher and was trying to ask questions concerning what the lesson plans were for that week and the teacher actedly like they couldn't be bothered. I am trying to understand what my son will be focusing on during this month so that I can reinforce it at home. He needs help with his speech, I'm not just taking him there for someone to babysit. Summer school should be explained to the parents of those that will be attending at that location. A meeting of some sort maybe in the last week of the school year. Again, I think the money should be used for tutoring during the summer or after school, hiring teachers for just that purpose. The district needs to address the younger childrens learning disabilities early and notify parents of this type of help that is available to them. If the district helps these children when they are just starting out and works closer with them & parents, hopefully as they grow older those learning obstacles or bad habits will be overcomed with good learning habits which will improve their self esteem and motivate them to want to learn as they progress in their education. I don't agree with moving so called "great teachers" to certain schools, because those schools will be left to fail and close out and that is just not fair. Instead it should move all the students that are exceeding in their studies to one classroom(s) and the students that are failing into other classroom(s). Then help those students figure out what is causing their learning disability and work with them/parents too. Why are the good students getting punished for the other students that do not want to learn. Thank You Teachers for all that you do, plus more. God Bless You.

I attended the meeting last night and again most everyone is failing to see where the fix needs to start. You can't fix something in the middle. You need to fix the foundation. Our children keep getting past on and past on and not taught what they need to know which is Reading, Writing, and Math. Start with Elementary Schools. Make sure that those teachers are qualified in teaching every kind of child not just the main stream kids. It should be a must to require that they be certified to teach Dyslexic kids, ADHD kids, and ADD kids. Go back to having teachers assistants too. Engage the slower kids or very active kids instead of the ones that always act right or are very smart. Start there and when that is right everywhere then the rest will fall into place. You haven't be able to fix all the other chaos so start with what you can fix.

Get us the teacher that care not the ones that say I don't care. Get us teachers like in the movie Freedom Writers or teacher like in the Spelling Bee movie. These people exist and they are the ones that we need to teach our children. They go the extra mile, they prove that all kids are worth it. It can happen and that is what we expect.

Thank you for inviting me to your meeting last night.

Custodians have two bosses. CFS and the Facilities where they work. Why not put their budget dollars in the facilities that they support so that the schools and facilities then have control over the overtime. It is impossible for CFS to maintain control over the overtime when the custodians are reporting to someone else.

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98% of the students I teach pass the TAKS reading test. The only way that HISD will listen is for parents to have more of a voice in what happens at schools. Don't question the teacher, question the leadership at the school and were the directives are coming from.

dedicated teacher says: Monday, June 07, 2010 3:15:33 PM
I grew up in this district went to school all my life in this district. In fact I still live in the community. I wanted to teach in this district and community that I grew up in, I've been a substitute in this district for the past year and its unfair how I have not been given a chance to interview with the district. Because of these NEW changes I cant even apply again until the next school year. I don't understand this new process it doesn't make sense and its not fair. I know I wont sub for this district next year I will take my heart to another district... They need to really re-think this process. There are great smart teachers out here that are not being given a fair chance.

Concerned says: Tuesday, June 22, 2010 12:28:44 PM
I agree. You are not the only one. TG is not interested in first time teachers. He is very, very narrow minded. I wonder if he was ever a first time teacher?

FeedUp Okay says: Saturday, June 05, 2010 12:22:32 PM
I really think that it is so unfair how the new person that is over custodian department is making all these changing, like our uniforms why do we have to put our shirts on the inside, really it should not matter as long as the schools are really clean, and we as workers show up everyday it is already enough that we do not get paid more but we should. I might get in trouble for speaking the truth, I will just have to take that chance. As an custodian worker I know that I do my job to the best of knowledge, (11month) and should get paid right. The hours should be left along because as a single parent (husband died) it is very hard to raise a child in this day and time by myself, but my sisters and brothers and mother they helps out when I need it but I try not to worry my mom as much like can she watch him if I have to work late, that is why you as the (head person) should reconsider the hours please. Just think about these hours 800am - 500pm, 900am - 600pm. We custodians need to be heard not just the Plant Operator we really are the ones that does the work, once again please think about the hours, it is already enough that I am not working for the summer, but I am not going to worry about it but, I will pray about. Thank You.

Cheryl V. Miller says: Saturday, June 19, 2010 12:53:24 PM
I have family and friends that have worked in Custodian Dept. YOU DO NOT GET PAID A DECENT WAGE! I will make this point known at the meeting I will attend. Let's continue to thank God for our blessings and pray for each other and our leaders! Bless you Sister!

Frustrated says: Saturday, June 05, 2010 10:07:27 AM
I'm an eleventh year educator and recently uprooted from a school I loved to be in a school that needed big change. My frustration is when a principal can't oust ineffective teachers or teachers who just do enough to squeak by because they know they are protected by a system that will remove a principal before they root out the cancerous spread of apathy, laziness and just old rebellion. Let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Principals are not afforded the luxury of 2-3 yrs to turn situations and school cultures they inherit that are decades deep before of a they are moved out). Get behind our principals trying the make a difference and get to some of the infected roots that touch our children everyday.

daytoday says: Friday, June 04, 2010 3:48:59 PM
why is everyone so opposed to change? are you really content with the district as it is or as it has been? As a parent, I am outraged that it has been allowed to get as bad as it is today. HISD has been the same for years (I am a native Houstonian). Grier and his team are simply trying to remedy, as best they can, the mess that, frankly, other (past) leaders of the district are responsible for creating. What is wrong with trying to fix it? What is wrong with trying to focus, for once in HISD's history, on the kids and the education they are being provided... or not being provided. Further, this is the first time in countless years that the board of education has jumped on the reform bandwagon - all together which is refreshing. They get it. The time has come for change. They don't want a broken system more than anyone else does. I understand the negative history of the board and the district - yes, I have heard all the scandals over the years, but this is a new day. Give it a chance. Regarding teachers, this is a nation-wide movement. It is certainly not unique to Houston. It is not a witch-hunt. Teachers are so very important to our country -- more so than anyone gives them credit for. The country seems to have just woken up and realized that "hey, teachers really are super important; they are shaping this country's future!" So with this awakening, it is normal to look at results, ways to improve (not to mention that our urban school districts have turned into holding tanks for under performing students, teachers who are burned out or that the number new prisons built each year in the USA is based on 8th grade math scores). Look, the vast majority of HISD teachers are amazing. But what is wrong with offering additional professional development, ways to provide feedback on "added-value" etc. Every large corporation in America is all about performance management and results. Why is a school district any different? I read a lot of complaints about Grier, his history, and the HISD folks, but I do not see one solution offered. It is very easy sit back and complain. It is much harder to face the challenge and be a part of the solution. Give it a chance. If you have a better solution, let's hear it.

TooMuchtoExpect says: Saturday, June 05, 2010 1:49:26 AM
Actually, many solutions (too many) have been offered. Many of them were even offered here. The complaints may be unfounded about Dr. Grier. Not only are there too many chiefs and not enough indians, but the chiefs all have differing
views of how to solve the problems. Now they have brought in more problem-solvers and paid them well to find out what is wrong and help them make a plan. It is critical that we remember that most teachers work very hard every day to help their students. Changes need to be made but with those teachers who refuse to change and update old strategies that just don't work anymore. There are too many lazy teachers who believe, wrongly, that they know how to do their job. But, year after painful year, they do not get the job done with any but the best and brightest in their class. Then they blame the children, the parents, and the lack of homework for what they do not know how to teach. Teachers need to wake up. I am one and I am already awake. What is wrong with the ones who refuse to wake up. Someone has let them sleep to long.

**You have no idea!** says: Monday, June 07, 2010 1:59:26 AM
Evaluating teachers based on students' test performance will not make students smarter or better the educational system. I know, I have been a teacher for 12 yrs. If change is what you want, bring it, we are not afraid. For the teacher that says that we are just lazy, we have teachers like you in every school, we call them "the principal's pet", and that's what you are. Most of us do an honest job and work very hard trying to be both teachers and parents at the same time; since some of you think that we are also your baby sitters. At some low income neighborhoods most of the time we don't even see these parents come to pick up their kid's report cards. And forget about homework, most of the time the kids don't do it. Some of you people, and specially school administrators, do not have a slightest idea of what goes on in a classroom. But this too shall pass. Like every thing else people adapt and the world moves on. In the mean time all of you "naive" parents, along with the HISD board, will let Grier rob you blind like he did at the other school districts where he worked before. If you don't believe me do the research!!!

**Robert Higgins** says: Friday, June 04, 2010 10:11:33 AM
I have a program I'm starting up it's called putting education first in communities and I know that Kashmere and other schools are on the strive for excellence list. I want to go those schools and have motivational speeches for those schools and start for the community first and then input a lot of social awareness for these students to strive for excellence and as well as the parents.

**districtobserver** says: Thursday, June 03, 2010 4:51:44 PM
It is my understanding that Dr. Grier has brought another one of his San Diego "friends" into the district with the appointment of the new assistant superintendent for Secondary Curriculum, Kim Hall. It has been reported that she has no advanced degree in Curriculum and Instruction, what qualifications does she bring with her to this position? AS the recent news has shown us, Texas in a unique state when it comes to curriculum discussions.

I would also ask the board to look at the number of positions that were eliminated through the reorganization and compare that to the number of new positions that are being created daily at the central office and the salarays that these new folks are being paid.

**Concerned** says: Friday, June 04, 2010 10:39:53 PM
I wonder.

**TooMuchtoExpect** says: Saturday, June 05, 2010 1:52:40 AM
Hmmm. I would also be curious since I recently attended one of the town hall meetings sponsored by one of the board members. At this meeting, we met several new people from out of state that will handle a similar number of schools as the old "Executive Principals" but in a different grouping. Oh well, new organization but with just as many chiefs.

**Lion** says: Wednesday, June 02, 2010 3:52:48 PM
I would like to see the Board down to the principals support teachers when it is appropriate. Meaning, support teachers when students have discipline issues and the parents say, "you can't do that to my child" even when the child is in the wrong. Maybe spanking should be brought back into the schools!

**What's the difference?** says: Wednesday, June 02, 2010 1:04:22 AM
Why ask for input when it is well known and documented that the HISD board will approve anything that Grier, their puppet master, dictates. Did they look at this guy's horrendous record at other school districts? What Grier wants is to blame teachers for all that is wrong with education. Parents need to get their behinds more involved in their kids' education and stop dumping their responsibilities on teachers. Now Grier wants teachers to go to trainings on their own time and also pay for the training out of their own packets. HISD is getting away with all these changes because they know that due to the economy teachers have to put up with all the abuses or be unemployed.

**TooMuchtoExpect** says: Saturday, June 05, 2010 1:57:38 AM
Again, is it too much to expect for teachers (and I am one) to accept a little responsibility to act as the professional they would pretend to be. Why can't a teacher pay for a workshop every once in a while? I do. I have to pay my bills just like everyone else and yet I want to be considered a professional and expect to have to work for it. I should have to spend my free time learning how to do my job better. I should have to spend a little of my time away from my family in order to...
Fed up 1st Grade teacher says: Saturday, May 29, 2010 9:45:10 PM
If Dr. Grier wants to place an effective teacher in every classroom, he needs to do away with performance-based pay! Although I have been a recipient of the Aspire Award the four years I’ve been teaching, I now feel that the Award does more to hurt students than help. Over the years, I’ve received too many 1st grade students (mid-year) from other HISD schools, with seemingly high Stanford test scores and grades in reading and math (scoring on a second-grade level), who cannot even decode the word “scat” or skip count by fives. I understand the Award is supposed to motivate teachers to raise their level of instruction, but it appears many teachers “inflate” scores (read, “cheat”) just to collect the check. The children are the ones who lose out in the end and teachers like myself end up killing themselves working to get that child on level before the end of the year.

Middle School Teacher says: Thursday, May 27, 2010 3:31:22 PM
In spite of efforts to improve instruction, many students continue to fall behind their peers and drop out. At risk students should be provided and steered toward more alternative education programs. Such alternative programs should provide training in a trade or career and allow these students more immediate job opportunities while they continue to study and learn. Otherwise, students who struggle in traditional schools develop a negative attitude toward education in general.

CommunityMatters says: Thursday, May 27, 2010 9:04:47 AM
By the time children reach school age I believe that some behaviors are already shaped. Teachers are given the task of not only educating the children but becoming counselors and surrogate parents as well. Teachers have to be strong disciplinarians at school when parents are lax at home (in some cases). When students enter adolescence some parents (and sometimes teachers) seem to just give up on them and just label them as (bad) because they don’t understand that a physical AND mental change is occurring, which affects behavior and learning. I think HISD should hire more mental health professionals and have counseling centers in each region to educate parents and provide ongoing counseling and support. Parents should be required to take on-going classes geared toward understanding the stages of human learning (childhood/adolescent) and development. I remember going through adolescence and my parents didn’t have a clue as to the changes occurring during this crucial life change, they just didn’t understand how to help me learn. I think helping to educate parents on child development will ultimately help the teachers as well. Many parents work hard for years to provide for their families and feel they don’t have time to take classes, etc. However, for children to have a stronger support base all people involved in their lives should understand the cycle of learning, human growth and development.

NothingButLearning says: Tuesday, May 25, 2010 6:57:57 PM
Students need field lessons. Not field trips. Many students have never been to the zoo. Give them exposure so we may build on their experiences. You can’t hold parents accountable. We can however, invite parents into the accountability process. Open up computer labs so parents can work on resumes, take online courses, and develop language skills. Students then see schools as life long learning centers. Begin by creating small charter schools model after successful charters like KIPP. One class per grade level starting with third. This then will create feeder schools to continue with excellence in teaching so they may compete for those students. Create after school programs that are enriching, robotics, science, math and language arts. We have to remember that community parks are only a few feet away from the streets, it’s our responsibility to prevent them from taking those steps to nowhere. These need to be focused on enquiry learning. Offer and suggest professional development for teachers they want and need to focus on their strengths to teach the curriculum. Don’t point fingers, but offer a hand.

Thinkingofcareerrechange says: Tuesday, May 25, 2010 8:09:34 AM
I left corporate America four years ago because I wanted to do something more than make money for others. Since I have been working in this vocation I have seen teachers sacrifice to the point of affecting their health. In my opinion teachers are treated poorly by administration and parents. The students that come to my class each year have severe mental and behavioral problems and there is no one to address their needs. Some parents (not all) think teachers are nothing more than babysitters and they are not held accountable. I initially thought I could help make a difference as a teacher now I am very doubtful about this career altogether. Next year I will finish my business degree and seriously thinking of going back to corporate.

fallendragon says: Monday, May 24, 2010 10:51:31 AM
I would like to see summer two week school programs that offer help in math or any subject for those students that cannot grasp the subject. This would be small classes and only for a few weeks. Too many good students fall off the van because they cannot keep up with the teacher and other students. If the teacher sees the student falling and cannot grasp it. The teacher should refer the student immediately to his counselor for help outside of the class.

My son is having a hard time with math, and I spoke with the counselor and she did not have any options for me besides outside tutoring which is too much for me. Now I know they have some A+ students who could help the failing student and would also get some kind of community service recognition (student resume) for help the failing student.
Schools should have more outreach programs, that students can go to and talk with and do outside community service or educational trips even if its on weekends. Students need someone they can confide in and not be judged at. These programs like CIS or Project GRAD do not help. The counselors do not interact with them enough. These are kids that need constant communication and motivation.

I as a parent constantly give motivation but they do not want to hear it from a parent. These programs need to be re-evaluated and get some counselors that actually want to HELP students. After all these are still children even if they do think they are grown. We are still molding them to be our future one day.

GOAL: HELP the failing students before its too late. I know there are some students who just dont want help but their are also students that want help and dont know how to ask because they are ashamed in some sort of way. LETS motivate these KIDS>

**guest** says: Monday, May 24, 2010 9:00:45 PM
As a teacher at my school, a large number of teachers do more than asked of them when communicating with parents. We as teachers, have tons of parents with non working numbers that parents do not/refuse to update, we even call their work numbers, even emergency contacts listed to get a hold of the parent, have the student call their parent on the spot to get a working number and we make tons of home visits. We send letters. Heck there are some of us that wait after school for kids to be picked up by the parent. It is a constant daily duty as teachers that we communicate with parents. I find it hard to believe that a large number of teachers have poor communication with parents. I know some may struggle with this and there are some bad that don't communicate, but it is difficult if the parent is not making themselves available for contact. So it is a give and take. Not just teachers and admin need to be held accountable, but I feel parents need to be too. I know of parents that comply but there is a chunk that we face that don't. I have parents that refuse to pick up their students from school saying they are too busy when they are found watching tv at home because they didn't feel like picking their child up. I had parents that point blank told me they don't care about their child's progress or decline in grades/behavior and some of these kids end up on streets. I do round up calls of 20 students at a time and I am lucky to get a hold of atleast one parent out of that 20. It may vary at schools, but my school we communicate to the best of our ability and we have discussed these in meetings of ways to get through parents.

**HISD Concerned Parent** says: Sunday, May 23, 2010 4:01:52 PM
HISD claims that parent/child/teacher and education is a partnership but a large number of teachers don't practice it and when parents are active in their child/children's education, a lot of times the student is mistreated, retaliation occurs. Also, the district needs to implement a plan of action against teachers that have poor communication with parents on all levels for example each semester, teachers should make it very clear the objectives that students are expected to master and when students are falling off, the teachers should be clear and provide honest communication with the parents about how to help the students and the parent/teacher partnership (communication) should be strong. Action speaks louder than words. Also, HISD needs to come up with a plan to stop discrimination against students based on their race, it's a huge problem. Incorporate teaching the whole child and obtaining a grant to provide quality food, nutritional, and physical education programs at all levels of education (primary & secondary).

**Guest** says: Friday, May 21, 2010 7:26:27 PM
I hope Hamilton will add a Chinese language course as an elective.

YiRong Waters

**Kevin Frei** says: Friday, May 21, 2010 12:28:49 PM
The MOST important thing HISD can do is to improve the Graduation Rate.

The single thing that would most create a more prosperous Houston, Texas and the USA is to improve the graduation rate in general and the Hispanic male graduation rate in particular. In some areas of Texas the graduation rate for Hispanic males is LESS than 50%. The economic impact of a less educated work force is slower and slower growth for our state and nation. The social impact is also bad: increased crime rates. The personal costs for those not graduating are a poorer and less secure lifestyle.

It is great to attempt to produce more college ready graduates, but not at the price of an unacceptably high non-graduation rates.

**Kevin Frei**

**Graduating Senior from HISD** says: Wednesday, May 26, 2010 10:57:39 PM
Focusing on numbers alone is not helping students. Simply pushing schools to improve test scores and graduation rates encourages many teachers to "bump grades up" and focus too much on standardized testing (although TAKS is being replaced by EOC tests). Lowering the value of a high school diploma to an even lesser standard than exists does
not create a more educated work force, but lowers expectations of what students can achieve. I have been lucky
enough to have been in challenging programs within HISD, but I have experienced the effects of teachers making
things easier. If you know you don't have to work hard or that you're not expected to, then in most cases you won't. A
high school diploma should be something earned, something of which to be proud, and something that ensures you
that you are ready for college.

Cielo says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 8:04:17 PM
Just as you showed with the graduation rate, there is a direct correlation between educational success (learning and TAKS
scores) and income. HISD does not take into account the home life and neighborhood when handing out money or devising
lessons. Students learn differently nowadays, but our school has less than a dozen computers available for students. To me, to
many of my fellow workers, to the students, and to their parents, the lack of supplies, equipment, and money says we don't
count. It costs more to get these children up to par. Yet, the Board ignores us and so far, so has Grier. Maybe we should just
count our blessings, but it is not fair and all of us in Houston will pay the price for neglecting low-income students.

positivefeelings says: Friday, May 21, 2010 5:44:31 PM
For a whole school? Are you certain that your principal is spending all of the technology money that is given to your
school on computers and peripherals. Seems very strange to have that few available for a whole school. Good luck.
But that is not the norm now in HISD. We are a Title 1 school with low SES and majority Hispanic. We have lots of
computers in every classroom and two computer labs. They may not be the latest version, but they work well.

Partner to Obvious says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 7:58:16 PM
Stating the obvious -- I would like to be your partner. I thoroughly agree with the concept of getting out students ready to face
the business world. With my industry experience of over 25 years (mostly in Human Resources), I know how to get the
community active in our education needs and at the same time have our students learn in the classroom setting what they need
to know in order to survive in industry. Once the skills in the classroom have been achieved, then have community businesses
ready to help our students move forward in order achieve a place in the business world.
I also agree that this project will take two professionals to accomplish its goals.

Stating the Obvious says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 7:24:01 PM
High Schools need to be lead by TWO professionals with the same "status"....a business person with the know-how to get out
into the community and build relationships AND someone with a firm foundation in instruction...the district is trying to get 2 for
1....won't work well because you can't focus on anything...you're being pulled in every direction.

Thanks to Obvious says: Friday, May 21, 2010 5:50:11 PM
We need more like you. Definitely, they are on the wrong track. What concerns me is that the HISD Board members
don't seem particularly friendly to teachers. Most feel that this is the case because they are from the business world.
We do need teachers that know what they are doing and that are willing to put the time in to get the job done. But we
also need people to support us that also understand what it takes to get that job done. Business people don't usually
know anything about day to day instructional issues, especially with students who lead homelives that would shock the
daylight's out of our Board.

Guest says: Monday, May 24, 2010 10:54:39 AM
I'll bet these administrators are good in business but have never been in a classroom for at least one day.
Same for the HISD board members. How many of them have come to our school to ask: What do you need to
accomplish your goals for this school year?

principal says: Saturday, May 22, 2010 7:55:53 PM
Obvious- I saw this Co- principal model work at comprehensive large high schools in Long Beach and So. Cal. It works.

Stating the Obvious says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 7:19:28 PM
Public education in AMERICA is broken....don't feel so bad Houstonians.

Concerned says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 4:38:30 PM
Oh my, Tired, that is exactly what I mean. We have to have an administration on campuses that welcomes parents as a partner
in their child's education.

Too tired says: Sunday, May 23, 2010 8:23:32 PM
I am a parent and I tried to volunteer at Hogg to help with students during lunch. The principal asked me to leave. It
was my first day!

Tired says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 3:32:53 PM
I have always been an active parent and have been supportive of teachers and the administration. I volunteered and did my part
at home and at the school, but as my children moved from elementary to middle school and then to high school, I became less
involved because I did not feel welcomed, in fact I felt out and out unwelcomed at the high school level. I think in the future it
would be helpful to find a way to assist parents with the transition through the school levels. In elementary school, information was readily shared, but in high school, when critical decisions about my child's future are made, parents get no information.....go figure!

TJ says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 1:20:07 PM
I would like a more detailed way of knowing exactly what my child will be graded on. I need to know overall topics, skills, and vocabulary she needs. In addition, a calendar detailing when she needs to have mastery would be great.

TooMuchtoExpect says: Saturday, May 22, 2010 9:20:45 PM
Ask the teachers to show you a copy of the curriculum for the subject in question. Parents can not know how many topics and skills (We call Objectives) their children have to learn every year. It is crazy. But if they were aware of how much their is, Perhaps these business people called HISD Board of Education members, also called parents in most cases, would take a different view of what is required and what is possible to accomplish with each and every child in a classroom full of students.

JLove says: Tuesday, May 25, 2010 8:55:57 AM
TJ:
In parent conferencing you can ask the teacher these things. Plan to meet with your child's teacher every 9 weeks. In reviewing homework and projects you will be able to get an idea of what your child is learning. In speaking with your child about their day at school, you will be able to know what they are learning. Ask the teacher for a copy of their lesson plans. Its for your viewing pleasures also. Ask for a list of resources that will help your child in their areas of strength and weakness. Typically skills should be mastered in the weeks, 9 weeks and school year as they are presented and re taught. I am a teacher and its great to see things from your perspective. I am also a parent and I know to do these things because I am a teacher. Hopefully your children's teachers are receptive and supportive of your concerns.

LH says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 10:55:10 AM
I believe the free breakfast is such a great idea. A growing number of our students do not eat meat though and an alternative is not offered to them. Is it possible to add more meat free alternatives? Including lunch too?

Time to Get Tougher says: Thursday, May 20, 2010 9:45:40 AM
Other School Districts (CCISD, FISD, etc.) require a fee for students who must participate in summer school when they don't pass standardized (TAKS) testing. A kick in the pocket of $350 PER TAKS TEST to attend summer school. Parents will take a more active role in their child's school progress because of the high cost. Summer school is not "free babysitting" and HISD needs to charge (and make it a sum of money that would be equivalent to the other districts). The parents need to be more involved-and a high cost fee of summer school will help us move in the right direction! It's not all on the teachers!

Hey... says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 10:06:00 PM
Will someone please listen? Do something about the growing number of US born Hispanic students whom reach middle school without the necessary language skills to succeed. Stop the insanity of bilingual, LEP, ESL that is occuring during crucial elementary years. Stop short-changing these students. They get so far behind. HISD wouldn't have to have a million intervention programs to fix the mistake. It is no wonder Hispanics drop-out in droves.

TooMuchtoExpect says: Saturday, May 22, 2010 9:25:32 PM
Should have written "who" instead of "whom". Language skills?

Born dia says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 9:25:51 PM
I couldn’t agree more with Term. Too many people are rushed through the system and become principals without paying their dues and learning the ropes. You can't call yourself a classroom teacher until you've been there for at least 5 years. And how can you be a good principal (meaning: instructional leader) if you're just a bureaucrat, a paper-pusher, someone without a true understanding of the art of teaching? Even though it's possible to be principal at a level where you haven't taught, at least be an assistant principal at that level so you can see what it's like.

Accountability says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 9:19:25 PM
Start holding principals accountable for their schools. Have an effective principal at every school and find ways to evaluate them that includes teacher input. Listen to teachers. They are the ones in the line of fire.

Term says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 9:12:24 PM
I have worked with many principals. It seems that the ones who were the most ineffective were ones that did not have much experience in the classroom. Many become principals after only two years teaching. How can a principal be an instructional leader without having taught more than two years. Also, many are principals at middle schools, but have never taught at a middle school. It makes no sense. I have taught for 9 years and I am still learning. I have taught at elementary and middle school and they are both way different. I believe that principals should have at least 7 years experience in teaching, and at least have classroom experience at the schools they are running.
**Concerned** says: Friday, June 04, 2010 10:16:14 PM
I agree. The Superintendent wants teachers with experience so why are principals being hired with no experience. One of my best teachers when I attended an HISD school was a student teacher. Student teachers have more experience in the classroom than applicants hired through the ACP Program. This process of not hiring teachers who graduated in education and have only student teaching experience is not a good idea. I am sure when he got his first job teaching he had no experience.

**TEACHER2** says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 6:26:52 PM
THINGS ALWAYS REMAIN THE SAME UNTIL YOU IN HISD DECIDE TO TACKLE THE TRUE ISSUES THAT EFFECT THE SCHOOL. THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE WILL NEVER CHANGE, YOU CAN CHANGE HIRING PRACTICES AND HIRE PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT THEY WILL JUST BE ENTERING THE SAME CORRUPT SYSTEM.

**Concerned** says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 9:56:58 AM
Parental support-we must have administration that not only involves parents in the educational proces, but also makes them a part of that process. It is true that teaching is a hard job, but many parents were never made to feel like they are part of their child's education. Imagine if the only communication you ever got from the school your child attends was negative. How would you feel? We have to develop a culture that includes parents. Right now, it is more of an us versus them. I understand that we need to notify parents when their child is doing something wrong or failing, but we also need to take the time and make the effort to also let parents know when that same child does something good or excellent!

**I've seen...** says: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 12:08:42 PM
We in HISD have to face many problems. First, we don't have that much parental support. In many cases we don't have any at all. Every year I see that many of my students are being neglected at home. Parents just don't care, and see us as babysitters. This has an effect in the students motivation to learn. Only those who are self-motivated make it. Many parents don't want to do their part! Of course there are exceptions, but they are just that, exceptions. On the other hand, I've seen teachers that don't know how to teach. They have the will, but not the ability to teach. Just because someone has a bachelors degree, doesn't mean he/she can teach! Being a teacher is not an easy job... Also, I've seen some excellent teachers who are demoralized by how much money they make. ASPIRE hasn't fixed that. There's TOO MUCH paper work, and the compensation is NOT good enough.

**HISD team** says: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 9:09:35 AM
On the last board meeting some immigrant students received an award because of their efforts, academic excellence and talent. HISD should do more for "excellent" students and give them a chance to get legal documentation to keep studying and to work. These are the students that are a good sample for all the community.

**DEE** says: Saturday, May 15, 2010 8:40:27 PM
WE ARE TEACHING TAKS,...TESTING COMPANIES MAKING BILLIONS...TEACHERS BEING RELEASED TO MAKE UP THE BILLIONS...BEHAVIOR NEEDS SHOULD BE PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY...BUSING NEEDS CONSOLIDATION OF PREGNANT WITH MOTHERS WITH REGULAR STUDENTS..

**Parent 3** says: Friday, May 14, 2010 3:13:51 PM
The ASPIRE pay can be changed, it's just a HISD initiative. The remedial classes could work on getting the kids caught up and will address their problems instead of putting them in a class to continue to remain lost on the subject matter. Once they get caught up or show they have the skills to progress, then they can move into the regular classes. They are behind and need to help to catch up in order to pass TAKS and graduate. We can't keep ignoring their problems.

**Parent 3** says: Friday, May 14, 2010 11:04:05 AM
My daughter made a very valid point last night that I thought would be helpful. Unfortunately, there are only two levels of classes in high school: AP and Prep. Not all good students are AP level in every subject. However, if you go into a Prep class you don't learn as much because of the wide range of kids in the classroom. She says that you are distracted by kids that are there but don't want to learn.

We moved here from Oklahoma. At her school (another large school district), there were three levels: AP, Regular, and Remedial. It worked much better because the teachers could focus on that particular level and there were fewer distractions in the regular classes.

**Parent voice** says: Friday, May 14, 2010 1:00:41 PM
They don't want 3 levels within high school because the teacher that is teaching the remedial classes will not get ASPIRE pay. Students will not show growth. Why? because they are the kids that drop out and have parents that don't value education.

**Graduating Senior from HISD** says: Wednesday, May 26, 2010 11:12:25 PM
My school offers 3 levels in some classes (Regular, College Prep, and AP), including some dual credit classes for upper classmen that are not considered as difficult as AP. This may be an issue that you can take up with the school?
**Need2Know** says: Saturday, May 15, 2010 9:40:40 AM
I understand how you and our daughter feel. Many teachers don't possess the ability or understand the importance of, many building capacity in students, therefore they give them as less as possible. Unfortunately, many have this "Kids Can't Do" ideology and don't understand they are teaching the students failure from the beginning. Teachers would rather water down the lessons in the text book because the don't follow that HAPG. Then the excuse is, "These kids can't do what the kids in the white schools do, because they don't care." Well, kids do care and they can do it! It's all about setting high expectations and modeling good work ethics. If the teachers feel better about themselves and made an attempt to develop authentic, engaging, thought provoking, hands-on activities, the students would be more interested in what's going on inside of the classroom, but that is too much like right because this can't be done during their 30-45 minute planning time. God forbid someone suggests they stay after hours to plan, this won't happen because then they are going to expect over duty pay. I pity the principals and teachers who came into this professional thinking the job can and will be done during the regular scheduled work day. But to sum it up, we are asking a lot of principals and teacher to do something they know nothing about, "WORK" and make decisions based on what's best for students, not what's best for the teacher. We have to remember, that's not in the contract either!

**Another Frustrated Teacher** says: Saturday, May 15, 2010 4:23:11 PM
I leave work at between 5:30 and 6:00 most days. I resent your comment about teachers knowing nothing about "WORK." Most of my colleagues work late as well. We do not expect nor do we receive no overtime compensation. We care and work extremely hard for our students. I challenge you to do what we do for the same amount of money. There are many things that we hold ourselves accountable for that may not be in our contract! Maybe I am lucky to be surrounded by teachers, at my school, who take pride in what they do.

**Need2Know** says: Sunday, May 16, 2010 12:21:29 PM
I may have needed to clarify myself when I referenced teachers who know nothing about "WORK," I am speaking of those who will only work beyond their clock out time if they are being compensated. Clearly you don't fall in that category, so you and your colleagues are exceptions to the masses. Thank you for all you and your colleagues do to ensure our students are receiving the quality education they deserve.

**cookie72** says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 3:26:34 PM
Another Frustrated Teacher. My daughter attends a so called great HISD school in a prominent area. For four years she has had too many lazy teachers. She is in the program that is called the Regular students Non Magnet, Non AP, Non IB Non Career Technology. Just regular I have to honestly say that most of the regular teachers are very lazy. I have had to go out and get a math tutor because most of the math teachers cannot teach math to reach the regular students. It's a sad thing when my daughter has to ask around the school to see who is the better teacher to make sure the next year I get her in that class. Sad to say all the kids in “Regular” knows that most of the teacher are not good math teachers. What about the students and parent s who think every teacher can teach and ends up failing because the teacher is not adequate in her skill year after year. I want you to know that it is not only math. I hope some accountability is added on these teachers to reach down to the Regular students considering from statistics that the Regular students is what is hold the school up from ever being in the running for the top 100 schools or ever getting the “Exemplary” status. I am so interested and how teachers are selected to come teach year after year.

**Check it** says: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 10:32:55 AM
Need2Know more than half of what your wrote doesn't even flow or make any sense. Who are you to judge? Try using spell check.

**Need2Know** says: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 8:36:38 PM
Check it, you are more concerned about my one typographical error more less than the topic at hand. Evedentallae you are one of those, "I won't work past 3 unless I'm being compensated teachers." I wonder which basket you were placed in.

**cookie72** says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 3:29:03 PM
Check It! You must be one of my daughter teachers.

**Gallup Assessment** says: Friday, May 14, 2010 9:41:25 AM
What is it with the GALLUP test? No one seems to pass this psychological test! Someone please tell me the purpose for this assessment. Wow! How far will this go?

**frustrated teacher** says: Thursday, May 13, 2010 2:35:29 PM
Many of us are counting down the days for the end of the year. Schools that just implemented the new "Breakfast in the Classroom" are counting the hours. The program is a flop. I see students that eat a large breakfast at home, come to school and eat again. So much for fighting childhood obesity. This mornings breakfast was mini cinnamon pancakes, graham crackers, juice, and milk. What kind of breakfast is that? I see kids throwing food away and being wasteful. More students are coming to
school late because they know they will get to eat in the classroom after 8 AM. More parents need to get involved and stop the nonsense. They don’t listen to the teachers!

**Seriously?** says: Thursday, May 13, 2010 2:04:07 PM
I have gone through the Apollo hiring system and have seen how “effective” in choosing effective teachers can really be. For example I know, personally, that some of the candidates that have made it into the “pool” are not effective for many reasons which include; language proficiency(can’t speak English too well) and lack of work ethic (I have even caught this person asleep under a table several times). So, tell me how is it that these “effective” new teachers can actually be effective in a classroom?

**Need2Know** says: Saturday, May 15, 2010 9:28:52 AM
Understandable. It’s also a fact that many fair well on tests and can talk a great game, but this doesn’t make them the best. They don’t understand the importance of building relationships with others. Many of these same people just don’t have the ability to connect with people in any capacity. It is a false assumption to think that looking like you possess leadership qualities means you can deliver. How many people have these top candidates worked with that can testify to all of the help and support has been given in multiple capacities, such as assisting with developing lessons, training in multiple content areas, side by side coaching, giving constructive feedback immediately after observations be it formal or informal, or just celebrating teachers in general. How many of these new leaders truly, whole-heartedly have the “KIDS CAN DO” mentality? I am sure if the people screening these new leaders took the time to sit with the candidates to engage in Real Talk, they will realize many of these great test takers more than likely won’t make the BEST Leaders for these Urban Schools. Dig deeper before settling for what looks good on paper and who can respond correctly to a set of scripted questions scored using a rubric.

**Confused about new direction** says: Thursday, May 13, 2010 12:32:15 PM
Why is it individuals have to loose their jobs in order for the district to have effective teachers? The effective teachers are being forced out while the ones who really don’t care about teaching remain to mess up the students more. When did teaching become a data driven system? What happened to the candidates for life long learning? When a child enters the “real world” as a teen, young adult and finally a full adult, TAKS will not help them. TAKS can’t assist them in filling out an application, providing for their families, etc... We need to stop the madness and teach the students how to write and speak correctly. Handwriting is thrown out of the window just to get data. The way that the students talk is deplorable. They can’t put one word with another word without messing the whole sentence up. Their spelling is terrible but HISD is focused on College Bound-a joke. The students have little knowledge about nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc... The family values are not implemented at home so the teacher is spending half of the teaching time implementing values that should have been taught at home. What happened to letting the parents be responsible for their child’s actions? The schools are scared to involve the parents. Why is this? The whole thing with the redirection of the district is insane. In my opinion it is just people sitting at the top collecting a paycheck with no direction and purpose in their own lives so their purpose is to destroy others.

**Need2Know** says: Wednesday, May 12, 2010 7:31:05 PM
My job was eliminated and how unfortunate that is. Now, the goal is to ensure every classroom is filled with a Star Teacher, but if the district is supposed to look at the incompetent teachers’ data for the group of children I have been teaching since schools got into TAKS mode (back in October), how will this teacher be eliminated if my hard work has paid off in their favor? How are you going to determine teacher’s performance based on student’s progress/achievement if they are the teacher of record, but I am the specialist who has developed engaging lessons and taught the students to connect to the text while the teacher of record has sat back and will collect the ASPIRE bonus money from my hard labor? Basically, I am working to fatten an incompetent teachers’ pocket. The specialists teach teachers in the Fall and teach students in the Spring, so why can’t we be linked to these groups of students we have taught almost all year long when the students, teachers, principals, and executive principals know the Specialists have been assigned to specific campuses/classes for more than 60% of our time, but can’t collect one penny from ASPIRE? Make me understand this when the Executive Principals are receiving $18,000.00+ and they haven’t pulled a single group of students and haven’t developed one engaging lesson.

**BENAVIDES** says: Wednesday, May 12, 2010 3:45:35 PM
New updated SIS 2010-2011. Could you add a checklist; (point & click) ENROLLMENT INFORMATION for Data Entry on, Free lunch Appl rec’d, Student Assistance Questionnaire rec’d, Social Security card rec’d.

ADD-HISD EMPLOYEE Time clock: (@/from our Office desk computer) Instead of clip boards. [Comment Box: Reason for leaving early.] Point & click to Send to.

Thank you! :)

doann says: Wednesday, May 12, 2010 3:10:55 PM
I work for the district and am getting laid off. I am not a teacher but am working in a place that we see teachers everyday. There is only 8 in my dept but people are worried that we might take business away from their dept. MY JOB IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME and we are totally getting the SHAFT. The teachers will not have any place to go and do their own laminating, die cuts, or purchase materials on their schools accounts. We are not making millions of dollars, we are just trying to survive. But now THE BOARD can hire all their friends that are in need of a job. And really the more I think about it, the more it makes me sick.
Frustrated and concerned...I totally agree that it is too obvious a difference between schools in our district. I also find it hard to believe that one of the best schools is Westside and Lee is the worst. They are so close together! What is the difference? Apathy?

HUMBLETEXAN1 says: Wednesday, May 12, 2010 11:45:11 AM
I am outraged by an article in ABC13.com about wanting to pay students to go to school! STOP right there! Instead you should be working on a plan to reward the hard-working, school-attending children who will grow up to be winners. Why in God's name, would you reward a bunch of losers? Reward the winners and let the loser's see it and maybe that will be their incentive to do the right thing. Why would you even consider rewarding people who do not deserve it? I would like to speak to the person in charge of this project personally. I can be reached by email and then will provide my phone number for this conversation to be held after business hours. Yes, my public education rewarded me with a wonderful, nice paying job. I am so outraged, that I will do everything in my power to prevent this from happening. No tax payer or business should associate themselves with this crap!

Common Sense says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 3:09:34 PM
Apollo Consulting Group? Really, if ALL of the administration professionals (all hundreds of them), including the Superintendent, can't figure out how to improve the district without hiring outside help I don't think they should be in these higher level positions. STOP with the fancy lingo and ideas, "effective" teachers require GOOD pay; principals should be supportive, and on-campus, not whisked away to useless meetings; and clearly in our most at-risk schools it's the PARENTS that could use a little more educating, not the children. I can teach the child all about U.S. History, but if mom and dad don't emphasize the value of education and instill good manners and common sense into these children nothing will help them, unless only a passing TAKS score counts.

LMSW says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 12:16:20 PM
More School Social Workers!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Your Name says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 8:16:26 AM
budgeting is a major issues in HISD. low performance school should get more money to buy materials and resources to help the students succeed. HISD is the vice versa, you dont get much help finanically if you performing low.

frustrated and concerned says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 2:46:01 AM
I have a serious problem with the uneven playing field that many of our low income urban area schools are enduring. How is it that two schools, say for example, T.H. Rogers and Attucks M.S., are both in the same school district but yet are grossly disproportionate in every area such as availability of resources, technology resources, aesthetics of school building, and basic funds. The list goes on and on when pointing out the disparities of many other schools in low income areas. I just can not understand how on earth the gap has been allowed to get so wide. This is one of the biggest school districts in America, yet we have schools with teachers who can't even get a working computer as a resource. There are schools with no libraries, some kids at certain schools do not even know what an LCD projector is. But we are supposed to be teaching the 21st century learner. How are we supposed to cater to the 21st century learner, when there are schools in low income areas still lack many resources in technology. The ironic thing about all of this is that these kids who have been deprived of many basic resources are still expected to perform to the same standards and expectations as their privileged peers who attend schools such as T.H. Rogers. This is what I call insane! So I hope with the elimination of regions, will help in ensuring that all schools are equitable across the board, because the current situation has been a disheartening and discouraging fight for many who have to be exposed to limited resources but yet yield exceedingly high results.

TAKSHammer says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 9:50:22 AM
I agree 100%.

Need2Know says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 3:09:34 PM
I agree 200% with TAKSHammer and frustrated and concerned!

Graduating Senior from HISD says: Thursday, May 27, 2010 1:33:37 AM
My siblings and I attended T.H. Rogers from kindergarten to 8th grade, and I can't describe how much I love and appreciate having been able to be a part of this school. I wish every student could have the chance to experience what I went through there. However, what made this school special had little to do with anything technological or material. I know that there have been many improvements made to the school during the time I was there, and even more after I left. But, before all of that it was just a building with some serious mold and mildew problems. What made the school what it was were the teachers that really cared and knew what they were doing. However, I can think of several teachers that left to teach at private schools where they would receive better pay and better treatment from administration.

The T.H. Rogers administration and the wonderful PTO have recently fought to improve the school building and provide technology for classrooms. People that care so much about students and their environment should exist at all schools.
However, since such support is not always available, HISD should focus on working with all of its teachers to determine which teachers are not being properly provided for and why. A well qualified teacher should be able to teach at an HISD school without it requiring a sacrifice of better treatment or pay. HISD should be asking teachers of struggling schools what they need and what criticism they can give rather than threatening them with lay-offs and test score standards. Teachers provide the education, so HISD should care for and work with its teachers. Teachers that are encouraged to care and that feel supported are more likely to engage students and parents in to the education process.

While technology and school improvements are usually associated with schools that have better reputations, no LCD projector or library alone is going to transform a struggling school's performance. Yes, better resources help support teachers, but from what I've seen in HISD, teachers have little input in what resources are given to schools. Technology alone is not the answer; it must be coupled with communication between the administrators and the teachers using the resources.

I agree that there are inexcusable discrepancies between opportunities given to students in certain HISD schools. However, they go much deeper than technology and school resources, since these are only fractions of what a school receives as a result of care and support.

TAKSHAMMER says: Monday, May 10, 2010 8:15:52 PM
I'm wondering why we prepare students for the TAKS throughout their years in Texas schools, but the ultimate test that they must pass is the SAT. If we are getting our students college ready, why are we giving the TAKS? It has no correlation with the SAT whatever. The TAKS also does not just grade students on what they know. It is filled with trick questions. A student can have the right answer, but chooses the wrong one because of the wording. What are we testing? Math, reading, or test taking skills?

Parent 3 says: Monday, May 10, 2010 3:31:30 PM
Children are bombarded by scheduled activities, entertainment (TV, video games), and parents with little time. It would be interesting to have an experiment of just one year of having study hall. Study hall in a large room where total silence is enforced, teachers are available to help with questions on homework, and reading required when homework is finished.

In addition, I strongly believe in Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math. AR scores should be a percentage of all reading and english classes from K-12. Reading is key to learning.

I'm a strong believer in identifying learning disabilities early. Are all kindergarten students screened when they enroll? Time taken to assess basic skills, hearing, language, and eyesight should manadatory. A little time taken to assess could mean an early diagnosis to prevent future struggles. I'm sure you could get plenty of volunteers (medical students, speech therapy students, etc.) to make this a worthwhile effort.

Make all parents aware of volunteer needs in a school and supplies that could be donated. Many of us would be happy to help or send some supplies, if we were just asked. ASK!! I have a masters degree and would be glad to help tutor on a few Saturdays or schedule a day to be a substitute teacher for free. As a scout leader, I wouldn't ask for a parent to help all the time, but would choose things I knew they would be interested in doing or just call on them once or twice a year. They were always more than willing. Some parents are just shy.

For those parents who think it doesn't or shouldn't matter if you are at your child's school: it matters....your child knows you care, all the children are glad to see another adult interested in them, and the teachers appreciate the extra help (and they know someone cares about what the do for our children). You also learn a GREAT deal about what you child does every day, what demands their teacher has (and your empathy will grow), and where you can come up with ideas to help their school. A little goes a LONG way.

Save lots of money asking for volunteer substitute teachers. Challenge some professional group to take one day a year (i.e. Real estate agents). Yes, they still need to be trained and screened but it could save you a lot of money.

Parent2 says: Saturday, May 08, 2010 6:58:48 PM
There is not a single solution to the problems with education, but there are resolve for some issues.

1. Smaller class sizes (22) students in a class is too many.
2. Leadership-Stop hiring your friends and hire people with experience in student success. Principals should understand the challenges of being in the classroom. Three years in the classroom shows a lack of commitmment. Some principals don't have a clue about teaching.
3. Administrators from the district office should spend at least a day in a teacher's position.
4. Parents should be held accountable for their children.
5. Teachers are not miracle workers although they often appear to be.

I volunteer at my son's school. He has the best teacher in the world, and my son has made tremendous progress. But, there is one student that I can't understand how she tolerates. He is very disruptive, but this teacher does not send him to the office, she does not stop the class flow to manage his behavior, she has a unique way to manage him and keep the other students on task and learning. If I was her, I would pack my bags and leave. She doesn't she returns everyday and the district thinks it's a piece of cake.

Open Your Eyes! Teaching is the most challenging PROFESSION that exist. I'm very serious.

At risk children says: Thursday, May 06, 2010 8:27:30 PM
A student success depends on the teacher's ability to assist the student become confident in his/her ability to succeed in school. To find learning of value to them. Teachers must find ways in which learning becomes significant, of value, to each individual student.

WOW says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 2:54:17 PM
Teachers, Parents and Students are responsible about the success of each individual student. Teachers should not and they are not the only ones accountable for the success of every child.

cookie72 says: Thursday, May 06, 2010 3:19:55 PM
Mr. Gier I am asking that you give a new title to counselors in High Schools. The scheduling department would be better name. Most have no skills for counseling because all they can think about is making sure the child schedule is correct. When it is time to graduate in some instance you have to get the counselor to write a letter of recommendation and he or she does not even know you and it's not even a priority to do because he or she is working on next years schedules. Please help!

Harvard Grad says: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 2:04:31 PM
If experienced teachers and principals have the most impact on school and student success, then why are approximately 65% of students graduating from high school in Houston? I would have to disagree with you as I believe that it is not experience teachers and principals that have the most impacts--its EFFECTIVE. Experience, in my opinion does not get results. Passion, knowledge, and skills do. Thus, there are a lot of great, experienced, and effective teachers and principals, but there are a lot of ineffective ones as well. Teacher quality in general must improve dramatically in order to see improved student outcomes. This can be attained by increasing the knowledge and pedagogical skills of our teachers. While teaching, I do not remember anyone helping me increase my content-area knowledge, yet I was expected to get my students ready for the TAKS and beyond. Luckily I was a biology major and I am intelligent, so I was able to teach myself and learn as we along. But, many don't have that drive. Hence, we must provide EFFECTIVE instructional support to our teachers.

Additionally, we must improve the type of professional development opportunities that we are offering our teachers. I have been to a ton of PDs and most in unhelpful. I would invest in culturally relevant pedagogy for HISD, considering our high population of Latino and African-American students.

Finally, we must increase collaboration among teachers. I think that if we formed subject-area focus groups and shared best practices and maybe even had an online database to upload/download materials, that would substantially increase student academic achievement. That way, students at Attucks middle schools could have access to the resources and materials at T.H. Rogers middle school and their would be such a gap in achievement. Also, there are a lot of high performing teachers that are out there. See what they are doing. Video tape them. Record them. Send teachers to observe their classrooms. But the key is to make sure that they are actually getting results and that they are high quality. Thanks for listening.

Not too old says: Friday, April 30, 2010 4:46:28 PM
I find it questionable that someone says all the teachers with 30 plus years should retire. This sounds like a generalization that you "are too old to teach" Really? Maybe some veteran teachers are ready for retirement, but many are still enjoying the day-to-day interaction with students, the joy of seeing a child learn, the joy of knowing they have the experience and knowledge base to teach any child. Research states that experienced teachers and principals have the most impact on school and student success. Yes there are great teachers at all experience levels. I know a 2nd year teacher who I would trust with any child. She is a gifted, natural teacher who can teach any grade level any subject. I know teachers who are in general education and special education who can motivate and teach and help children reach higher than anyone expects. They have 1,2,5,10, 15, and 32 years experience and all in between.

I know teachers who needed to retire after 1, 5, 10 or 25 years. They either lost their zeal for the job, never had the passion or just saw it as a "job" not a calling. Many never had the opportunity to truly improve. No assistance just-“gotcha” and negative support from principals.

You can't look at age, years of experience, which schools, or parts of town someone works in to determine their effectiveness.
Principals and other administrators must start by being proactive, encouraging and looking at all variables. If it appears only those with "30+" years or encouraged to leave that smacks of ageism! Am I a better teacher at 30 years that 1 or 5. You bet! I know more about curriculum, interventions, data, classroom management, instructional strategies, and all that goes with it. With the right support, professional development and reduction of redundant and meaningless paperwork I could teach many more years. I am not less valuable because of my years or age. Are you OLD at 52? If so maybe all the administrators including the superintendent are too. Maybe it is "sci-fi" time-No one past 30 should be in the schools. Food for thought

Need2Know says: Sunday, May 23, 2010 10:03:26 PM
I am saddened to hear that someone would suggest teachers with 30+ years retire. I have worked with teachers who have been in education for 30+ years who are moving, shaking and teaching like they are 2nd year teachers. On the other hand, I know teachers who have been in the class 2 years who need to find another career. It is not always about the years, but the commitment and compassion a person has for what they do. I concur with you Not too Old, you can't look at age, yrs of exp, to determine effectiveness, look at the person and their commitment.

Concerned says: Friday, June 04, 2010 10:23:07 PM
I agree. Look at the person and their commitment to educating children not that they have no teaching experience or they have too much experience.

No Excuses says: Friday, April 30, 2010 2:32:20 PM
I have a question. What support is provided by the district to the children that DO NOT qualify for Special Education? We stress that our students are college bound and this is wonderful for those with the potential to be successful. However, the children that are failing yet are working to their full capacity are held accountable for a test that they are not able to pass. This frustration is one reason that students drop out of school. When and how will we help these students that are falling thru the cracks?

allarenotthesame says: Saturday, May 01, 2010 8:30:43 AM
This is a very valid point. Many of us have referred students who need so much more than we can give in a regular classroom with 22+ students (I just got my 23rd student a week before TAKS). These students are the ones who have low IQ's according to testing and are working up to full potential. They simply have problems that no one can identify. IQ tests are so limited and subjective. Yet, if a student is working at the same level as someone has decided is the cutoff point for that IQ at that age, then he/she is not expected to ever increase achievement by district special education standards. How are we the average or above average teacher supposed to address these needs and increase this child's achievement if even the best diagnosticians in HISD agree will never improve. But these kids are part of our EVAAS scores also. oh well miracles, I guess.

1 teacher says: Friday, April 30, 2010 12:54:10 PM
I have been reading through the posts and I am encouraged by the fact that this feedback forum exists. I hope that district personnel really listen. I to see interesting and informed comments from parents, teachers, and personnel around the from all around the district.

teacher 560 says: Friday, April 30, 2010 12:34:04 PM
I am a little concerned about the order of the "key stakeholders" in education and agree with the some of the other posters that more input should be taken from the community, parents, and students, which are lower on the list than should be and seem to have not had the chance to give as meaningful feedback.

Need2Know says: Thursday, May 27, 2010 12:29:09 AM
Teacher560, I totally agree with you. Many school leaders don't want to hear what the constituents have to say in regards to the daily functions of the schools in which their children are students. If the input of ALL key stakeholders were taken into consideration, we would get more parental support which leads to less behavior problems which will lead to higher student achievement. Concerned parents' voices MUST be heard and respected. The schools must begin to allow parents to reconnect with the schools.

teacher 1 says: Friday, April 30, 2010 12:30:06 PM
I found myself a little worried about some of the comments of students about teachers not being prepared. I agree that some teachers get out of best practices or simly do not have the time or money to keep up to date.

How will teachers be improved? Will future training not only be required but financed? If no more money is given for a Masters (not what is left of the pay change is any incentive) what other incentives will be given for further training? Training is often expensive. For Example, a 3 day workshop at Texas A&M on open source programs is over $500. This is a bargain and subsidized by foundations, etc.. AP summer institutes are $550 and usually, but not always, subsidized by the school. If a teacher goes to a couple of these sorts of trainings each summer - which may or may not be enough to truly stay current and motivated - that can get expensive. Taking a college class a semester - or equivalent in professional training workshops which are often much more expensive - A teacher could easily spend a significant portion of their paycheck on training.

Most teachers would love to be gain more education and training. Many teachers become teachers because they love education
and learning, but the resources are just not always available for them to continue training and learning on a consistent basis. The results is that some of our more experienced teachers do get behind the times just as a matter of economics. This is especially true of our teachers who are supporting families on their salaries. They may want to take a class, but can not afford either the time (between family and second jobs), but perhaps more often the money.

**allarenothessame** says: Saturday, May 01, 2010 8:42:43 AM
Well, this is not exactly an accurate view of what is available. HISD offers many trainings that would benefit many teachers that are of no cost to the teacher or school. Even these short trainings would help some of the teachers I work with. The admin at my first HISD school determined that the 45 hours required by the district could not be at school during school hours. These hours are already being paid for. Also, you could not count in the 45 hours trainings that you were being paid extra-duty pay for. But at subsequent schools, they count all of the inservices during the time before the first day of school. We get paid for those. We can also count workshops that we are getting paid to go to.

Too many teachers that I have worked with are not willing to give up a single minute passed 3:25 sign out time if they are not getting extra duty pay. Even with that, many teachers refuse to go to perfectly good trainings because they “have a life” after school. Our job requires continued learning about what we can do to improve our work. I wouldn’t want to go to a doctor who has too much golfing to do to continue keeping up with advances in research to keep me well or make me better. Most teachers do not consider themselves professionals because professionals KNOW that they must keep up with what is out there.

They simply are too lazy to believe they need to do anything different from what they already do (regardless of age or experience).

**bonnie** says: Friday, April 30, 2010 8:52:34 AM
The district can save millions of dollars in the future if veteran teachers with 30 years or more are offered a retirement package. The package should include salaries for the next 3 years! I have spoken with many of these veterans, they would welcome the retirement offer!!!!!!!!!!

**August to January** says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 9:47:31 PM
How many people are aware that the Stanford test is given in January? How many are aware that K-2 teachers are assessed based on growth on these tests from the January of the year before? So a K-2 teacher is “graded” on how much growth the students made with another teacher from January to May of the prior year, possible summer school for some students, and a summer in which many students are not involved in literacy at all, and the current teacher’s instruction and guidance from mid-August to January? Probably not many are aware of these things. It has always been fascinating to me that K-2 teachers can make the same bonuses but Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten are not required by Texas State Law. The Stanford 10 and the Aprenda were not ever intended upon conception many, many years ago to be used as promotion standards and certainly are not made up of grade level material. I have had to explain to so many parents that their friends first grader truly can not read like a high school student even though the student received a POST-High School rating on these tests. I put no stock in how my children do on a test they are afraid of because it can cause them to be retained. I put no stock in a test in which students from low-income, gang-oriented, HOPELESS (homes with little or no hope for literacy in Spanish or English) families are compared to those from River Oaks families who can hire personal tutors at $50.00 per hour and who actually expose their children to the world outside their windows.

Simply pathetic standards to determine bonuses do not make teachers work harder. It makes them cheat if they are unable to turn around their scores and are afraid to lose their jobs. It makes teachers who work hard every year but have not had the break-throughs or learned the best ways to educate their students feel like there is no hope to improve their situations.

Why would new teachers want to continue under these circumstances?

**Malu** says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:39:27 PM
After reading all the wonderful things that are being planned for our district, I would like to applaud the leaders who are working together to become the best district in the nation.

I personally would like to participate in the planning process, not only with my comments but also by providing my time and efforts to support in any way the current administration and its plans.

Thanks

**Unsure** says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:33:28 PM
I was supportive of efforts to get qualified people in positions within HISD. At my school, we all received layoff notices so to speak, and were told we could reapply for jobs if qualified, however, if we failed to find a job, contracts would not be renewed. I am fine with that, if that is how it goes. My problem is the manner in which the process is working. Why are district people that have layoff notices interviewing the people for the limited positions that are slotted after reorganization? Professional development is picking and choosing who they want back. Please look at the special education monstrosity. In some cases, people that were in the district offices are getting the jobs that were to be offered first to the school staff that were displaced.
One job notice did not have qualifications or job duties described. As a displaced worker, how would one know whether they could do the job or not without a job description? Additionally, before interviews were held, people had been told they had one of the few positions available. Oh. That was off the record! Lastly, when some were interviewed, the person over the process did not know specifics of the job duties, details of the job, nor is she/he qualified. Is anyone checking the certifications of these leaders for a good fit? No more superintendents without certifications, or elementary people supervising high school staff. Who is watching that the displaced district people do not put their old staff members in the jobs, which should be freely competed for by duly qualified people? Make the process fair, Take my job, but give it to someone that can do it better; not to a friend to prevent them from experiencing the perils of unemployment. What happened to fairness? Better yet, what happened to being qualified? Isn’t that what got us into this mess in the first place?

paige says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:03:44 PM
Hello! Thanks for the opportunity to speak out about HISD. I have a son at Kolter Elementary and I have been very happy with his education. We have the means to send him to private school, but chose HISD and Kolter. He is in the GT program there and is doing very well. The teachers and staff are wonderful. The issues that concern me relate to the teachers. Every year when the bonuses are reported I am at a loss. The extreme disparity between the amounts given are concerning. I know K-2 grade teachers do not give TAKS tests, but is their worth really that far below some of these math and science teachers in middle and high schools? It is insulting for a teacher, who works very hard, dedicates his/her life to the kids and influences these young people so much in such positive ways to be given so much less in bonuses simply because they don't have the results to show for in standardized tests. Would these high school math and science teachers have the results they do without the strong foundation given to these students by their elementary teachers? And the teachers who teach in low income/high risk schools...why are they held to the same standards as teachers in wealthy areas with involved parents? I was told (and correct me if I am wrong) by a teacher in HISD, that a standard letter was sent to every teacher telling them to speak to their principal about their contracts because they may be terminated and may want to resign before that happens. Is this a respectful way to treat someone who puts their heart and soul into our children? It seems like this new campaign to get rid of teachers who are not doing well has become a witch hunt. Morale is what makes or breaks the success of anyone in any job. Low morale of teachers will seep into the classrooms, and our children are the ones who will suffer. I also am aware of the possibility of taking away the tiny raise given to teachers who receive master’s degrees or PhDs. This is absurd; another example of disrespect. I choose to see teachers as people who want the best for our children. I know there are teachers who should not continue, but there is a vast number who are wonderful and deserve to be treated as invaluable.

I also hope as the superintendent of a large and influential school district you will speak out against these lawmakers who are insisting on using their political power to further their own political agendas. I am appalled at some of the changes that they are trying to put into place in our children's text books. What’s the point of sending my child to public school only to have him heavily influenced by the personal beliefs of a small but powerful group of individuals? If I wanted that kind of teaching, I would have chosen to send him to private school.

Thank you for this opportunity! I hope my voice can make a difference.

HISD team says: Tuesday, April 27, 2010 8:31:58 AM
Elem. School at St. Georges Place is a nice school but seems that they only care about getting money for the spark park. They want to make a track but they children don't have a gym; they have to exercise in a small room or the halls which disrupt classes. Where is common sense? The school has great potential but administrators are focused on something else than academics.

Real Solutions says: Monday, April 26, 2010 11:48:14 AM
I strongly believe that the positive changes for students in HISD are relatively simple. They just need to be funded and put into place. If, as a district, we can make a commitment to reasonable student/teacher ratios, helping professionals (social Workers/counselors) on every campus, technology in the classroom and teacher training on that technology, and quality curriculum, then we would be successful. Smaller class sizes would allow teachers to teach to all students. They would be able to get to know students and their individual needs. Classes are so big now that we are loosing students. Smaller class sizes would increase learning, decrease discipline issues, and improve student's belief in himself or herself. All students would feel connected and welcome rather then just another student to get lost in the shuffle. Each campus needs helping professionals, social workers or counselors, that really work with students, families, and teachers. These professionals could help with problem solving, behavior issues, social services, family issues, attendance, crisis situations, etc. They could also identify the campus needs and develop specific programs to meet the needs. They could teach parents how to support their children in the educational setting. It seems as though most campuses do not have this support service for the students. So many issues could be prevented if each campus had a social worker or counselor. Finally, technology and curriculum must improve to meet the needs of today's students. We must stop trying to teach today's students with yesterday's methods. Yes, some of the "old school" methods are very effective and should continue, but many of our students are bored and need to be taught in varying ways with varying methods. We must keep them stimulated and interested. As this happens, teachers must be provided with the necessary professional development and with time to explore technology and curricula so that they become comfortable with new teaching methods. It is time to modify the teaching methods to meet students where they are and to prepare them for today's world. Of course, there are many other ways to improve, but if we are truly student focused, these are the top priorities as I see it. These changes will help all students - special ed, bilingual, general education, GT, at-risk - rather quickly. The
changes will also be cost effective in the long run because students will be more successful and more productive both in school and after graduation.

not-ferdinand says: Friday, April 30, 2010 6:11:10 PM
You would be encourage by the Montessori style design. It allows getting to know students over a 3 year period.

enoughalready says: Sunday, April 25, 2010 3:47:46 PM
Educating our children will only happen through a partnership between the parents, the teachers, the school administrators and the community.

Parents:
1. make sure your children go to bed early enough so they arrive at school rested.
2. understand how much trouble it is for a teacher to report and attempt to remediate your child's bad behavior. Make sure your child understands there will be consequences if a teacher calls to report bad behavior.
3. understand that HISD provides a variety of resources for YOU to keep tabs on your child's academic performance. Use them and take appropriate corrective actions.
4. stop expecting the school to take over parenting responsibilities.

Teachers:
1. stop putting up with disruptive students in your classroom. Use the system for reporting bad behavior, every time.
2. stop worrying about standardized testing and teach. If you are doing a good job, the tests should be a no-brainer.
3. join your union - you're going to need some help if you are going to try to be a teacher rather than try to keep fulfilling ever-changing administrative mandates.

Schools:
1. make sure every teacher can pass the TAKS. If they can't, get rid of them.
2. back up your teachers. They are responsible for teaching, not for making sure your administrative numbers are met.
3. work to make every school safe for every child every day. Children will not come to school if they fear for their safety.
4. understand that not every child is meant for college. Help those that aren't find alternatives that will work for them.

Community:
1. pay good teachers what they are worth. Insist bad ones be fired.
2. understand that the chaos that constitutes every school day is unacceptable - demand that schools become safe places of education and growth rather than holding pens.
3. be involved with local schools even if you don't have children!
4. stop expecting schools to solve every community problem. They should not be day care, case management, discipline centers, etc. They should be places where motivated people get educated. Those that do not want an education and whose family does not want them educated should be allowed to leave.

Guest says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 2:30:23 PM
I agree whole heartedly.

Lilo says: Friday, April 23, 2010 10:23:31 PM
I am concerned at so many changes coming from the top. True change should come from the people. in this case, parents and students and teachers. Stop talking, Grier, and start listening. I am not at all impressed by you. I fear for the children, suffering an onslaught of egomaniacal adults, who seem to be completely out of touch. Step one, listen, step two listen, step three listen. When people are heard, they eventually come to clarity, and can take specific action to address their own issues. Your vague generalities are a sure sign of ineptitude. I don't believe for a minute that you, Terry Grier, care about anything but your resume. I haven't heard you say or write anything that makes me believe in you at all. Good luck on your next job, I hope you find it soon.

not-ferdinand says: Friday, April 23, 2010 6:23:37 PM
Part One, continued in next submission.
I have a few pertinent thoughts on school reformation that have been stirred into hopefulness by statements and actions coming out of Dr. Grier's office. Also I'm motivated by this quote from the 4-23 HISD enews. "Rather than being upset by the tactics of charter schools, we should instead begin to quickly learn from them about how to treat our clients—our parents and students—and how to establish a culture of high expectations." Let me respond your requested culture shift needs to be in the hearts and minds of administrators. I do not know any teacher or on-the-ground principal that does not believe in and want the best for their students. I am convinced the problem lies within the educational triumvirate of Curriculum publishers/district curriculum developers/and Education universities who have a vested financial interest in the status quo. I believe that you, Dr. Grier, greatly desire to make a cultural shift in HISD, but you are bucking inertia and capital interests. Today's teachers are like the nation of Israel when Moses first came and Pharaoh said, you shall make bricks without straw, the tally shall not be reduced! The system you are attempting to reform, which is so miserably failing so many children, drives the desire to learn out of the child at a young age and then it seems the majority of funds are wildly thrown in an attempt to redeem them. Why not start right and keep the
I would also like to ask this about charter schools. Is it not true that although they do not skim the best students from a district do they have very specific ways of dealing with parents? It seems to me that parents of charter school children are not invited to be "involved" in the school, but are instead commanded to be involved in their child’s proper care and education at home! And if they fail to maintain a minimum effort then their child is expelled? Then in public schools we must take what we get from parents (I do not mean our students) and if we are fully committed and in steady contact we might possibly woo and wish and "counsel" them into doing a better job. I am sure that this is one major reason charter schools do better. Also in agreement with your recent paring down of unneeded and redundant positions in HISD, I have been told by a charter school principal that they are able to do more with their state allotments, despite the lack of taxation for capital funds, by using smart and lean management.

not-ferdinand says: Friday, April 23, 2010 6:22:35 PM
This charter school pays the same as HISD, has better medical benefits and pays 50% more for extra tutoring hours as well as providing other exceptional benefits to their teachers. It was on the verge of collapse a few years back and now is exemplary. So when you say we need to “quickly learn… how to treat our clients” I’d be happy to take this charter school’s example and begin to make non-negotiable demands on parents. Especially the ones who don’t (or possibly can’t) get their child to bed on time, and feed them good food, and read to them, and attempt to give them some basic reading and number skills! This is the other prong of education reform that the charters seem to understand, many parents are desperately in need of parenting themselves. Additionally, in an article I recently read that came from your office I saw another glimmer of hope that you really get the point (I do not mean our students) and if we are fully committed and in steady contact we might possibly woo and wish and "counsel" them into doing a better job. I am sure that this is one major reason charter schools do better. Also in agreement with your recent paring down of unneeded and redundant positions in HISD, I have been told by a charter school principal that they are able to do more with their state allotments, despite the lack of taxation for capital funds, by using smart and lean management.

Falcon says: Friday, April 23, 2010 6:16:08 PM
An unacceptable number of Latinos, particularly immigrant class, continue to experience educational failure. In terms of school structural barriers (that is, factors within the power of schools to change, the research data clearly implicates the "subtractive" nature of the schooling process (see Valenzuela, 1999) as a primary factor for school failure. The native language and culture of Latino students is rarely treated as capital worthy of life-long preservation, but rather, solely as a means to transition into an English-only class environment in the most expedient manner. This stop-gap measure does not recognize that the Spanish language (along with English) forms the ethnolinguistic core that is the essence of being Latino in America. Essentially, Latinos that retain a measure of competence in the native language while acquiring English do well academically and socially. Those that become bi-literate (reading and writing both languages equally) excel much more. HISD, with its majority Latino and Latino immigrant population, needs to consider the profoundly positive educational impact that will occur given a paradigm shift toward the universal goal of bi-literacy. English-Spanish dual-language instruction makes the most logical sense as it meets the criterion of preparing students for an increasingly global economy, and meets college language learning requirements more effectively than reliance upon traditional foreign language instruction. Further, a rapid expansion of dual-language programs throughout HISD would not only serve to "level the playing field" for Latino and Latino immigrant students, it might provide the stimulus for strengthening the Houston economy for decades to come by producing graduates equipped with a linguistic competitive edge. HISD, proportionately the greatest provider of education for Houston's Latino community, can no longer afford to dismiss the identity-building and self-actualization needs of Latino students. The best academic outcome for the Latino community in Houston schools is to facilitate the development of functionally bi-literate individuals that retain/acquire "the best of both worlds."

not-ferdinand says: Friday, April 23, 2010 6:28:31 PM
Not to be naive in the face of such erudite cognition but why not spent that money on other world trade languages like Chinese, etc. and encourage parents to maintain the language and culture at home? Achieving tri-lingual status for the currently bilingual student.

wondering says: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:22:03 PM
I find the statistics that reference Hispanic males as having the highest dropout rate interesting. Then I wonder, of those Hispanic males that dropped out, how many of them were "Non-English" speakers, and maybe realized that at the age they were coming into the HISD school system, that they would be able to support their family and learn English more quickly if they got a full time job instead of going to school where instruction in content areas (science, history, math etc) were being done so in English or ESI classes. Do schools in HISD offer, to non-English speaking recent immigrant students, English as a "foreign" language much like students who learn English in, say, Turkey would? Why not provide incoming Non-English speaking students, who are coming in at a high-school level English instruction as a foreign language, not as "immersion" (taking content area classes in English) or an ESL process?

Does HISD not believe the theory of language learning/acquistion in regards to BICS and CALP and CUP (Common
Concerned Citizen

LULU needed at some campuses do not 'break' a school that is already performing above expectations.

grade test in Spanish and barely passes on the third try, and then transitions to English in 4th grade and has a 90 something percent passing rate... there is something that is not right here. It then looks bad on the teacher because instead of showing green (growth) when they've worked so incredibly hard just to get these struggling students to pass-- they show no growth and are rated as medium-performing teachers. Also, if the child is red in Reading-- how can they be green and 90 something percent passing in writing? There needs to be a more effective and fair way of evaluating the year of transition.

Concerned Citizen

HISD needs to review its budget and funding process. I support schools being able to make strategic budget decisions when it comes to community involvement and a select portion of the operational budget needs, but many of the schools facility decisions and a larger portion of the operational budget need be handled by more experienced decision makers. I think the those not directly involved in the budget process on the school level would be absolutely shocked with the amount of money being spent and the decision making process going into these decisions. School administrators are better served to concentrate on the education of the students at the school and leave much of the budgetary decisions to those in HISD's central and regional offices responsible for the creation of various district contracts and budget setting.

Active Parent

HISD serves a large and varied community. Some of the schools are doing well now, and we need to ensure that changes needed at some campuses do not 'break' a school that is already performing above expectations.

LULU

ABOUT FLEMMING MIDDLE SCHOOL
I am not satisfied. Student's do go to field trips. At the end of the year. They go to a collage. But guess who does all the work student's. They force student's to bring back a certain amount of money back or they will not participate in the activity. Like right now they have this scratch a dot sheet. You scratch and whatever you scratch is how much you donate. It runs from .15cents to $3.00. But not alot of people want to scratch off. But the student's need to bring back a total of $100 from the scratch sheet. An the student's are selling candy. Especially the 8th graders. If they don't bring the scratch a dot sheet (the $100) and sold a box of candy. They will not be able to go to the prom. Each student will end up paying for their own prom entrance. Yeap, the student's will pay out of their pocket if they could of not scratch all of the dots or sold all of the candy to go to their own prom. Teacher's should say; Thankyou so much for helping, participating. Not force them to bring a certain amount back. For them to take the student's to field trips or like the 8th graders right now, force them to sell everything for their prom entrance. They even charge students and parents to see the school programs. That's why they go to field trips. They force them. That is not showing them how to learn to participate.

Positive

No one is ever forced to do anything. If a student can't participate, then they can simply decline. They will get the same benefits as those who participate. All of the money raised at Fleming by the students goes right back to the students. None of it goes to the adults AT ALL!!! They do more than field trips at the end of the year. The students go throughout the year to various outside learning activities. So, if you have a student who doesn't want to participate in fundraising, then they don't have to. Simply tell the school you don't care to participate. There is no penalty for this. If they choose to pay for the 8th grade dance (there is no prom in 8th grade) without fundraising, then that is also an option. Please don't undermine the efforts of the school to try to do things for the students that are above and beyond. The only thing that they are required to do is educate them daily from 8:30 until 3:50. All of the other things are things that they choose to do for the kids to make school a more fun and pleasing place. If they shut all of the events down and do nothing with the kids, then we would all be complaining as well....my point is, try to work with the school instead of criticize them. They do a bunch for our kids.

20twenty

Who makes drastic changes THEN creates a strategic plan? Looks like this should have been implemented 6 months ago.

borkie

While I believe that we should have a great teacher in every classroom...it starts with having good principals on every campus. EEVAS is wrong. Until the district can clearly define what it means and how it can be used with every campus professional to fairly evaluate staff across the board, it should not be used. I do not think the plans that are being put into place are very well planned or thought out, ie the Breakfast in Class Program. We were given training and information on this program. We were shown a video with what it would look like regarding time and the quality of food. Today, we started the program. My 5th graders did not get their food until 8:05 and a Smuckers Cheese Sandwich (processed), animal crackers, juice, and milk was what was served...not the healthy whole grain fruit muffins and other samples which were shown in the video. What my kids were getting in the cafeteria for breakfast before was better quality than that. If food services was not prepared for this, then the district
should have postponed the program until next year when food and schedules could be adequately be prepared. Change is necessary in any organization, but it is how leadership implements that change that will push our district to be better.

**HISD teacher** says: Friday, April 23, 2010 8:33:14 AM
At one elementary school, the breakfast was a pop tart and cookies. This is the Breakfast in Class Program?

**justanother teacher** says: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 5:09:06 PM
So much good information is out there about how to get this job done. Even in HISD, we have great teachers who get the job done on a consistent basis and care about sharing the information with others. There are so many teachers who are able to show us how to fix many of these ongoing issues with our students. However, those that care and would help others are not asked and, if asked, are not listened to when they share the secrets. What is an even bigger shame to the concept of professional educators is that there are many who know how to do the job well and will not share for fear that someone else may take the information and do even better. Until people stop worrying about getting "Their fare share" and more and begin creating and atmosphere of professionalism, we are going to continue this downhill struggle. I understand that parents want the best of their children. I did. I understand that they believe even unknown change is good. It isn't. Parents can not possible know how to get this job done. They have not experienced it nor have they attempted to do it. But until we "fix" the lower grades across the district, nothing will improve. In case anyone cares, I have two degrees in Early Childhood Education (third Grade and younger) and have been teaching for over 20 years. There is no easy fix. It will take years of people getting over their laziness and being willing to step up to the real work of determining their own inconsistencies and lack of knowledge, finding out what they need to know, and putting into serious practice daily. 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.

**Sallymatu** says: Sunday, April 18, 2010 4:40:48 PM
The "right on target" article ("Response to Intervention...") found under National News within our E-news(4-16) is the web in which we (HISD) are entrapped.

**concerned Mom** says: Sunday, April 18, 2010 3:44:59 PM
I think there is a need and a place for change. However, I am concerned that relationships building is not taking place (between upper admin and staff/community/parents) and because of that there is little buy in. Without that investment from the masses, it will just all pass as another education fad when the next new guy comes along. Parents, teachers, campus based administrators and the community are aprehensive about the rapid change. Better PR might help, but also- some participation in the change process form the ranks and the community could be powerful.

**Guest** says: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 9:43:07 AM
Fleming Middle School far exceeds their counterparts when educating the African-American sub-group. I am a parent, and I have researched this. They are consistently spending money on the kids. The kids there go everywhere. If you ask them where the money goes, they can tell you. Every semester, the kids go visit colleges at no cost except to buy lunch in college cafeteria, they take trips out of state, and expose the kids to a bunch! So, I say that those "ladies" are doing a great job. I am satisfied.

**jelly** says: Saturday, April 17, 2010 3:46:53 PM
Are we also looking at surrounding schools around the district. Fleming Middle School has too many women on top. T his school also make students buy free dress passes if they are free why are they paying. It use to be you would get free dress for perfect attendance good grades or when you were caught doing something good. My nephews mom can't afford to pay for free dress and the community are apprehensive about the rapid change. It's only showing students everything is at a monetary cost. Shame on schools who keep this up. I thought students were wearing uniform for the reason of not having students feeling inferior.

**Been there 1** says: Saturday, April 17, 2010 1:36:18 PM
I am saddened by the comments I am reading. Everyone seems to be "out there" with specific issues or general concerns. You know what? Let's get back to why schools exist: to educate our children and increase the chance that they will become productive citizens. That being said...a band-aid approach or any other "get better quick" scheme will not change our schools. No one single superintendent or principal can cure the societal ills of public schools overnight or without deep, intensive, research-based thought. When the restructuring of community schools(all involved--principals, techers, parents, students themselves, radio stations, tv promoters, technology gaming, etc.) takes into account how we can pool all our resources to positively impact how our youngsters "view" school and what it can do for them in their future, then this is perhaps a place to start. Our children are overexposed everywhere, including the home. Some children can act as adults at home, but are asked to behave like children in school. The opposite is also true in some cases. There has to be true perception, representation and modeling of what we really expect schools to do. As I wrote in the beginning, no one single person or entity can do it. It has to be a concerted effort on the part of ALL who really want HISD to work. Blame and pointing fingers only add fuel to the flame. Stop comparing KIPP. Remember, their students and some of the teachers came from HISD. Go figure... Perhaps the call for a purposeful, orderly community forum (several, perhaps) is in order, especially now with so many changes to community schools where so much generational history resides. Quick fixes like calling a school magnet to change the image and reduce failure is like putting lipstick on a pig and expecting it to start blotting and carrying a purse!
Can we move toward some medium of meaningful discussion??

**just a thought** says: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 11:45:34 PM
It seems that everyone has a part to play in reaching our overall goal. However, it becomes quite a challenge to manage the safety and academic needs when there is no system in place district wide to provide support when non-teachers are off campus. We have subs that work to fill in the teaches, but who do we have when the teacher aides or office staff become sick, or attend a training? Right now we must pull from our staff on campus, which means not 1 but 2 vital positions and being completed that day as they should be. If it is a teacher aide, then the students are missing out that receive the direct support of the aide. If it is an office staff member it sometimes comes down to 1 person answering the phones, signing in and assisting the parents and visitors, and attending to the needs of the children as they stream into the office. I believe that there is a need to have some sort of subs available for these vital roles. I have seen it in other school districts, Klein ISD uses a system to provide for their support staff. They seem successful with it.

**hmmm** says: Thursday, April 22, 2010 8:25:01 PM
Have you asked yourself how much subs get paid? $90 a day! And they do not show up to cover jobs because is not worth their money... no wonder! just gas an lunch and they made $80 a day...minus taxes...$60! Would you do it? Now wonder about a sub for clerks and ta's? $30 dollars after all deductions??? Not me! HISD needs to revist the substitute teacher salaries

**txgirl** says: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 11:56:46 AM
Teachers should be able to sign in online instead of wasting paper. Also the subline should be available online.

**BLAME_GAME** says: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 11:16:05 AM
The Houston Independent School District has been sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars as it hands out pink slips to nearly 100 teachers, critics at the local teacher's union said Tuesday.

Houston Federation of Teachers leader Gayle Fallon pointed to Texas Education Agency spreadsheets showing federal stimulus dollars and annual formula dollars, which are based on enrollment.

“We're looking at hundreds of millions of dollars in unspent federal funds,” she said.

She's talking about roughly $300 million, the majority of it consisting of federal stimulus dollars. The issue is being highlighted in The Houston Federation of Teachers' next newsletter, which raised the question: Why is so much money left on the table when so many teachers might lose their jobs?

HISD Spokesman Norm Uhl said he has the answer.

“You can't use it to offset general fund shortfalls,” Uhl said. “Federal funds have very specific rules you can use it for “A” but you can't use it for “B.”

How about departments where that money is supposed to be spent? Special education stands out on the spreadsheets, because of the $42 million available -- not a penny has been spent. The department is being audited.

“Because of a bureaucratic snag the special ed. kids don't get their special ed. Money?” Fallon asked.

“It's not a bureaucratic snafu,” Uhl explained. “We are purposefully doing an audit of special education.”

HISD said it believes spending that $42 million after the audit, is simply smarter.

School districts have two years to spend most federal monies. Since 2011 is expected to be an even tougher financial test, HISD like many districts, is deliberately saving for next year.

“Some we purposefully put into next year's budget because we knew we were going to be facing some difficulties,” Uhl said.

That did not sit well with Fallon.

“School improvement, credit recovery, drop out recovery, individual programs all those things we could've had, this year and didn't because they put it in a savings account?” she asked.

HISD emphasizes all the money will be spent by the deadline. But when all that extra stimulus money is gone in 2011, many say they fear that will mean a real fight over much fewer dollars.

**bonnie** says: Tuesday, April 13, 2010 11:03:47 AM
Concerned Parent

I would suggest to Dr. Grier to offer veteran teacher of 30 years or more a package to retire!!!!!!!!
Most of these teacher would take from the ones I have spoken to!

yungsr

If a child has discipline at home then discipline at school should be no worry...kids and PARENTS nowadays think they can talk
to people any kind of way they feel because they thinks it their right...Kids see this and think they can act crazy when they feel...I
can guarantee that most of the complaints of discipline come from North region and South region schools

oh please

yeah all of this venting is nice but who actually thinks Grier or anyone else cares what input is given. He will get the Board to do
whatever he wants. Teaching used to be fun until politics came into play. How dare Grier and the board so lightly take away
people's jobs and act like it's no big deal and then have the audacity to say they can re-apply but there is no guarantee. To all
the ones who LOVE the GREAT job Grier is doing of course you do because you're on the other side of the fence. You
apparently do not work for TeamHISD (what a joke). This transformation is going to be done by Grier and Grier alone. There will
be no Team. As for budget deficits let's trim some of the fat off of Grier's salary and see if he'll be ok with that:) I am personally
sick of all of the sudden and profound changes that he has made and probably won't be here long enough to seem them carried
out. I hope the next superintendent overturns everything Grier has done. I can bet that previous superintendent is looking at all
of this and wondering what possessed the board to even consider Grier. I'm no fan of Fallon but she got it right the employer
out. I hope the next superintendent overturns everything Grier has done. I can bet that previous superintendent is looking at all
the ones who LOVE the GREAT job Grier is doing of course you do because you're on the other side of the fence. You
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sick of all of the sudden and profound changes that he has made and probably won't be here long enough to seem them carried
out. I hope the next superintendent overturns everything Grier has done. I can bet that previous superintendent is looking at all
of this and wondering what possessed the board to even consider Grier. I'm no fan of Fallon but she got it right the employer
from hell; and he knows it. But don't worry HISD employees this too shall pass.

Concerned Parent

As far as Grier, I think he needs to assess the situation and come with solutions. Researched based solutions on effective ways
to educate the new generation of students. I have rarely met a teacher who just does not care. Teachers honestly do not make a
lot of money, so why would someone select a profession, attend a four year university, probably be in debt with student loans
and then don’t give a care. Makes no sense to me honestly!

cookie72

I would like to know what do schools really expect for parents to do at the schools? I mean working parents. I really
would like to know. How would my presence at any child school would make you teach my child better. Please no
comments about parental fundraising please!
If you see me at the school will it make you pay more attention to her. Will she get better grades in your class. Will she
be placed in the front of the class rather than the back. Will she be afforded a better quality education than what all the
other children deserve. I really want to know. I am saying that because I do not go to my child school unless there is a
problem rather it is from her or whomever. She still will graduate on time, made good grades, attended class regularly,
good score on the ACT, many college offers. She was accepted to a college on a scholarship. All this without me
parading my face around the school thinking it is going to make a difference. As a single parent I only look to the school
to offer me resources or avenues for me and my child to help make a teachers job easier. Free internet access, free
lunch, free health care/HISD clinic, free eye care, free counseling, free mentors, free learning materials, free
ACT/SAT/PSAT testing, free tutoring, Community in Schools etc. These are the things that I have utilized over the years
to have in returned with the help of HISD molded my child to be a healthy, literate, productive citizen as she journeys on
to college.

Leader_in_education

As stated before you and parents like you are the EXCEPTION! Obviously you and your child care about
education, but incase you did not know parents like you are in the minority. There are far more schools
labeled AT-RISK than those that are not. Do you honestly think if every parent thinks like you we would have
AT-RISK schools? My answer is no. What do we want parents to do, how about be an extension of the
learning environment like Tina stated. Education does not stop when school is over. My school has all of those
programs you mentioned but when it comes to tutorials we have less than 25% of the students show up.
HERE IS WHAT YOU DON'T REALIZE:

Ex1. I have several students in resource classes and some of them get picked up early every day. I not talking
about 15 or 20 minutes early, I’m talking about 3 and 4 hours early. There parents are stay at home and they
have no explainable reason for picking their child up that early 5 days a week. Should the teachers who have
those students be held accountable? How can a teacher teach or help a child to progress that is not there?

Ex2. At my school there are OVER 100 students who have ankle monitors and parole officers. Most of them
have to be escorted to class by a parent or guardian. Guess what, if the parent or guardian is not around do
you think that these students come to school? Let me answer that for you, NO.
The parents I see don’t share your same mentality. If they could get away with not sending there children to school they would. They send their children because they don’t want to get another truancy ticket. This is why their parents allow them to stay half a day. I truly wish I had more parents like you!

**Tina** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 2:25:47 PM
I am a parent and was a stay at home mom until my children got to middle school. When they were in elem. I would come to there classes for a few hours see what they were learning so I could extend what they were learning in class to the at home environment. My kids also went to several elem. schools but they always had excellent teachers who encouraged me to come and visit not just after school but to sit in the classroom to observe ANYTIME, no notification needed. In several of the classes I saw how the teachers would struggle to discipline students. I would often see how a teacher could lose valuable teaching time disciplining students who have no business being in a classroom with other students. I think it’s a shame that the alternative schools are going away because they are really needed and it scares me as a parent that my children could be in a school with children who have no interest in learning!

**cookie72** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 12:50:05 PM
I agree with Jady. I am the writer(Guest) of the the child that attended all those Magnet Schools in search of a quality education.

**Leader in education** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 2:05:58 PM
Guest/cookie72: You are the exception; you represent the type of parent who actually cares about their child’s education. But here is where YOU differ from others:

Ex #1. A school has sent 5 letters home, made 4 phone calls to the parent’s home & job, to invite them to come for a meeting for their permission to enter their child into an AP class. Their child is doing so well in regular classes that the school wants to change the child’s classes, but the parents don’t care, or too lazy (You choose). They don’t show up, or even call the school to return phone call. They don’t answer the door when we make house visits even though we see them throw the windows and we know they are at home. I don’t understand how SOME parents could not want their child in a program that could help them grow.

Ex #2. The Special Ed. Chair calls, writes, and visits homes of parents for permission to have their child tested in certain subjects, so that the student can be placed in a class that fits his/ her needs. Often times there are NO responses. So the school has to proceed with measures without the input of the parent, just so the student can be placed in a class according to their skill. Then when the parent finds out that their child is placed in a certain type of class where the parent can receive a CHECK they send paper work immediately for the school to fill out, but yet they refuse to come for ONE meeting.

These examples are what teachers are talking about and teachers can not be held accountable for and ABSENT parent! I applaud those parents who are involved in their child’s education. Not all teachers are great teachers I know I have seen, but not all teachers are bad either. Hold the bad ones accountable and leave the good one alone. I came from a school in San Antonio before I came to HISD and the parental involvement is the total opposite. Maybe it’s different because of all the military parents down there but it makes a HUGE difference in the school atmosphere!

**cookie72** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 2:18:27 PM
Why can’t a phone conference be done instead of coming to the school. Send the parent a scanned letter by email so that she can sign it electronically to alleviate visits to the school. The child should not be held back because the lack of parental involvement. Maybe it is time to take HISD Parent Engagement Department to another level. I still say you do whatever is necessary to get that child on task.

**Leader in education** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 2:40:57 PM
They make HOME visits!!!! We see them and know they are home but won’t come to the door! A lot of these parents don’t have computers! Your thinking about this as if you were in this situation, but think of this as a parent who does not have resources. We often do what ever it takes include calling CPS, where a lot of our students in up in foster care.

**Guest** says: Friday, April 09, 2010 11:54:16 AM
I am a parent that appreciates the STAND(doing his job) that Dr. Grier is taking for HISD and our children of the future. I am appreciating how he is cleaning house and getting rid of all the teachers(from the bottom to the up) that are not educating our children to the best of the system abilities. I mean using all the resources that are available to all teachers no matter what school you are zoned to. I like that he is looking to get rid of crooks in the system. Teachers cheating children out of a quality education cannot be repaid or given back to the child or the parent. I hope that he takes a deeper look into the elementary schools and the Principals who run them. It is critical that each child has a solid foundation which starts with elementary in HISD. More pressure should be put on the leadership at the elementary level. Throughout my child’s educational journey she has attended Longfellow for kinder (they did not renew her application for magnet) Peck 1st(she was too smart!Lovett (the best school ever her teacher had cancer then a lazy sub came to take over) J.WILL Jones(okay school) Pin Oak Middle6-7(great school) Teague 8th grade
(AISD) and will now be graduating from Lamar High School class of 2010 and will be attending Sam Houston University with a 70% athletic scholarship and plans to become a math teacher. I mentioned all these schools because if my neighborhood school would have offered me a qualified quality teacher I would not have had to take the Magnet journey all across Houston to obtained a quality education for my child over the pass years. I hope that Dr. Grier continues to hold each teacher and leadership accountable for each child’s growth and educational experience. I am behind him 100%

1 Reader says: Friday, April 09, 2010 12:20:21 PM
It is understandable why this parent wants so desperately for her child to have a good education. Look at this letter.

BLAME_GAME says: Friday, April 09, 2010 12:48:50 PM
GUEST: YOU SAY THE TEACHERS ARE CHEATING THE STUDENTS OUT OF AN EDUCATION. THEN WHAT ARE THE PARENTS DOING? WHEN I WAS A KID MY MOTHER USE TO MAKE ME AND MY SISTERS SIT AT THE KITCHEN TABLE FOR AT LEAST 1 HOUR TO DO HOMEWORK WHILE SHE WENT AROUND THE TABLE CHECKING TO SEE IF EVERYONE WAS DOING THE WORK CORRECTLY. WE NEED FOR THE PARENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS TO ALL GET ON THE SAME PAGE.
ITS HARD TO TEACH DISRESPECTFUL CHILDREN.HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOUR CHILD MISSED OUT ON AN IMPORTANT CLASS TOPIC BECAUSE THE TEACHER IS BEING CURSED OUT BY A DISRESPECTFUL KID WHO THE ADMINISTRATION SENDS BACK TO CLASS AFTER THE TEACHER WRITES HIM UP AND SEND HIM TO THE OFFICE? I'D BE UPSET. YOU HAVE KIDS WHO'S OWN PARENTS CANT CONTROLL THEM BUT THEY COME TO SCHOOL AND WE THE TEACHERS ARE SUPPOSE TO BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT. AS TEACHERS OUR HANDS ARE TIED BEHIND OUR BACKS.

kipp parent says: Saturday, April 10, 2010 11:31:00 AM
BLAME GAME YOU ACT AS IF THA MAJORITY OF KIDS BEHAVE THIS WAY. Only a small percentage of students are difficult. IF you can't control your class then maybe you need to find another job.

BLAME_GAME says: Monday, April 12, 2010 9:45:46 AM
kipp parent: I HAVE BEEN TEACHING LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT ALL YOU NEED IS 1 BAD APPLE TO SPOIL THE BUNCH. IF THE CLASS PERIOD IS 1HR AND 15MIN. AND I SPEND 20 MINUTES ON WRITING A STUDENT UP AND GETTING HIM OR HER OUT OF MY CLASS THAT EFFECTS THE WHOLE CLASS. ITS NOT ABOUT ME CONTROLLING MY CLASS, ITS ABOUT EVERYBODY DOING THEIR JOB. IF I SEND A STUDENT TO THE OFFICE FOR WHAT EVER REASON,DONT SEND HIM BACK TO ME SO THAT HE MAY CONTINUE TO DISRUPT THE LEARNING PROCESS. ITS NOT THAT ONE STUDENT IM CONCERNED WITH. IM CONCERNED WITH THE OTHER PARENTS KIDS THAT WERE SENT TO SCHOOL FOR AN EDUCATION AND CANT GET IT BECAUSE THE TEACHER CANT TEACH AND BABYSIT A STUDENT THAT SHOULD PROBABLY BE IN A BEHAVIOR CLASS AT THE SAME TIME. ITS NOT FAIR TO THE OTHER STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS. SO ITS NOT ABOUT ME CONTROLLING MY CLASS, ITS ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION SEEING TO IT THAT I HAVE A GROUP OF KIDS WHO CAN BE CONTROLLED. (WE DONT GET TO HAND PICK OUR KIDS YOU KNOW. IF WE COULD I'D PICK ALL THE KIDS WITH DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND YOUR KID kipp parent. JUST TO SEE HOW WELL YOUR KID DOES IN SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT.)

just a thought says: Thursday, April 15, 2010 12:04:20 AM
Kipp parent I am an elementary school administrator and I agree with the "Blame Game" teacher. There are some children that come to school with issues that deeply cause them to have major issues during the day. I've seen it in a pre-k class all the way up to 5th grade. It is not always the teacher. If a child as young as 4 or 5 simply becomes enraged and begins to disrupt the class, especially if they become aggressive and violent, at that poing there is no teaching going on. Even if the teacher tried the rest of the students lose the ability to focus and have the feeling of security needed so that they can learn. That is when it becomes protect all the rest of the students. What is sad, that even if we wanted to place a student into a DAEP, it is extremely difficult to do. Now it will be impossible.

We have severl students that we watch daily to see what their mood is when they enter school. There have been many days when I have had to remove the child from the class, and basically babysit them for the day, so that the remaining 21 can receive the education they are entitled to.

It's a difficult balance. How do we successfully provide a proper education to all the students when the resoursec and support we need keep getting cut?

cookie72 says: Friday, April 09, 2010 1:43:16 PM
I understand blame game. As for my child who was taught to read before entering the school HISD school system with Distar Reading, Math and Arithmetic which included discipline and self control all at the same time. My child is by far not perfect child. I have encountered a few issues with her in being disrespectful to a teachers and she suffered the consequences of her actions and we moved on from there. Our kids are humans to and most times are examples of
their parents. I would always tell her to go back to the teacher with a sincere apology and be a better student. I have always been an active parent with my child. Classroom management is a must! All teachers need to learn and utilize classroom management skills. If they lack it admit and get help! As a parent of a imperfect child I utilize the Community in School program at Lamar High to help my child journey through high school a success. She was offered a Mentor through the program to talk and discuss issues, discipline, goals, life skills etc. As a parent you have to want it bad for your children to be an effective citizen in society after high school. But, in the educational aspect the teachers have to want it just as bad. A solid foundation is must! Do the school or administrators you speak of have alternative ways in dealing with children other than suspending them or expelling them to please the teacher.

**kipp parent** says: Saturday, April 10, 2010 11:32:01 AM
I agree.

**Inoughtesting** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 1:29:52 PM
Guest: The problem I have seen though when a parent receives calls regarding behavior, when you request proof, video, or to work with the parent of a student that may be a problem to your child, they refuse to prove anything to a parent and just initiate a discipline, and this is not just. The parents and students are the ones that support the school thru taxes and attendance mainly and what needs to be reformed is proper negotiation with the parent/student before initiating a punishment and have valid, solid proof for the parents, and mediation if necessary. I have had to go to the district heads to remedy the issue, and they have found that my rights were violated the majority of the time. Also, Parent/teacher conferences are good to schedule, but I would like to see at least twice a year, a grade meeting with parents and teachers to address their concerns regarding in the evening hours, as it is getting more difficult for workers to get time off for jobs and the recession makes it more of a worry. An discussion example, may be something like - as 9th grade teachers we have found many issues regarding student focus, tired students, general things that affect the teachers ability to teach and may take of more of the Admin Staff's time. I would find this type of detail helpful in reminding my child and

**Guest** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 1:35:20 PM

If you want parent participation, especially in the south for any type of parent teacher night. Take up their childs cell phone, ipod, psp player the day of the event. and have the schools band perform . You are guaranteed standing room only.

ps. give the items back at the end of the event .they wool leave if you pass them out any earlier.

**Guest** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 1:50:29 PM
Teachers are important and short handed. I am tired of seeing those who mean well for our children get written up or fired because of a parent complaining about an electronic device that their child acted inappropriately with. I for one had to deal with this with my child, and my child was the one that got punished by us, and it is the parents responsibility to teach proper use, manners and RESPECT of such in a school environment or revoke it as well. Do not let go of teachers that want to teach and do the right thing. Only let go of those that act out in a criminal way or behavioral way that is not deemed appropriate work behavior. Such as a teacher yelling at the students and flipping the classroom desks or tables; teachers found to be allowing porn sights to be on school pcs. Situations that have occurred.

**Enoughtesting** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 1:35:20 PM

As a teacher within the district, I'm tired of testing these kids to death. I teach 3rd grade and it seems that at least 2-3 times a week, we are testing to get "DATA" to determine whether they will pass TAKS. It has taken the joy out of teaching. It's difficult to expect a student to do well on a test when they are struggling with phonics. I recommended a pull out program to my principal to pull 6-8 kids for 1 hour/day to work on extensive phonics lessons. The idea was shot down "because it wouldn't serve the masses." There wouldn't be masses if a program was used to move kids forward with spelling and phonics. Test scores would increase and there wouldn't be the need to get more "DATA". I was also told that we have a literacy coach/Dyslexia specialist on our campus to handle those students. Well she only pulls out maybe twice a week, when she is here. She is also our Title I Coordinator and those responsibilities come first. I think the job of a literacy coach should be to help students on campus- not push paperwork.

**Guest** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 1:29:52 PM
I have found that HISD SW Principals from Askew, Westbriar have done well for the most part. The problem I have seen though when a parent receives calls regarding behavior, when you request proof, video, or to work with the parent of a student that may be a problem to your child, they refuse to prove anything to a parent and just initiate a discipline, and this is not just. The parents and students are the ones that support the school thru taxes and attendance mainly and what needs to be reformed is proper negotiation with the parent/student before initiating a punishment and have valid, solid proof for the parents, and mediation if necessary. I have had to go to the district heads to remedy the issue, and they have found that my rights were violated the majority of the time. Also, Parent/teacher conferences are good to schedule, but I would like to see at least twice a year, a grade meeting with parents and teachers to address their concerns regarding in the evening hours, as it is getting more difficult for workers to get time off for jobs and the recession makes it more of a worry. An discussion example, may be something like - as 9th grade teachers we have found many issues regarding student focus, tired students, general things that affect the teachers ability to teach and may take of more of the Admin Staff's time. I would find this type of detail helpful in reminding my child and this would probably smooth out alot of the behavior issues that take place, and alleviate one on one with parents, unless the matter deems necessary. I would appreciate this.

**VALID Accountability FOR ALL** says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 3:16:10 PM
Guest: "The problem i have seen though when a parent receives a call regarding behavior, when you request proof, video, or to work with the parent of a student that may be a problem to your child they refuse to prove anything..."

"Would you like DNA evidence and audio of the situation as well???? Seriously we are not a crime lab. Eyewitnesses and video (when available, although we are are not always allowed to let parents view it) are about all we can afford and when you have tried to bring parents together to try to mediate and they end up fighting each other, you generally changes the rules!

Guest: The parents and students are the ones that support the school thru (through)taxes and attendance mainly...

** Really??? LOL I pay most of my own salary then too and honestly we are more interested in your support than your money. like getting passionate about keeping your child out of trouble, making sure that they are in bed at a decent hour, that they are at school on time, that their homework is done and presentable, that you respond when we call you
Strategic Direction Discussion Forum Comments: March 26–August 23, 2010

or write you, and that you take education seriously not just when you they have gotten into trouble and you want to defend them because of "lack of physical evidence!"

Guest: ...I would like to see at least twice a year to address concerns in the evening hours

** I have worked at 3 schools and they have all had 3 - 4 nights where parents can come and bring up their concerns and the attendance is mediocre. WE DO THIS ALREADY and BEG parents to come and many don't. Also would you be okay with me telling you I can not come to your job during your working hours and I want you to stay late to help me with my issues? NO!!!!!! Yes we love your children, are passionate about their education and generally go out of the way to help them succeed however, this is a job and we do have families of our own to tend to and we can not continuously ask our families to live without us to help yours. It is not fair to us or them.

LOL says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 12:35:33 PM

TO: getinvolve.

lol.. "by HELPING my children’s teachers get this REQUIRED DATA done while they teach their class." Are you serious. . lol..

That's why is call TEACHER. They need to find a way to do their job. ....lol..

wow says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 2:37:44 PM

@lol "That's why is call TEACHER." Are you serious is the real question?

You skipped out on a few English classes too, right? I guess your teacher was to busy to teach you writing skills.

LMAO

informed says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 8:53:44 AM

How do they expect students who are on heavy medicine daily, to set up and pass a test. Student are being benchmark too much and become tired and just put anything on the test when it really counts.

jady says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 2:35:55 PM

All these ideas to improve kids education. Extending the year, or i recently heard. Kids will enter late and come out late. Why not start by looking into how teacher's are teaching. It won't do good if extending school if the teacher is not teaching what she suppose to... It all starts with the teacher. The school where my daughter goes. By the time the teacher gets done reading her eamil or what ever she is doing looking through the computer, its almost time for them to go to the next class. The teacher's are the one that need to make learning fun & excited. That's where they need to start. Kids will learn if its excited and fun..

get involved says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 3:30:47 PM

You mean it starts with the PARENTS don’t you? I don't want teachers raising my children or taking on the responsibilities that I provide my own children. I don’t know what school your child goes to, but I volunteer twice a week at my children’s school to help out in the classroom. If your child’s teacher is behind a computer it’s probably because she is the only adult in the classroom. The administration requires so much that is done on computer by a certain time everyday, I know because I comply by HELPING my children’s teachers get this REQUIRED DATA done while they teach their class. So if a teacher is behind a computer more than likely it’s because they have to report so must data constantly. Why don’t you volunteer a few hours of your day to HELP your child’s teacher and school because they can’t do it all. THEY ARE NOT BABYSITTERS OR PARENTS. They are educators and should be given respect not belittled by parents or administrator. I have seen with my own eyes how teachers take an emotional and physical beating from students. They take it home everyday and come back to get it all over again day after day. These teachers need SUPPORT from the PARENTS, COMMUNITY, and ADMINISTRATION!! I like some of the changes by Dr. Grier and in other areas it seems he has missed the mark (or dots as he suggested). One idea for the state is to tie school volunteer hours to the amount of welfare and disability check that the parents get for their children. I can guarantee that there would be an astonishing amount of parent involvement then!

wow says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 3:40:22 PM

@lady I see how "fun and excited" learning needs to be.

Question:Did you skip out on a few Language Arts/English Lit. classes?

BLAME GAME says: Friday, April 09, 2010 12:21:54 PM

HERE IS THE PROBLEM. THE TEACHERS ARE CONSTANTLY WORRIED ABOUT HAVING THESE KIDS PASS THE TAKS SO THAT THEY MAY KEEP THEIR JOBS. SO INSTEAD OF TEACHING 100% OF THE CURRICULUM THAT IS IN THE LESSON PLANS, SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO KEEP THEIR JOB WOULD PROBABLY TEACH 40% OF THE LESSON PLANS AND 60% ON TEST TAKING SKILLS.THAT MEANS WHEN ITS TIME TO LEARN ABOUT THE PERIODIC TABLE, WE JUST SKIP IT CAUSE THERE'S NOT A LOT ON THE TAKS ABOUT THE PERIODIC TABLE. HIS 9TH GRADE SCIENCE TEACHER CAN TEACH IT TO HIM.

Concerned Parent says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 9:37:31 AM

I respect some of the decisions the Dr. Grier has made and some I do not.Yes, I agree as a parent and former teacher we do need excellent teachers in every classroom. I also want to state as a parent and former teacher, parents have to be involved.
How many parent show up for open house. Out of a class of 22 students maybe five; sometimes. However, if is was some mess or they thought their child was being treated unfairly; they were present the next day. It is not one event at my child's school I have missed. Her teacher e-mails me on a regular basis. I check her grades weekly through the internet. She also is an A student. I take responsibilty for my child and maybe because I was a teacher at a low income school and saw the first hand effects of parents not being involved. I just decided I would not be that parent. Because those were the parents I needed to speak with the most. Regardless, parents are first in deciding a chils'd success.

VALID Accountability FOR ALL says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 2:31:03 PM
I have to agree 100%

gina says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 5:12:39 PM
I am a new mother living in the district. I have respect for education industry. I believe the district need to change its teaching techniques. Not teacher necessarily. Children learn differently now and are easily bored by the old teaching techniques. Learning need to be fun for children of today and full of interaction not stressful and full of test preparation. I hate that learning has come to how to take a test. I believe testing need to be used as a tool for improvement not as a weapon towards teachers or students. I think year round schooling is a waste of time and money. I really fear for my daughter and what her education will be like. I'm just a concerned mother and I am speaking for the future of my daughter.

djkoro says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 1:54:08 PM
i think school should not be year round and if you feel it should email me the reasons why

betrayed says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 11:24:12 AM
After all the years of hard work and dedication to have to apply for my own job is an insult.

blame_game says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 12:23:45 PM
MAN, THAT HURTS

mr.s says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 9:14:43 AM
Overall I think our new boss is looking at the best interest of the kids. I think that while he is looking at cutting cost in the Admin and Support Services the overall change will benefit everybody in the long run.

Kipp Parent says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 1:03:51 PM
I believe your right Mr.S. WE ARE HERE FOR THE KIDS. Some of us have forgotten that. NO SHORTCUTS/NO EXCUSES. Thanks
Dr.Grier

K. I. R. says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 9:56:17 PM
As I sit here and read some of the comments, I am saddened by all the uproar, complaints, and negativity toward our district. We all have lost sight of the most important factor...the children. Heaven forbid they read this (which requires no age limit to access). I just want to say to those students who might stumble upon this, that I am very sorry for opinions that may cause any discouragement. I would just like you to know that you have the ability to be the best if you work hard at it. You are valued and cared about by many educators in the district and don't let any words you read stop you from giving it your all!

You may not be the A student, but you are a child who looks upon ANY adult to guide you in the right direction.

You may stumble during your path, but you get up brush yourself off and keep on stepping. This educator knows you can do all things possible.....I will teach you!

blame_game says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 10:39:48 AM
K.I.R.: I understand what you are saying. I'm only saying that I too have school age kids and I want them to get the best education HISD can offer. On the other hand I am a new teacher at a low performing school. When the blank hits the fan around here and they start making big changes (lay offs) I don't want my kids thinking "daddy sucks as a teacher thats why he has no job and bill collectors keep calling" I know I do a good job at being a teacher,counselor,campus security, after school crossing guard, and secretary. I do feel under paid by only getting a teaching salary when I wear so many other hats on my campus. (Lets not even start on the massive amounts of paperwork I do as a TEACHER) In order for a student to be successful there needs to be team work. The teacher cant do it alone. The parents can't do it alone. The administrators who spend no time with these kids but tell teachers how to handle the kids surely can't do it alone. It has to be a team effort. The team being PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS.

Kipp Parent says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 1:09:24 PM
Thank You K.I.R...Any child can learn....blame game give every child what you want for your own and nothing less. If your a good teacher then you have nothing to worry about....Your reward is in your success of the children...

Wish that were true. says: Friday, April 02, 2010 2:00:33 PM
Even good teachers have their jobs on the line now. EVAAS data is both an invalid and unreliable measure of teacher impact on students. Terry Grier needs to put cameras in classrooms and hallways and see what REALLY disrupts the learning process in many of our schools. It isn't for lack of knowledge, planning, commitment, and passion on the part of teachers. I have taught in HISD and at KIPP, and we're talking apples and oranges (with regard to resources, parent involvement, availability of both rewards and consequences, etc.) If HISD teachers could make students stay after school to complete assignments, be on the "porch" for a few days when their behavior is unacceptable, and sign a behavior contract that forbids disrespect of oneself, peers, and school authority figures, then a comparison would be fair. Until then, enjoy your orange and be thankful your child got picked in the lottery.

clueless says: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 2:03:23 PM
The new teacher evaluation had nothing to do with being a good teacher. If one negative remark is given on the new assessment instrument, a good teacher could loose his/her job. It's subjective and it is a set up. This is all about money. Watch the teachers that are targeted. They either have many years of experience or they or probationary teachers that don't have a leg to stand on. The district needs to cut the budget and this is one way to do it.

wrongtimeforlayoffs says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 6:09:31 PM
Transforming HISD is a big job, but there is a need for sufficient staff to manage the district schools, students. What if employees with high salaries, took furloughs to offset the deficit, that way layoffs wouldn't be necessary at HMW?

concerned says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 12:31:19 PM
I propose that HISD embraces their educators instead of alienating them.

betrayed says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 11:26:27 AM
amen. mass exodus is about to befall this once unique and stoic district

Change says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 10:54:30 AM
ALL Title I schools need more accountability and supervision.

BLAME_GAME says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 11:10:00 AM
I AGREE. WOODSON MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR EXAMPLE.
POOR ENROLLMENT NUMBERS (EVEN WITH THE COMBINATION OF THE LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL)
POOR TAKS TESTING PERFORMANCES
MAJOR SECURITY CONCERNS
45 STUDENTS IN A CLASS WITH 1 TEACHER
BUT!!!! THE PRINCIPAL IS THE 3RD HIGHEST PAID MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN ALL OF HISD. WOW!!!! WAY TO WORK THE SYSTEM
I WOULD GLADLY WORK AT A SCHOOL LIKE PERSHING MIDDLE INSTEAD OF WOODSON MIDDLE. SURE I MIGHT GET A FEW EXTRA DOLLERS FOR TEACHING AT A TITLE 1 SCHOOL, BUT HOW LONG WILL THAT LAST BEFORE THEY CLOSE THE SCHOOL DOWN BECAUSE OF POOR PERFORMANCE? ID RATHER GO TO PERSHING MIDDLE WHERE THE KIDS "GET IT". THEY HAVE FAR LESS DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS. VERY ACTIVE PTO STAFF. AND THE KIDS IN THAT AREA HAVE PARENTS THAT ARE VERY INVOLVED, WHICH MAKES IT A BIT EASIER FOR EVERYBODY.

K.I.R says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 9:35:23 PM
....I agree that Pershing Middle would be a better location for you. Have you applied? I feel that a person has the right to be happy with their work location; so I am behind you 100% if you decide to apply in the Central Region. It takes a person with a lot of resiliency to work with the students, parents, and community in the South Region.

cmon says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 3:07:26 PM
Blame Game: You say you don't want the teachers to be blamed for low student achievement, yet you blame the parents. I have seen parents that are involved and care for their students and the student still struggles in the classroom. Let's accept what we have in every classroom instead of blaming parents, teachers, administration ect. Do your job, and do it well regardless of your student population and parental involvement.

BLAME_GAME says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 3:42:52 PM
CMON: I TEACH MATH. LAST YEAR ON THE TAKS TEST ONLY 48% OF OUR 8TH GRADERS PASSED THE MATH SECTION OF THE TEST. EVERY MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY NIGHT WE HAVE TAKS MATH NIGHT IN OUR SCHOOL CAFETERIA. WE HAVE VERY POOR ATTENDANCE EVERY NIGHT. (NO ONE SHOWS UP EXCEPT THE TEACHERS AND THE CAFETERIA ROACHES) WITH ONLY 48% OF THE STUDENTS PASSING THE MATH PORTION OF THE TEST I WOULD THINK THAT WE WOULD HAVE A BETTER TURN OUT. LET US HAVE A DANCE IN THE CAFETERIA AFTER SCHOOL AND WE END UP WITH NOT ENOUGH ROOM FOR SUCH
A MASSIVE TURN OUT AND PARKING LOT JAMS FROM PARENTS PICKING THEIR KIDS UP. TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF THAT - PLEASE

BLAME_GAME says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 3:55:51 PM
CMON: I TEACH MATH AND LAST YEAR LESS THAN 50% OF OUR 8TH GRADERS PASSED THE MATH PORTION OF THE TEST. WE ALSO HAD MATH TAKS NIGHT EVERY MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY EVENING (AFTER SCHOOL. WE HAD A VERY POOR TURN OUT EVERY NIGHT. WHEN WE HAVE AFTER SCHOOL DANCES THE TURN OUT IS AMAZING. THE PARKING LOTS ARE JAMMED PACKED WITH PARENTS PICKING UP THEIR KIDS. CALL ME YOUNG BUT I JUST DONT UNDERSTAND THAT. I THINK IF THE PARENTS CAN FIND A WAY FOR THEIR KIDS TO PARTICIPATE IN PURE FUN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS THEY SHOULD DO THE SAME FOR EDUCATIONAL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS. THIS WOULD HELP

BLAME_GAME says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 3:56:59 PM
THIS ISN'T ABOUT FINGER POINTING ITS ABOUT SOLVING THE PROBLEM. I THINK PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS ALL NEED TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE IN ORDER FOR THESE KIDS TO MAKE IT.
MY ORIGINAL QUESTION: IF I HAVE A STUDENT THAT IS IN THE 8TH GRADE BUT READS ON A 4TH GRADE LEVEL AND HE DOESN'T PASS THE READING PORTION OF THE TEST, SHOULD I BE HELD RESPONSIBLE?

Educator1998 says: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 11:49:12 AM
You've got it wrong. Visit the school before you try dismiss someone's opinion.

betrayed says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 11:29:16 AM
This is insulting to an overworked, underpaid and underappreciated consumate professional.

VALID Accountability FOR ALL says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 2:53:17 PM
Cmon: That's the thing, many of us work extremely hard and it is not about blaming the parents and administrators for the students failure but it is about being realistic. And realistically when parents are more involved and the administrators are supportive and feel responsible for improving students learning, in reality and not just on paper, students can acheive more. It is the difference between a buggy being pulled by one horse and a buggy pulled by a team of horses working together, you get there faster, more efficiently, share the sucess and rewards, and as if they have carried the load alone and that is how many teachers feel. Like we are carrying an immense load alone while being whipped and yelled at to go faster then are treated with disdain if we don't make the schedule.

Tootsie says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 2:19:40 PM
Not all parents have in intelligence level, but they never show up to teacher conferences, or when there's a program for children. Math coaching, and reading coaching is available but lazy parents fail to get the help available through the schools. What alot of parents are trending to is a child is labled learning disabled, so let's get them disagnosed as mentally retarded, oh and let's get a check. They never realized that these children are being tagged due to lack of parental involvement in their education.

ASPIRE says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 1:48:22 PM
I disagree and have disagreed since the onset of the ASPIRE model/incentives for teachers and administrators. I believe if we are really about creating college bound students then why not put our money where our mouth is and provide scholarships/bonds/college funds each year aside into an account for those students whose data reflects success. I feel we should invest into our future and recognize students and parents because you cannot do it alone. I hear alot of parent bashing but I am sure when you cash your ASPIRE monies you all are not thinking or thanking those parents who have provided ongoing support all along. Stop the parent bashing. This only creates a divisive environment. Parents do what they can and not all parents have the skills, knowledge base or resources to do more.

JOYCE says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 12:01:39 PM
I think the extended Year school is Great. I think all the schools should have extended year, because this will keep the students focused on school work and not summer vacation and I believe this will allow Test Scores to Be Better. But I disagree with Teachers being Fired due to test scores, a Teacher can help students that want to learn, PARENTS NEED to be be supportive of TEACHERS and WORK WITH THEIR OWN CHILDREN AT HOME ALSO ON SCHOOLWORK.

Tootsie says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 11:21:56 AM
I'm a social worker and i see the other side of the coin, parents that fail to respond to teachers when their children are struggling in school, parents who don't have a clue to what a student should be learning, and they never ask their children if they have homework, teachers have to assume to many roles, a parent, a role model, policing kids to follow school rules, a provider , a counselor, and a social worker.HISD should hold parents responsible as well as teachers.

Did I pick the wrong profession? says: Monday, March 29, 2010 5:02:54 PM
..I once learned that a true leader has the following qualities and traits...Integrity! Mutual Respect! Common Courtesy! Equitable and Fair! Visible! Teamwork means everyone! Communication to ALL staff! Equitable support to ALL staff members, not just the
staff members that brown nose or spend time hurting the climate of the school; or keeping tabs on other staff members, when they should be working! A true leader is a person that does what's best for ALL students. Equitable education for EVERY last child in the building, not just the students that bring in the scores! Remember....you are the PRINCIPAL and you should hold yourself accountable!

Generally Frustrated says: Monday, March 29, 2010 4:54:37 PM
As a teacher at a 'low-performing school' in HISD, I recognize that there are problems on my campus. To ignore this would be a disservice to the students I teach and counsel on a daily basis. However, the responsibility that is shouldered upon us everyday is a burden that is difficult to bear without the support of many others. Teachers have become the de facto parents of these children. Teachers have become counselors who help schedule classes and try to talk kids out of gangs. Teachers have been given so many other professional responsibilities outside of lesson planning and delivery that it makes the job we were hired to do rather difficult...on some days, impossible. Competency goes a long way in this profession, but learning how to juggle multiple demanding tasks and carry on is quite another. I have never heard of a teacher in secondary education that has had a knock-out, stellar first year. This does not mean that your child's teacher is sub-par. The teacher is, more than likely, working hard and is in need of SUPPORT - support that shows that your child's teacher will become even better with mentorship and practice.

What troubles me about our district and my campus is the trickle-down effect of ineffective leadership. My supervisor is a lame duck. My principal was only just transferred to my campus in January - a blow to several teachers’ morale. We are days away from receiving letters that tell us that we must reapply for our jobs, which I can survive. What I cannot stand is that our superintendent has never visited our campus, spoken with our kids, observed our teachers, and offered support that could lead to possible solutions.

Lee High School is a gem in the rough; so many wonderful things happen at this campus that are largely overlooked because we sit in the middle of the Gulfton ghetto and work hard to teach students in English when they speak one of many currently spoken on campus. Our AP program has grown leaps and bounds and continues to make progress. TAKS scores rise every year. Even better, more kids are continuing their post-high school education every year. We still have problems, but we continue to improve. I know that the teachers at Lee WANT the help and support that will help our kids succeed.

I challenge all the HISD upper management and board of directors to come visit us and spend a day in our classrooms, as well as every classroom in every other school that is considered sub-par. The HISD administrators need examples to follow, and that is the example of a man driving an expensive car to the ghetto that is willing to roll up his sleeves and get to work with a kid that may never have been given that chance. Can you do this...or will the example continue to trickle down and show that your office chairs are just a little too comfortable?

Elizabeth Villarreal says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 5:40:17 PM
Amen ! Add a music teacher and band to that, and I'm right there with you !

BLAME_GAME says: Monday, March 29, 2010 2:54:09 PM
I'M A TEACHER AND SOMETIMES I ASK MYSELF "WHY?"
I THINK THAT INSTEAD OF PUTTING ALL THE BLAME ON THE TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS NOT MEASURING UP TO THE TAKS, LETS TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT PARENTING AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THESE KIDS ARE EXPOSED TO. IF YOU HAVE A STUDENT THAT IS IN THE 8TH GRADE BUT READS ON A 4TH GRADE LEVEL, IS IT HIS 8TH GRADE READING TEACHER'S FAULT THAT HE DID NOT PASS THE TAKS? I THINK THAT IN ORDER FOR ANY STUDENT TO BE SUCCESSFUL HE OR SHE NEED THE FOLLOWING: A GOOD TEACHER THAT CARES, GOOD PARENTS THAT CARE, AND A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN.
P.S. YOU COULD GO TO CALIFORNIA AND BRING BACK ALL THE "GOOD" TEACHERS YOU CAN FIND. PUT THEM IN THE SCHOOLS THAT ARE PERFORMING THE WORSE AND AS LONG AS THE PARENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT DOESN'T CHANGE NOTHING WILL CHANGE INSTEAD OF THE STATE THAT YOU GO TO NEXT TO FIND YOUR "GOOD TEACHERS.
betrayed says: Thursday, April 01, 2010 11:30:18 AM
YOU GO !!! Let them walk in our shoes

TeachMe says: Monday, March 29, 2010 1:00:21 PM
The magnet program is a vital part of the success of HISD. The problem with creating new magnet schools is that they are being created for the wrong reasons. To create a program to try and lure neighborhood children or to make a failing school successful is not the right way to go about this. The magnet school has to build a program over time. The successful magnet programs in HISD have a long history. They started small and grew to what they are today. Just calling a school a magnet school doesn't work.

VALID Accountability FOR ALL says: Tuesday, April 06, 2010 3:03:28 PM
I agree! I've seen it happen! The worst are the programs that are only magnet for some grade levels while the rest of the school is ignored! Also, do not compare the success of magnet schools to regular schools, private schools, or charter schools! It is like comparing apples and oranges. The rules are totally different.

SICK OF THE COMPLAINTS says: Monday, March 29, 2010 3:45:24 PM
IF ONLY ALL PARENTS WERE AS MARVELOUS AND DEDICATED AS E VILLAREAL. YES THERE ARE BAD TEACHERS BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BAD PARENTS THAT SEND THEIR KIDS TO SCHOOL AS IF IT WERE A DAYCARE. EVERYONE LIKES TO POINT THE FINGER AT SOMEONE ELSE BUT ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION, HOW AM I GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND TO CHANGE MY COMMUNITY, MY FAMILY, MY COUNTRY. DON'T SEND YOUR SCHOOL TO A SUB-PAR, SPANISH SPEAKING SCHOOL. LORD FORBID YOUR CHILD BECOME BILINGUAL.

Elizabeth Villarreal says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 5:38:37 PM
Wow - that was quite a dig. Sorry that you misunderstood where I am coming from. I work full time - have 4 kids - I AM TRYING to give them what I never had. I WAS A KID WHO WAS ALONE FOR MANY YEARS WITHOUT SUPERVISION OR ENCOURAGEMENT OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES and I do not want that for my children. Waltrip ROCKS !! I can't say that enough. I want equality in the elementary schools. I see equality in the high schools, but not the elementary schools. That was my main beef. All kids, English, Spanish, or Vietnamese speaking, deserve a wonderful elementary school with a bright learning atmosphere. Some schools have that, some do not. THAT is what I find absolutely CRAPPY. How to work to change?? I've been thinking - what the heck to do? I know the principals need help - I know the principals need funding. Tell me - what would be your best idea to share with the community about improving the schools which are lagging behind? I am truly sorry for any misunderstanding - EV

Elizabeth Villarreal says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 5:31:57 PM
Hi there - you must know I have Open Mouth Insert Foot Disease and do not always make myself clear. First, my children are Hispanic. Second, I am devoted to Waltrip - I love ALL those kids. Third, I was referring to the disparity between our elementary schools - some are sparkling new and equally mixed with all kinds of kids - some are old, need help and their principals are working hard to create a wonderful learning environment with little help from the District - which others have had millions of dollars showered upon them. I think you've (with my help) misunderstood my ideology. I want equality in all our schools and I do not see it in SOME of them. My child becoming bilingual absolutey was not the point. I am sorry if you were offended, that was not my intention!!! I won't write on a blog again - it is too hard to hear what someone is feeling and you can't see body language or get to know someone ... thanks for your time. E.V.

Robert Gomez says: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 5:00:48 PM
I read Elizabeth Villareal's message and I was so furious. Three of my kids have graduated from that school, 2004, 2006, and 2009. I have one more left. First, looks like there someone who does not want her child bilingual. We all now what research says on that don't we!!! I am a proud parent of one the schools she is "dissing". The HS has GREAT administrators and GREAT teachers and it shows all over, in particular the data. I remeber when that school was low-performing. The principal and some new administrative staff and teachers created small learning communities. The school has done nothing but increase it's scores in every category. There have been huge increases in TAKS scores, Stanford 10 scores, SAT scores, AP scores, graduation rate, completion rate, drops in dropout rate etc... This parent is known as a "constant Whiner" so I would not take anything she says seriously. Move to the suburbs then. For me, my kids went through Stevens, Clifton, and Waltrip and I could not be happier. Three of my kids are in college and one is getting her Phd. Way to go HISD. You guys have done well by my kids. Robert Gomez--Proud parent
Deb	Deb
What is up with Villereal. My God son went to Sinclair, Clifton, and Waltrip. He is a sophomore at Texas A & M and makes all A's and B's. While I did not always agree with the teachers or administrators, there were all competent and extremely dedicated. Wow, too bad her kid has to learn Spanish! God forbid the kids gets to be bilingual, ha? FV

Elizabeth Villarreal	Elizabeth Villarreal
Dear Mr. Veselka: Mr. Gomez misread my comment completely. I love and am devoted to Waltrip Senior High School. My daughter is currently a very successful student and my whole family is involved there. I am frustrated about our elementary schools - they are not equally funded and provided for. THAT's my beef. I am so sorry Mr. Gomez misunderstood me. Have a nice day - Elizabeth V.

Hi there Robert. I am not a constant whiner, I am a constant WORKER. I LOVE Waltrip and promote it to EVERYONE. I'm up there all the time WORKING. I love our teachers, administrators and I wish all our neighborhood kids would come back to Waltrip instead of going out to other schools. I am so, so sorry but you have misread my email completely. An elementary school is the one I am talking about. My daughter is in the top 5% at Waltrip right now - WALTRIP ROCKS !!!!! All my kids will go to Waltrip. It is the ELEMENTARY school I need help with. I should check out Sinclair perhaps. Also two of mine went to Clifton. I'm sorry you misunderstood. I wish no harm and no ill feelings! You are right - Waltrip has done a terrific job of bringing up scores and SOOOO many other things. I was absolutely NOT talking about Waltrip. Please, please, please hear where I am coming from and know that was not what I said. Thank you. This is the last time I'll write on a blog. Was my first time.

When I drive home past all of the "exemplary" districts, it saddens me that my students don't have internet access, a library in their house or parents that can help with their science fair project. I know that parents are very important. Their input gives a student a great advantage, but I can tell you that we really don't have any idea where our parents are coming from. I experienced a fire when my own children were middle school age. We were staying in a 2 bedroom trailer while our house was rebuilt. Wow! Did I have a wakeup call. It was a firedrill every morning getting out of the house! There was no place for storage and only one pair of shoes for each kid, etc. Imagine living like that every day. On top of that, imagine getting home from work at 10 or later at night and earning minimum wage. Your focus is putting a roof over their head and food on the table. Your focus is putting a roof over their head and food on the table. We can make life easier for them. We should do what we can to compensate. We cannot say, "It's not my job". What you say is right - Waltrip has done a terrific job of bringing up scores and SOOOO many other things. I was absolutely NOT talking about Waltrip. Please, please, please hear where I am coming from and know that was not what I said. Thank you. This is the last time I'll write on a blog. Was my first time.

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Hi there Robert. I am not a constant whiner, I am a constant WORKER. I LOVE Waltrip and promote it to EVERYONE. I'm up there all the time WORKING. I love our teachers, administrators and I wish all our neighborhood kids would come back to Waltrip instead of going out to other schools. I am so, so sorry but you have misread my email completely. An elementary school is the one I am talking about. My daughter is in the top 5% at Waltrip right now - WALTRIP ROCKS !!!!! All my kids will go to Waltrip. It is the ELEMENTARY school I need help with. I should check out Sinclair perhaps. Also two of mine went to Clifton. I'm sorry you misunderstood. I wish no harm and no ill feelings! You are right - Waltrip has done a terrific job of bringing up scores and SOOOO many other things. I was absolutely NOT talking about Waltrip. Please, please, please hear where I am coming from and know that was not what I said. Thank you. This is the last time I'll write on a blog. Was my first time.

Deb	Deb
When I drive home past all of the "exemplary" districts, it saddens me that my students don't have internet access, a library in their house or parents that can help with their science fair project. I know that parents are very important. Their input gives a student a great advantage, but I can tell you that we really don't have any idea where our parents are coming from. I experienced a fire when my own children were middle school age. We were staying in a 2 bedroom trailer while our house was rebuilt. Wow! Did I have a wakeup call. It was a firedrill every morning getting out of the house! There was no place for storage and only one pair of shoes for each kid, etc. Imagine living like that every day. On top of that, imagine getting home from work at 10 or later at night and earning minimum wage. Your focus is putting a roof over their head and food on the table. Your focus is putting a roof over their head and food on the table. We can make life easier for them. We should do what we can to compensate. We cannot say, "It's not my job". What you say is right - Waltrip has done a terrific job of bringing up scores and SOOOO many other things. I was absolutely NOT talking about Waltrip. Please, please, please hear where I am coming from and know that was not what I said. Thank you. This is the last time I'll write on a blog. Was my first time.

Educator	Educator
I could not agree with Dr. Grier more about every child deserving an excellent teacher! However, we cannot trick ourselves into believing that this is where it ends. Parents and students must play a role. Many of us work in schools where the kids don't do homework, don't study, and are allowed to make major decisions for themselves. How can the teachers be expected to get maximum growth when they can only influence during the 90 minutes that they see the kids? All of us who went to college know that parents are very important. Their input gives a student a great advantage, but I can tell you that we really don't have any idea where our parents are coming from. I experienced a fire when my own children were middle school age. We were staying in a 2 bedroom trailer while our house was rebuilt. Wow! Did I have a wakeup call. It was a firedrill every morning getting out of the house! There was no place for storage and only one pair of shoes for each kid, etc. Imagine living like that every day. On top of that, imagine getting home from work at 10 or later at night and earning minimum wage. Your focus is putting a roof over their head and food on the table. We can make life easier for them. We should do what we can to compensate. We cannot say, "It's not my job". What you say is right - Waltrip has done a terrific job of bringing up scores and SOOOO many other things. I was absolutely NOT talking about Waltrip. Please, please, please hear where I am coming from and know that was not what I said. Thank you. This is the last time I'll write on a blog. Was my first time.

HISD teacher	HISD teacher
Thank you!!! I completely agree with every word in this comment. I expect my student's parents to start working and caring for their child's education as HARD as I do everyday.

VALID Accountability FOR ALL	VALID Accountability FOR ALL
Good points!

Ray	Ray
The special ed department needs to be renamed and revamped. I realize that this is a national problem, but we can start in Houston. The name is outdated, and means very little, since At-risk can now be added as a major factor in a child's education. Right now NCLB is a joke and so is Sped, no matter how we shorten both. Kids and parents are using it for a crutch which can destroy classroom chemistry. Parents have 75% investment in their child as far as time is concerned. A teacher see a kid about the 4th maybe 5 hours a week. Take away foodstamp or even offer Tax relief when a parent volunteers. Change will occur rapidly.
TeachMe says: Sunday, March 28, 2010 8:44:20 PM
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 effectively make a difference in a school the leadership must be committed to the school.

mom says: Sunday, March 28, 2010 7:30:45 PM
I am very interested in my child. The school is very quick to point out what my child should be doing. What about the school and teachers? It's a three way streak parents, teacher and school. Most teachers are great but you have a lot that are just collecting a check. Until everyone takes responsibility education will no change.

HISD teacher says: Monday, March 29, 2010 2:47:38 PM
You may be interested but what are you DOING for your child's education? Are you reading to them every night at least 30 minutes, making sure they complete their homework, practicing math facts, etc. When I have children, I am not leaving educating them up to only teachers.

HISD Teacher 2 says: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 12:52:16 PM
I'm sure the answer is no! That's supposed to be your job. Whatever happened to the parent being the first teacher. It's called HOME TRAINING

PRP says: Saturday, March 27, 2010 8:30:11 PM
Here's a Cognitive Theory that GUARANTEE'S Straight A's (if applied). A = 90 as the minimum acceptable.
PRP = Practice Rehearse Perform
P = Practice (ON YOUR OWN)
P = Rehearse (WITH PEOPLE THAT ALREADY KNOW HOW TO DO IT)
P = Perform (THE TASK)

This Cognitive Theory, if applied, may provide a Framework for Increasing Student Achievement levels in HISD. It has been used successfully in three HISD schools to date.

north says: Saturday, March 27, 2010 10:21:09 AM
I have to agree with the others about educating the parents. I have students who stay up until 2:00 in the morning playing video games, texting, or on facebook. And I become a bad teacher because these students are not learning??? I hold my students to the same expectation as I would for my own children. When I discuss this issue with the parents their comment is my child won't listen to me or they can't make good grades. All students can be successful!!! Until we can get the parents on board we must continue to expect more form our students until they are successful and can stand on their own. So teachers keeps focused on the real prize our students, and be the best you can be so they can succeed.

Fil says: Saturday, March 27, 2010 10:04:27 AM
Parent should be involved in their children's education! (And I should have a Mercedes Benz!....)

We need to use our educational resources wisely! to force parents to be parents the way we want them to be is a self defeating effort that depletes educational resources and anoys parents....

Is it difficult to fix one failing school?
Not at all:
1. Recruit competent teachers and administrators: Offer enough money and prestige to attract competent individuals.
2. Bus to alternative schools those students who do not conform....

What to do in those alternative schools?

One needs more than one way to deal with students who do not function in regular schools! We need schools that are able to provide value added education for a variety of students who do not function in regular schools.... It would be easy to fix the mess.... It would not be cheap though....

Gina says: Sunday, March 28, 2010 8:26:55 AM
Why can't you spell?

Guest says: Monday, March 29, 2010 7:11:03 AM
I am sure that was just a typo! Where is the Aloha Spirit
**Sallymatu** says: Sunday, April 18, 2010 5:13:11 PM
Why "bus out"? Can't those "competent teachers-administrators" handle those "variety of students . . . ."?
Before "bussing out"--check to see if that "variety of students" can read (well)on grade level or above. . . .

**Guest** says: Saturday, March 27, 2010 9:41:58 AM
I think the person that does SIMS have to many rolls.
Rigerter and enrolled, ADA attendance, Discipline, PEIMS Edit+, Elementary Scheduling, withdrawals, TEA, Connect Ed., it can be done, but just enough to say it done, no one person can do this my jobs like they should be done.

**Committed and Concerned** says: Friday, March 26, 2010 8:44:43 PM
It is quite an injustice to provide schools in trouble with inexperienced leadership and to expect positive growth and change. Administrators set the tone for the school environment. If it is one of chaos, ignorance, low morale, and lack of discipline and structure, then success and growth are far fetched. There are many schools, especially those in the South, that have extremely dedicated and effective teachers who provide growth to their students and community in the face of unorganization, yet are tagged as bad teachers because of the state or federal rating of the school. These teachers use rigor, relevance and relationships to take students who enter the doors on 6th and 7th grade levels and bring them up to par. There are many things missing that would contribute to an environment conducive to learning. One of the most important that HISD needs to commit money and time to is educating parents and increasing parental involvement at schools. Parents should be held responsible for their child's attendance, discipline, and other factors that are outside the realm of the teacher's control. I agree with Lieutenant on the idea of honorary contracts for parents and their commitments to the success of their child, the school and HISD.

**Lieutenant** says: Friday, March 26, 2010 4:42:54 PM
PD does an outstanding job with building human capital! Will the Madeline Hunter Model be offered to new teachers, and those on growth plans as standard practice?

**Lieutenant** says: Friday, March 26, 2010 4:41:00 PM
As parents/guardians have the children about 93% of the time, it may be beneficial to have more of a buy in with parents through an honorary contract to:

attend more parent conferences, volunteer/donate items that they can once a year, let the campus know if they are noticing studying difficulties with their children, other related duties.