



Austin Independent School District

**SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT ON
PRELIMINARY DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN
AND SUBSEQUENT REDRAFTS**

*Prepared by the Office of Planning and Community Relations
December 17, 2009*

Summaries of Stakeholder Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan and Subsequent Redrafts

Based on a considerable amount of previous stakeholder input, a preliminary draft Strategic Plan was developed by the Strategic Plan Task Force during four meetings between September 28 and October 15, 2009. The preliminary draft was made available for public review and comment on October 22, 2009. Subsequent redrafts of the Strategic Plan were also placed online for public review and comment.

Stakeholder input on the preliminary draft plan and redrafts was gathered in several ways, as outlined below. Summaries of various stakeholder input are provided in this document.

Online and Email Input

Stakeholder input was received online and via email from the period of October 22 through December 14, 2009. A total of 471 persons provided input. Respondents provided input on the proposed Key Action Steps and Performance Targets, as well as on other aspects of the proposed plan they wished to address.

Community Conversation

A community conversation was held on October 27, 2009 at Austin Cornerstone Church. The event was facilitated by Austin Voices for Education and Youth, and was attended by approximately 100 individuals. Following an introduction by the Superintendent and an opportunity for questions and answers, participants broke out into several small discussion groups. Each group looked at certain sections of the preliminary draft and provided detailed input.

Community Forums

A community forum on Bilingual Education and Dual Language programs was held on October 20, 2009 at O. Henry Middle School, and was attended by approximately 100 individuals. And, a community forum on Health and Fitness was held on October 21, 2009 at the Seton Administrative Center, and was attended by approximately 50 individuals. In both of these forums, participants broke out into small discussion groups to provide input on these two topics included in the Strategic Plan.

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion with members of the Central Texas Education Funders was held on October 26, 2009 at Applied Materials, and 12 individuals were in attendance. Over lunch, participants provided general input on the preliminary draft from an educational partnership perspective.

Written Comments

Written comments were provided by the School Health Advisory, ACCESS program, Student Support Services, and several individuals.

Expanded Cabinet

The Expanded Cabinet (40 central administrators and 115 campus principals) met on November 4, 2009. Members of the Expanded Cabinet rated each of the proposed Key Action steps of the preliminary draft according to how powerful the action step would be in achieving district goals. They also provided comments on the proposed Performance Targets and support for East Austin schools.

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Summary of Online and Email Comments

Following is a summary of the most recurring comments received online and by email from the period of October 22 through December 14, 2009. A total of 471 persons provided input. Respondents provided input on the proposed Key Action Steps and Performance Targets, as well as on other aspects of the proposed plan they wished to address.

- Support fine arts; fine arts should be part of core curriculum
- Provide greater focus on student health and physical education
- Support Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program
- Don't close schools
- Support ACCESS program
- Ensure that all schools have sufficient library resources
- Too much testing
- Three years is not enough time to accomplish all of the proposed strategies
- Replicate successes
- Too many action steps are being proposed
- The goals are not achievable; the targets are not realistic
- Focus on the needs of all schools, not just the ones in East Austin
- Need more campus technology support
- Need to ensure resources to achieve proposed actions
- Students need to be socially and emotionally prepared
- Remove barriers to learning
- Ensure safety at all district facilities

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Summary of Community Conversation Comments

A community conversation was held on October 27, 2009 at Austin Cornerstone Church. The event was facilitated by Austin Voices for Education and Youth, and was attended by approximately 100 individuals. Participants broke out into several small discussion groups. Each group considered Strategy 1 plus one other Strategy. In addition, each group was asked to provide input on the proposed Performance Targets. Following is a summary of the input provided.

Strategy 1: Provide a high-quality, well-rounded educational experience to all students that is rigorous, culturally relevant, and engaging.

- Try to combine action steps where similarities exist
- Provide early interventions
- Provide differentiated instruction
- Provide various course offerings
- Provide greater opportunities for dual language programs
- Expand opportunities for early childhood education
- Ensure that class sizes are appropriate for the course being taught
- Provide supports for homeless and mobile students
- Focus on math and science
- Ensure that students have access to health and physical education
- Provide greater opportunities for Fine Arts and other electives
- Identify and apply best practices
- More teachers need to be able to speak Spanish

Strategy 2: Improve academically struggling schools and better serve East Austin schools and community.

- East Austin schools need to have more control over their own curriculum
- Need a statement for a round, rich curriculum
- Need to address leadership stability and turnover
- Need to address school climate for students, teachers, parents
- Need more focus on dropout prevention
- Need to address student responsibility and service
- Address effects of school choice on East Austin schools
- Address increasingly negative effect of accountability sanctions

Strategy 3: Build strong relationships with students, family, and the community to increase trust and shared responsibility.

- Try to combine action steps where similarities exist
- Need to address parent-teacher relationships
- Ensure that resources are allocated fairly
- Include peer counseling
- Offer student service opportunities, but don't make service mandatory
- Need to have more grassroots efforts
- The district should not need outside assistance in building relationships

Strategy 4: Ensure that every classroom has a high-quality educator, and that every other staff position is filled with the right person to do the job.

- Try to combine action steps where similarities exist
- Consider innovative ways of delivering training and mentoring
- Build greater collaboration within the organization
- Match struggling teachers with successful ones; make helping struggling teachers less punitive and more encouraging
- Concern over alternative teacher certification in high-needs schools

Strategy 5: Organize central administration to support schools and enable campus leadership to focus on the classroom.

- How are “struggling” schools identified?
- What does increased autonomy mean?
- Applying successful business practices is a good idea, but not the corporate structure
- How are “peer districts” defined?
- Aim at effectiveness, not cuts
- Career paths for teachers could result in losing great teachers to administration; may want to focus on teacher leadership instead

Strategy 6: Align resources to accomplish priorities within a balanced budget.

- Not only refresh technology, include all short-lived items (e.g., textbooks, lab equipment, furniture)
- Closing schools is a short-term fix, and puts more high-need students into larger schools
- Support performance-based budgeting
- Reduce use of paper
- Push for better legislative solutions
- Find ways for title funds to follow students
- Provide sufficient library resources
- Address facility safety and security

Performance Targets

- Many groups did not have time to get to the Performance Targets
- Some support for extending the period covered by the plan to five years
- Need to make sure data bear out higher performance for students who have been in the district for at least three consecutive years
- Division noted over setting targets at 100 percent or being more realistic
- How are other school districts across the nation addressing targets?

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Summary of Community Forums

A community forum on Bilingual Education and Dual Language programs was held on October 20, 2009 at O. Henry Middle School, and was attended by approximately 100 individuals. Also, a community forum on Health and Fitness was held on October 21, 2009 at the Seton Administrative Center, and was attended by approximately 50 individuals. In both of these forums, participants broke out into small discussion groups to provide input on these two topics included in the Strategic Plan. Following the forums, program staff were asked to identify the top areas of priority identified by participants, and the top priorities are identified below.

Bilingual Education/Dual Language Top Priorities

- Provide greater opportunities for participation in dual language programs
- Ensure that dual language programs are well thought-out and resourced
- Have the transitional bilingual education program consistent across the district

Health/Fitness Top Priorities

- Obesity can lead to short- and long-term health problems
- Pregnancy is one of the reasons that students drop out of school; it has a significant impact on a student's ability to attend school and perform well academically

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Summary of Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion with members of the Central Texas Education Funders was held on October 26, 2009 at Applied Materials, and 12 individuals were in attendance. Over lunch, participants provided general input on the preliminary draft from an educational partnership perspective. Following is a summary of the input received in the focus group discussion.

- Provide another column to show key partners for each action step
- May want to try and differentiate between new and continuing action steps
- Include expanding PBS to more campuses
- For Step 1.9, specify magnets – can gain more momentum with increased and equitable access to magnets
- Haven't we always had a focus on math and science – yes, but we're still having difficulties there
- Some things are not always implemented with fidelity – and some things are just broken
- Need to measure student growth beyond "at grade level" – students need to reach their full potential
- 100% doesn't seem realistic – can we measure varying degrees of success?
- Resource allocation needs to be focused on students/schools falling short of targets
- Consider putting dual credit and advanced placement back in college readiness indicators
- Need to have a vocational certification option at graduation to prepare for workplace
- A hundred action steps are too many – need to further prioritize them
- Sometimes the public is not the expert – who will be doing the prioritization?
- Need to clarify what, if anything, has fallen out since the last strategic plan
- East Austin schools are not equal yet – there does need to be a focus there, with more resources
- "East Austin" may be difficult to define – may want to get rid of the term altogether – are we talking just socio-economics, or does it also involve history and geography
- Need to change perception of East Austin – make it a positive perception
- University of Texas would be a good choice for a focus group discussion

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Written Comments

Written comments were provided by the School Health Advisory, ACCESS program, Student Support Services, and several individuals. The written comments from groups are provided as they were received.

School Health Advisory Council

The AISD SHAC reviewed the October 22, 2009 Draft Strategic Plan and planning process and had questions about the lack of health content in the plan based on the following:

Academic Data

- Showing the connection of healthy BMI and Fitness scores to improved student achievement
- Showing correlation between child health and attendance
- Showing correlation between attendance and student success
- Showing correlation between attendance and drop out potential
- Showing lower test scores and school ratings associated with poor BMI and Fitness scores
- Showing correlation between student demographics, poor BMI and Fitness, attendance, academic success, and school rating

Health Data

- Data showing rates of childhood obesity in AISD
- Data showing rates of teen pregnancy in AISD
- Data showing immunization delinquency
- Data showing lack of access to healthcare
- Data showing rates of chronic disease
- Data about mental/emotional health

Legal Code requiring implementation of coordinated school health

- Texas Education Code 28.004 School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC) requiring SHAC to recommend indicators for evaluating effectiveness of Coordinated School Health Programs and to report directly to the school board at least once annually with detailed account of SHAC activities and recommendations.
- TEC 11.253 Coordinated School Health (CSH) requiring Campus Improvement Plans for elementary, middle and junior high school campuses to develop goals and objectives based on fitness assessment data, academic performance, attendance rates, academic disadvantages, the use of success of any method to ensure students are reaching required moderate or vigorous physical activity (MVPA), and any other indicator recommended by SHAC.
- TEC 28.002 Physical Activity; Physical Education
- TEC 28.004 Health Education

AISD Charter for Strategic Plan to 2013

- C3. The Superintendent shall ensure that other plans of the district, including District and Campus Improvement Plans and administrative departmental plans align with the Strategic Plan.
- C4. The Superintendent shall ensure that the charges and recommendations of district task forces and committees align with the Strategic Plan.
- C5. The Superintendent shall ensure that the consideration of proposed initiatives includes alignment with the Strategic Plan.

We are concerned that the current outline for the strategic plan does not incorporate health content so that the Strategic Plan will align with state law, Charter requirements, and district student health and academic data.

The SHAC offers the district the following content suggestions (underlined) to help with the integration of the issues noted above.

Mission (What We Do)

In partnership with parents and our community, AISD exists to provide a safe and healthy comprehensive educational experience that is high quality, challenging, and inspires all students to make a positive contribution to society.

Vision (Where We Want to Be)

AISD will be nationally recognized as an outstanding school district, instilling a passion for life-long health and learning in all students.

Values (What We Believe in)

- Health and Safety

Goals (What We Want to Accomplish)

- All schools will provide safe and healthy learning environments that encourage students to make healthy choices and be physically active.

Strategies (How We Will Achieve Our Goals)

- Coordinated School Health Programs will be fully implemented on every elementary and middle school campus.
- Healthy lifestyles will be promoted and modeled at all grade levels and best practices will be implemented for health and PE

Measurable Outcomes (How We Will Check Progress on Our Goals)*

- Elementary and Middle School CIP will report on implementation of coordinated school health, measured against fitness assessment data, academic performance, attendance rates, academic disadvantages, method to ensure students are reaching required moderate to vigorous physical activity, and any other indicator recommended by SHAC.
- High Schools will utilize currently collected data for health indicators: FitnessGram fitness assessment data, behavioral data including attendance, discipline and absenteeism

Key Action Steps

- Ensure that every student has equitable access to health related programming by providing staff and resource support for coordinated school health education, family and community involvement, safe and healthy school environment, health services, physical education and physical activity, nutrition services, counseling and mental health services, and staff wellness at the district and campus levels.

ACCESS Program

Additions highlighted:

- 1.5 Provide early interventions for struggling learners that address academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs.
- 1.17 Develop a system to identify and replicate successful models, programs, and techniques throughout the district (e.g.: Ann Richards School, Positive Behavior Support, evidence-based interventions)
- 1.20 Develop a district-level, multi-tiered, integrated student support system focused on prevention, intervention, and integration of services to address barriers to learning and assure consistent access to curriculum and appropriate services. (e.g.: homeless, mobile, and other students with special needs)
- 1.25 Ensure that teachers have access to timely, relevant data to guide instructional decisions and classroom management structure.
- 2.12 Identify gaps and develop needs assessments for schools, teachers, and students. (Use the UCLA School Needs Assessment survey in conjunction with Positive Behavior Support.)
- 3.3 Identify a variety of available resources within the community, create a resource database, and perform a gap analysis (Youth Service Mapping).
- 3.6 Ensure equitable and integrated resources and services (public, private, non-profit) at every school for supports to students, parents, and families.
- 3.10 Establish, evaluate, align, and strengthen existing relationships with community organizations (e.g.: chambers of commerce, Communities, in Schools, United Way, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs).
- 4.4 Reach out to other school districts to collaborate, share best practices, and jointly offer training and development (e.g.: ACCESS and PBS do this through local collaborations and through national collaborations managed by Safe School Healthy Students).
- 4.12 Ensure that teachers are given appropriate training to deliver co-curricular and culturally diverse instruction utilizing effective classroom management system.
- 5.1 Create a cross-functional team to better support struggling schools with alignment of campus and community resources.
- 5.2 Charge central administration to review processes and procedures on prioritized district-wide initiatives to allow schools to operate more effectively and with increased autonomy.
- 5.7 Identify and acquire the skills to promote national best practices and processes that promote sustainable campus systems to address academic and behaviors.
- 5.8 Annually assess and address professional development needs of central office staff to insure understanding of national models of evidence based programs that address barriers to learning.
- 6.2 Create the methodology for determining school needs to evaluate and reallocate if necessary funding to individual schools based on identified needs.

Student Support Services

- Create a positive behavior climate at the school-wide, classroom, and student level at every AISD campus to ensure a safe, supportive, and productive learning environment for all students.
- Create a district-level, multi-tiered, integrated student support system which addresses academic, behavioral, and social service needs and removes barriers to learning.
- Strategy 1:
 - 1.10 Develop culturally diverse co-curricular and enrichment activities for all schools and all levels both in school and after school.
 - 1.28 Engage afterschool programs and Community Based Organizations and afterschool funding sources.
 - 1.28 Campus Impact Teams will serve as a central resource for teachers needing additional guidance in responding to students who have been non-responsive to teacher academic interventions. (Primary Accountability – Campus Administrator)
 - 1.50 Provide early interventions for struggling learners that address academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs.
 - 1.16 Strengthen the pre-Advanced Placement programs at each middle school and ensure culturally inclusiveness.
 - 1.17 Develop a system to identify and replicate successful models, programs, and techniques throughout the district (e.g.: Ann Richards School, Positive Behavior Support, evidence-based interventions)
 - 1.20 Develop a district-level, multi-tiered, integrated student support system focused on prevention, intervention, and integration of services to address barriers to learning and assure consistent access to curriculum and appropriate services. (e.g., homeless, mobile, and other students with special needs)
 - 1.25 Ensure that teachers have access to timely, relevant data to guide instructional decisions and classroom management structure.
- Strategy 2:
 - 2.18 Explore non-traditional educational options based on student feedback (e.g. twilight school).
 - 2.18 Extend the learning day by utilizing the resources of Community Based Organizations and after school funding sources.
 - 2.19 Offer Diversified Career Technical classes which allow currently working students to receive high school credit for working.
 - 2.20 Implement Jobs, Inc. program similar to model at Eastside High School – which provides students with job readiness skills, employment opportunities coupled with academic supports, and allows for students to receive training to serve as (Math and Reading) tutors for elementary students. The skills developed to serve as a tutor helps undergrads mastery of academic foundation needed to be successful in high school.
 - 2.21 Expand on-site Truancy Court at all Eastside Middle Schools which as documented results of increasing student attendance and academics.
 - 2.21 Identify gaps and develop needs assessments for schools, teachers, and students. (Use the UCLA School Needs Assessment survey in conjunction with Positive Behavior Support.)

- Strategy 3:
 - 3.15 Utilize the resources of afterschool programs and Community Based Organizations by providing guidance, access, and training.
 - 3.3 Identify a variety of available resources within the community, create a resource database, and perform a gap analysis (Youth Service Mapping).
 - 3.6 Ensure equitable and integrated resources and services (public, private, non-profit) at every school for supports to students, parents, and families.
 - 3.10 Establish, evaluate, align, and strengthen existing relationships with community organizations (e.g.: chambers of commerce, Communities, in Schools, United Way, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs).

- Strategy 4:
 - 4.4 Reach out to other school districts to collaborate, share best practices, and jointly offer training and development (e.g., ACCESS and PBS do this through local collaborations and through national collaborations managed by Safe School Healthy Students).
 - 4.12 Ensure that teachers are given appropriate training to deliver co-curricular and culturally diverse instruction utilizing effective classroom management system.

- Strategy 5:
 - 5.1 (add the following) Create a cross-functioning team (which includes ESS staff – Dropout Prevention Parent Involvement, PBS, etc) to better support struggling schools.
 - 5.1 Create a cross-functional team to better support struggling schools with alignment of campus and community resources.
 - 5.2 Charge central administration to review processes and procedures on prioritized district-wide initiatives to allow schools to operate more effectively and with increased autonomy.
 - 5.7 Identify and acquire the skills to promote national best practices and processes that promote sustainable campus systems to address academic and behaviors.
 - 5.8 Annually assess and address professional development needs of central office staff to insure understanding of national models of evidence based programs that address barriers to learning.

- Strategy 6:
 - Create the methodology for determining school needs to evaluate and reallocate if necessary funding to individual schools based on identified needs.

Input on Preliminary Draft Strategic Plan Summary of Expanded Cabinet Input

The Expanded Cabinet (40 central administrators and 115 campus principals) met on November 4, 2009. Members of the Expanded Cabinet rated each of the proposed Key Action steps of the preliminary draft according to how powerful the action step would be in achieving district goals. They also provided comments on the proposed Performance Targets and support for East Austin schools. Following is a summary of the input provided by the Expanded Cabinet.

Action Steps Receiving the Highest Ratings

- 1.1 Align the development, teaching, comprehension, and testing of the state required curriculum.
- 1.2 Establish clear expectations that curriculum, programs, and best practices will be implemented with fidelity and rigor across all campuses.
- 1.5 Provide early interventions for struggling learners.
- 1.6 Provide different learning experiences in the classroom to meet varied student needs and learning styles (i.e., differentiated instruction).
- 1.13 Expand and fund pre-kindergarten and early childhood education services and locations.
- 1.15 Provide recognized optimum student-teacher ratios at all grade levels.
- 1.18 Apply advances in technology to improve instruction and learning.
- 1.20 Identify homeless, mobile, and other students with special needs and ensure that they receive consistent access to curriculum and appropriate services.
- 1.21 Provide at least one fourth-year science course in engineering at each high school led by trained educators who engage students in project- and design-based learning.
- 1.23 Maintain a strong focus on math and science and identify and correct what is not working in these areas.
- 1.24 Provide teachers online access to curriculum guides, course management tools, and other classroom resources.
- 1.25 Ensure that teachers have access to timely, relevant data to guide instructional decisions.
- 1.26 Ensure that Health Education, Physical Education, and Nutritional Services are provided so that students can exceed fitness and health standards.
- 2.2 Hire and retain effective teachers and administrators, and provide them with appropriate supports and incentives.
- 2.12 Identify gaps and develop needs assessments for schools, teachers, and students.
- 2.14 Create early literacy and parent advocacy programs for families.
- 3.4 Increase collaboration with other entities (e.g., E³ Alliance, City of Austin, Housing Works) to support such areas as affordable housing, health and human services, and community planning
- 3.6 Ensure equitable resources (public, private, non-profit) at every school for supports to students, parents, and families.
- 3.7 Provide all resources necessary for adequate translation and interpretation services at all schools.
- 3.15 Increase the number of schools with Parent Support Specialists.
- 4.5 Develop a comprehensive and cohesive plan to deliver professional development in a meaningful fashion that is connected to needs and results in the classroom.
- 4.9 Enhance efforts to attract and retain high-quality and diverse personnel.
- 4.13 Ensure that teachers are given appropriate training to deliver co-curricular and culturally diverse instruction.
- 5.3 Include on central administration employee appraisals performance measures related to support of schools.
- 6.1 Examine options in funding methodology that allow federal title dollars to follow the student.
- 6.2 Evaluate and reallocate if necessary funding to individual schools based on identified needs.
- 6.4 Rigorously and regularly evaluate programs, including fiscal and operational indicators, to establish a framework for performance-based budgeting and to abandon programs that are not effective.
- 6.11 Actively explore and support legislative actions to enhance local district funding.

- 6.12 Search continually for alternative sources of funding and grants.
- 6.13 Ensure that safety and security are adequately addressed in funding and resource allocation.
- 6.14 Build adequate facility and program capacity to fully accommodate projected new students.
- 6.22 Consider closing under-enrolled schools to increase district efficiencies.

Is four years the right amount of time to achieve our goals?

Out of 12 breakout group tables:

Yes = 5

No = 5

No reply or not sure = 2

Comments:

- Not sure with so many changes to accountability system
- Definitely to make progress, but are goals reasonable?
- Research says 5 years
- If funded and focus on students maintained
- It takes 5-7 years to establish a program
- Allow time for campuses to follow their cohorts
- 100% is not appropriate or reasonable in 4 years

Are the proposed performance targets set at the appropriate level?

Out of 12 breakout group tables:

Yes = 3

No = 7

No reply or not sure = 2

Comments:

- The growth model is reasonable; an absolute model is not
- 90% is more realistic than 100%
- Not sure if appropriate to have separate targets for students in AISD less than 3 years
- Based on a 5-year timeline
- 100% not realistic; set at 95% for those in AISD for 3 years
- If we don't set them high we won't get there
- Not realistic for all students to be on grade level
- Targets should consider growth over time; consider schools with high mobility

Are targeted investments in East Austin the right approach to improve academically struggling schools and better serve East Austin schools and community?

Out of 12 breakout group tables:

Yes = 6

No = 3

No reply or not sure = 3

Comments:

- Some of us don't have information/perspective to fully determine this
- Rewrite as, "Are target investments the right approach to improve schools and better serve at-risk students"
- Low-performing schools need support
- What are the targeted investments; also include schools not physically in East Austin
- Not schools but learners – focus needs on struggling learners across the district
- Programs as well as dollars need to follow students
- Don't know – no real evidence that what has been done in the past has been successful
- Hire the right principals, trust them, give them the resources and autonomy to do their jobs
- Southeast Austin includes a huge percentage of AISD population

- Need more time to study this; stability is affected in East Austin because growth in Riverside is dealt with by shifting kids; stop paying for transportation for diversity choice

Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the preliminary draft plan?

Comments:

- Redistrict so all schools are at 600-650
- How do you determine what are appropriate allocations – are funds being effectively used and impact student success?
- Too many action steps; need to focus on effective leadership and teachers, student contact time, and professional development
- Increase collaboration that ensures equitable resources, streamlines access, and builds shared accountability
- Pre-K should be available to everybody
- Consolidate action steps under Strategy 4 into four broad areas:
 - PD plan that addresses district needs and is flexible and dynamic to meet campus needs
 - Retain our quality staff ...why hire them but we don't keep them ...why?
 - Cohesive plan for technology with sessions for using and maintaining technology
 - Develop an exit strategy (current plan is to wait 3 years to have contract lapse)