

AISD DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL
Summary of Annual Retreat
September 18, 2007

ATTENDANCE

Member Attendance

(See attached list)

Others in Attendance

Connie Barr, Principal, Mendez Middle School
Lisa Alexandra Bush, Lanier High School
Carol Chapman, Principal, Dobie Middle School
Ariel Cloud, Acting Associate Superintendent, Elementary Schools
Joey Crumley, Office of Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Paul Cruz, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Support Services
Karen Dulaney Smith, Trustee
Dr. Celina Estrada-Thomas, Principal, Johnston High School
Wanda Flowers, Acting Associate Superintendent, Middle Schools
Dr. Pat Forgione, Superintendent
Dr. Rene Garganta, Principal, Travis High School
Dr. Janis Guerrero, Office of Planning & Community Relations
Lori Moya, Trustee
Dr. Glenn Nolly, Associate Superintendent, High Schools
Maria-Elena Ramon, Office of Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Ann Smisko, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction
Vincent Torres, Trustee
Claudia Tousek, Associate Superintendent, Elementary Schools
James Troutman, Principal, Pearce Middle School
Ismael Villafaña, Principal, Reagan High School
Dr. Darlene Westbrook, Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Maria Whitsett, Office of Accountability
Mark Williams, Trustee

PROCEEDINGS

Call to Order

The retreat was called to order at 9:05 a.m. at the Norris Conference Center. Dr. Jane Ross and Ramon DeJesus, Co-Chairs, welcomed attendees and reminded them that the focus of the retreat was developing a pilot program to provide DAC assistance to targeted campuses (i.e., state Academically Unacceptable campuses, Year 2 or higher, and/or federal Needs Improvement campuses, year 3 or higher).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 21, 2007 regular meeting were approved.

Panel Discussion with Principals of Targeted Campuses

- The principals of the following campuses, and their Associate Superintendents, were included on the panel: Dobie, Mendez, and Pearce middle schools; Johnston, Lanier, Reagan, and Travis high schools. Each of the principals provided a brief presentation on how they planned to improve student performance at their campuses.
- The DAC co-chairs posed two questions to the panelists:
 - 1) How do you plan to engage your school communities?
 - 2) How might the DAC provide assistance to you?
- Following are highlights of responses from the panelists:

Carol Chapman, Dobie Middle School

- Walk the community
- Parent visitor center
- Include parents in learning walks
- Biggest challenge is just getting people to come to the school
- DAC can attend CAC meetings and encourage CAC membership

Connie Barr, Middle School

- Make parents feel at home, speak their language
- Coffee talks with parents
- Parent tours of campus
- Providing transportation to school activities
- DAC can help bring parents into PTA and CAC

James Troutman, Pearce Middle School

- Dedicated space for parent visitors and Parent Support Specialists
- Various parent workshops
- Surveys of parents and teachers
- Canvassing community for involvement in school activities

Ismael Villafañe, Reagan High School

- First Things First parent nights
- Working with neighborhood associations
- Community nights
- Parent academies
- Provide child care and food at school activities
- Parent and student advocacy program
- Parents welcome to visit school and provide principal feedback
- Evening lessons for parents and children
- Partner with Austin Police Department on college/career programs
- Extra credit to students who bring parents to school activities
- DAC can help community partnerships

Edmund Oropez, Lanier High School

- Difficulty in getting a lot of parental involvement
- Increase in bilingual staff
- Build more genuine engagement beyond basic communications
- DAC can help outreach to parents

Dr. Celina Estrada-Russel, Johnston High School

- Reaching out to ninth grade families
- Upcoming community forum with State Senator Kirk Watson

- School community seems to be complacent following possible closure discussions
- Parent center is active, but the same faces
- Not hearing a lot of comments or concerns from community; the phone should be ringing off the hook
- Strong core staff is dedicated to success
- Hold PTSA meetings in different places
- Yard signs around the neighborhood in support of the school
- Mentoring and tutoring programs
- Various evening classes for parents
- DAC can help keep the sense of urgency alive

Dr. Rene Garganta, Travis High School

- Monthly parent meetings
 - Quarterly immigrant focus meetings
 - Regular college nights
 - Various parent classes
 - Electronic newsletter
 - PTA participation in walk-throughs
 - Communications with other schools in vertical team
 - Thanksgiving community meal
 - DAC can help develop CAC membership, attend campus events, help support campus and district decisions, and help in communications about the school
- Following are highlights of questions and comments from DAC members:
 - ☞ In addition to DAC members going to CAC meetings, CAC members should come to the DAC meetings
 - ☞ CACs need more direct access to DAC
 - ☞ Need to work to expand DAC assistance to all campuses
 - ☞ What is being done to allow teachers to recharge their batteries (rotating schedules, meeting with teachers only when really necessary, making people know that teachers' time is valuable)
 - ☞ Ask PTA members to more campus meetings and activities
 - ☞ Parental responsiveness is greatly encouraged by a highly visible and accessible principal
 - ☞ Make sure to praise successful students; don't give all the attention to struggling learners
 - ☞ Need to help teachers learn how to deal with diverse populations
 - ☞ Give parents more opportunities to say what they really feel
 - ☞ A lot of parents are not aware how attendance is taken or defined
 - ☞ Having principals here is an invitation, not a summons
 - ☞ It's easy to see what doesn't work, but need to focus more on what is working, and share ideas
 - ☞ Counselors and counseling weren't mentioned in any of the presentations on improving campuses; counselors are trained professionals and their services aren't being fully utilized; students feel they need more access to counseling

- services, but we don't seem to be listening; include counseling in Campus Improvement Plans
- ☞ Celebrate students as learners; take pride in the great things we are doing
- ☞ Get students more involved in the community

Panel Discussion with Trustees and Superintendent

- In addition to Superintendent, Dr. Pat Forgione, the following Trustees were included on the panel: Mark Williams, Johna Edwards, Vincent Torres, Karen Dulaney Smith, and Lori Moya.
- Jane Ross commented that a successful Board and district takes policies and makes them have positive impacts on students. She said the Trustees are volunteers who work hard to improve student achievement.
- The DAC co-chairs posed two questions to the panelists:
 - 1) From a community partnership perspective, do you think there are any other types of supports that could be provided to targeted campuses?
 - 2) How might the DAC provide assistance to targeted campuses? What do you think would be a success in this effort?
 - 3) How might the DAC provide assistance to Trustees in their upcoming community outreach efforts?
- Following are highlights of responses from the panelists:

Johna Edwards

- Leadership at all levels is key to getting targeted schools back on track
- Encourage mentoring
- The DAC can help by getting the word out about the community forums

Lori Moya

- It is important to build community partnerships
- Need to make sure parents feel welcome to come into schools
- Need to find more ways to reach out
- Try to piggyback on other activities so as not to over-tap community members
- We all need to have the same message and deliver the same message, clearly and concisely

Karen Dulaney Smith

- We do a lot, but there are so many needs that we must maximize our efforts
- Schools can be intimidating places for a lot of parents; many parents feel they can't do anything
- We may need to meet parents where they are
- Develop community connectors
- DAC can help by building relationships with schools and their communities, and developing CAC leadership

Vincent Torres

- For some schools, the solutions are going to be very tough
- The Board needs to be focused on future planning (i.e., preventing poor performance by schools)
- Need to look at vertical structures more to minimize problems in the later grades

- Need to excite the middle 80 percent of students
- Resources need to follow struggling learners if they move to other schools
- Place more emphasis on science to better meet the demands of local and state job markets
- Starting at the elementary level, need to provide empowerment, excitement, and expectations for rewarding careers
- DAC can help the Board plan for the future

Mark Williams

- Very challenging to help targeted campuses while the clock is ticking
 - Webb showed incredible community mobilization, but now we need to ensure sustainability success
 - 50 percent of student achievement is linked to student characteristics; we have to help students in all factors leading to success and provide them the supports they need
 - Principals can't solely own community engagement, it needs to be a community partnership; we need grassroots campaigns at all of our targeted schools to mobilize the community; community leaders need to help change the model
 - Parents need to encourage and participate education at home as well as at school
 - Pouring money into struggling schools isn't always enough to turn them around; we may need to look at the home, the neighborhood, and the community at large for support and positive change
 - Need to make sure kids know what success looks like and that it's possible to attain
 - Need to make sure that clear expectations are set, known, and reached
 - DAC can help by getting CAC and PTA members more involved beyond their own meetings, and to get the "unusual suspects" to become partners
 - The DAC might consider just selecting one school as a pilot effort and then try to replicate successes
- Dr. Forgione thanked the Trustees from their comments and said he fully agreed with them. He added that we need to not only build greater links through vertical teams, but with higher education as well.
 - Following are highlights of questions and comments from DAC members:
 - ☞ Having a Trustee at a school function is huge, and it should be encouraged
 - ☞ Need to make sure to take full advantage of libraries and librarians; in many schools, librarians take part in a variety of activities and services; need to make sure kids still appreciate books and get them into libraries; a greater investment in libraries is needed beyond the current \$2 per student, and this will have a positive impact on student achievement
 - ☞ Genuinely invite and welcome parents to campuses; have nametags waiting for them, including the name of their child
 - ☞ Provide resources for community advertising to help increase involvement
 - ☞ Planning for the future is indeed important

- ☞ The number of parents opting to send their children to a school other than Johnston should have been seen earlier as a red flag; if parent support for a school is no longer there, it will be even more difficult to see improvement

Breakout Sessions

- Attendees split into two groups for more detailed discussion.
- Group A addressed providing training and mentoring to CACs and PTAs, and building communication networks between the DAC, CACs, and PTAs.
- Group B addressed providing assistance to CACs and PTAs in informing, reaching out to, and involving their school communities.
- The complete notes from each of the breakout groups are attached.

Breakout Group Reports

- Following are highlights from the Group A discussion:
 - Take a proactive approach
 - Make sure CAC training materials are clear and concise
 - Develop goals that are easily communicated
 - Provide ample opportunities for discussion
 - Provide information in various languages and formats
 - Develop a communications toolbox
 - Make sure that the CAC website and campus websites are user-friendly
 - Provide interpretations of data and performance results
 - Provide separate training on budget, conducting meetings, and developing Campus Improvement Plans
 - Identify the attributes of highly functioning CAC
 - Ensure a continuous flow of information between the DAC and CACs
 - Develop a cadre of DAC members willing to participate in campus meetings and activities
 - Focus the pilot program on those campuses most at immediate risk of closure
- Following are highlights from the Group B discussion:
 - Emphasize the importance of parental involvement
 - Communicate in understandable terms; be good listeners
 - Clarify the role of the CAC, and train CAC leadership
 - Ensure sufficient technology assistance at every campus
 - Conduct brief surveys of parents
 - Establish a dedicated district phone line for the DAC
 - Emphasis early interventions for struggling learners
 - Make sure to provide “best practices” to CACs
 - Improve tutoring delivery and participation
 - Rely on students more to help with communications and other efforts
 - Need to develop a few key performance indicators to assess success of the pilot

DAC Subcommittee on Pilot Program

- Several members volunteered to serve on a special subcommittee to implement the pilot program, with the target of starting to provide DAC assistance by October.

- The work of the subcommittee will probably be more intense at first, in order to get some momentum going. The subcommittee will need to determine what can be done immediately and what will take more time; the pilot will probably roll out in phases.

Adjourn

The retreat was adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Complete Notes from Breakout Sessions

Breakout Group A

- Orientation and training to CAC
- It isn't sufficient to wait upon a request
- Proactive approach ... how can we help you?
- Low SES and performance
- Assumes access to website
- Model or focus: DAC→ CACs, DAC→ targeted campus
- Readability and summaries need to be reviewed (training CAC)
- DAC develop goals that are easily communicated and provide opportunities for discussion
- How is the CAC used and/or guided by principals?
- Mentoring and/or training to CACs

Training

- Vertical team together
- On-campus (facilitated by AISD)
- On targeted campus, hands-on and small group setting
- Develop knowledge and interest first in the function of CAC
- AISD- In native language(s)
- AISD- In various formats (email, mail, phone messages)
- CAC's can leverage communication infrastructure to inform parents
- Leverage principal/teacher communications on role and function of CACs and PTAs ... on all campuses, not just targeted
- Layout and images on website are not inviting; need better links (e.g., icons) ... user friendly website
- Existing website appears to be a resource page, not inviting and interactive
- Video of a model meeting
 - Training
 - Promotional ... what are you expecting me to do?
- CAC website support
- Save links as "favorites"
 - TEA
 - AISD specific pages ... library and school computers
 - SBOE

Content and Topics

- Interpreting data and performance
- Understanding standards and implications into the future
- How to include high school students who are "parenting" themselves

- Challenges that some CACs face are:
 - Opportunities to train
 - Pre-set agendas ... how to draw the connection to parental input
 - Bridge to PTA
 - Individualized training for
 - Budget
 - How meetings operate
 - Developing the CIP
 - Process and timeline to build an annual process
- How does the DAC differentiate itself from other resources CAC can draw upon?
- Mentoring vs. training
- Recruit
- Share experiences
- Create continuity
- “Critical friend” model training for DAC members who do offer CACs an opportunity to improve their meetings or raise the performance (be more relevant?)
- Models for positive outcomes ... what can they share with other CACs?
- Successful schools do _____
- Celebrate differences
- Previously paired CACs for training and support
- Train the trainer model
- What are the attributes of a highly functioning CAC?
 - Matrix of all campuses
 - Classify campus PTAs
 - 3 benchmarks to track progress for “at-risk” PTAs
- Scorecard or critical friend too/or rubric for CAC to self-assess or mark progress
- A little more structure to marketing
- Austin InSiDer ... advertisement on CACs and how to get involved
- How does the DAC improve the communication infrastructure between the DAC↔CACs and PTAs
- Who is our target audience?
- What can we offer them?
- Does the CAC on each campus know you represent them?
- Can they contact you?
- Do the vertical team principals know their DAC members?

Which Campuses?

- Stage 2 or higher (state)
 - Johnston, Reagan, Pearce
- Federal ... optional and upon request (any)

Breakout Group B

How can DAC assist CACs and PTAs?

How do we get involvement/communication between campuses and DAC, and the broader community?

- Communicate in understandable terms
- Understand the community ... listen
- Clarify role of CAC ... what do we want from CAC?
- Campus needs are so different
- Train CAC in agenda planning
- Why no mention of AU elementary schools? (Only in Year 1?)
- First, do what's manageable
- Start earlier in intervention; be proactive
- What is mechanism for communication?
 - CAC minutes
 - Websites
 - Perhaps message board potential?
 - Student CAC members post minutes?
 - Baby steps maybe needed to get more things online
- Targeted campuses
 - Parent short surveys on topics; get their input when they come to school events
 - Subcommittee members (DAC) go to CAC (for training)
 - Dedicated DAC phone number?
 - Don't centralize ... make campuses more capable of communications
 - Not everyone has Internet access; may still need paper copies
- Best Practices need to go to CACs
- Videotape of well-functioning CAC ... what does one look like?
- Keep advocating walkthroughs with parents
- Do campuses have equal technological capability?
- Targeted schools need adequate tech support ... funds for this?
- Tutoring is available and necessary ... stress importance to parents
- Tutoring in classroom too, not extra (later) ... challenging to get students to come later
- Parent accountability
- District accountability and campus accountability
- Tie in middle school with target high school
- Use phone technology via phone tree
- Family advocate parent → 10 students
- Students choose advisory teacher, and keep
- Student communication ... leadership to talk to students raise awareness
- Mixed age rather than alphabetical arrangement advisory
- Recognize student achievement vocally – let them shine
- Who will “buy in” or benefit?
- Lanier/McBee → Target Diversity ESL learners high numbers

- Resources needed: IT help; Dr. Paul Cruz' Office ; Food
- Parent support specialists
- Use counselors

District Advisory Council Member List and Attendance (Rev. 10/16/07)	2007						2008					
	6/19	8/21	9/18	10/16	11/20		1/15	2/19	3/18	4/15	5/20	
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES												
Jasmine Thum, LASA	N/A		✓									
Cora Lee, Austin HS	N/A	N/A	N/A									
BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPRESENTATIVE (ex officio)												
Johna Edwards, Board Secretary (1/2)	✓	✓	✓									

/ # = Total number of terms appointed/Year of current term ★ = Co-Chair