

**Creating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education  
For the Students Of Eastside Memorial High School  
At the Johnston Campus  
September 22, 2008**

With the closure of Johnston High School in June 2008, and the approval of the Texas Education Agency to “repurpose” the campus facility and open two new schools, AISD and school/community stakeholders have the opportunity to realize their New Vision to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century education for the students at Eastside Memorial High School.

AISD has implemented various program strands of 21<sup>st</sup> century education at different high schools through out the district under the umbrella of High School Redesign: personalization, new instructional strategies, structural changes, technology, project- based learning, and thematic curriculum.

Leveraging the experience and knowledge gained over the last three years, AISD proposes to bring these program strands together at Eastside Memorial to deliver a challenging, relevant 21<sup>st</sup> Century education for students at Eastside Memorial and for students across the district who apply for a transfer to the new schools.

Given the multiple challenges students face at Eastside and the history of under-performance, the situation calls for a totally new educational setting that allows students to build on their assets while providing additional support, instruction relevant to their lives, and a rigorous curriculum. It calls for efforts to integrate college and career readiness throughout the school and community so post-secondary enrollment is expected and encouraged and students graduate with the skills required for success in the future. It also calls for highly trained teachers who are committed to these students and to creating a community of high expectation and engaging classroom courses.

This report summarizes the New Vision process, provides background information on viable instructional models, presents possible options for consideration, and makes recommendations to the AISD Board of Trustees. Appendices at the end of the report provide additional information for each section of this report.

**Background**

In January 2008, AISD and the Johnston High School community embarked on a journey together to develop a New Vision for Johnston High School to better meet the needs of students by creating a world-class educational institution on the campus.

When Johnston High School did not meet all required performance measures on the state accountability test in May 2008, the Education Commissioner closed the school and allowed AISD to “repurpose” the facility by creating two new schools

on the campus, one to open in 2008 and the other in 2009, with instructional models that would meet student needs. Eastside Memorial High School at the Johnston Campus was the name for the first new school approved by the AISD Board of Trustees in August 2008.

AISD continued its New Vision process with stakeholders throughout the Summer of 2008 in preparation for making recommendations to the Board of Trustees in September 2008.

### **Parent/Student/Community Engagement**

AISD conducted an extensive parent and community engagement process to involve stakeholders in creating a New Vision. Multiple opportunities were provided for students, parents, and community members to become well informed about the future of the school, to express their opinions, and to provide feedback. Stakeholders were consulted on major decisions at every step of the process. A summary of activities is attached in Appendix A.

A Parent/Community Leadership Team was formed in January 2008, composed of representatives of the PTSA, CAC, Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Johnston High School Alumni organization. The Team met monthly to provide input and feedback at every step in the process and to become well-informed about the high school's accountability status and about options for new models.

With the support of the Team, AISD hosted a total of eighteen meetings throughout the spring and summer of 2008 to engage the school community around the New Vision and the future of the high school. Parents had multiple opportunities in many different venues to express their opinions, to ask questions, to learn about new instructional models and programs, and to provide feedback at decision points in the process. Over 1,200 parents, students, and community members participated.

A series of presentations were made at school-wide meetings about possible new models and programs, including: New Tech High at Manor, New Tech at Akins High School, the George I. Sanchez Early College High School in Houston, dual college credit at Austin Community College, Career and Technology Education programs, and programs at Garza Independence High School such as community service.

Parents, students, and teachers made site visits to both the New Tech High at Akins and at Manor to see the program first-hand and hear about its impact from the students themselves.

Five focus groups were conducted with parents, students, and teachers by the company JAMLatino to solicit opinions and ideas about the future of the high school.

These activities culminated with a community-wide meeting on Saturday, August 9, 2008 in which participants set their priorities and values for the New Vision for Eastside Memorial High School. These priorities were aligned with the criteria established to evaluate possible new models. These priorities included:

**College and Career Opportunities (Total Votes – 80)**

- More dual-credit classes on site (28 votes)
- Additional information for parents about college (14 votes)
- Additional, and earlier, information and counseling for students about college (11 votes)
- More career days and college visits (11 votes)
- Opportunity to receive associate degree from ACC (6 votes)

**Support Services (Total Votes – 53)**

- Positive Behavior Support – to decrease student behavior problems in classroom (10 votes)
- Bilingual counselors (9 votes)
- Technology assistance to parents to improve communication (9 votes)
- Social worker and parent support specialist (6 votes)
- College success skills for students – how to study, note taking (5 votes)

**Teaching and Learning (Total Votes – 42)**

- Hands-on, Project-Based Learning in Classrooms More Relevant to Students (9 votes)
- Summer Classes for Students & Teachers /Community School (6 votes)
- More experienced teachers (5 votes)
- Technology-based curriculum (5 votes)
- Additional on-site tutoring to help with academic skills (5 votes)

Key findings from the focus groups with parents, students, and teachers are summarized below, but a more complete report is included in Appendix B:

- Parents, Students & Teachers/Administrators all agreed that the school should expand Career & Technology Education opportunities, programs to help teachers better manage student behavior, programs that enhance students' computer/technology skills, continue providing tutoring after school and on the weekends, and better integrate the use of education/graduation goals and plans.
- Parents & students endorsed the idea of having flexible class hours and flexible curriculum, expressed a preference for small student/teacher ratios, and advocated for Life Skills classes and Saturday classes to help with TAKS or to make-up absences. Parents & students also expressed strong support for the New Tech High School model.

- Parents in both the English & Spanish focus groups expressed frustration in terms of receiving timely and easy to understand information from the school. Spanish-speaking parents in particular mentioned having a feeling of isolation due to the language barrier and made suggestions about how communication could be improved.
- Students expressed strong interest in classes that were hands-on/interactive as well as support for dual college credit classes and classes relating to effective studying techniques. Ninth grade students were particularly in favor of classes on studying techniques and also expressed support for a program where 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are mentored by older high school students.
- Teachers expressed a need for increased training to make classes more interesting and relevant to students and improved communication among teachers to learn from each other's teaching methods and classroom management skills.

**Calendar of Parent & Community Engagement Activities  
January 2008 – September 2008**

<b>Date - 2008</b>	<b>Activity</b>
January 24	Vertical Team Parent Meeting at Ortega Elementary
January 31	Vertical Team Parent Meeting at Govalle Elementary
February 12	Parent/Community Meeting to Obtain Input on Contingency Plan
February 19	Vertical Team Parent Meeting at Zavala Elementary
February 25	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
March 19	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
April 10	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
April 30	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
May 6	Kick-Off of Johnston New Vision Process Hosted by Senator Kirk Watson, AISD Superintendent & AISD School Board
May 15	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
May 27	Teacher Focus Group
May 28	Student Focus Group (afternoon) and Parent Focus Group (evening)
May 29	Student Focus Group (afternoon) and Parent Focus Group (evening)
June 5	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
June 12	Parent/Community Meeting to Provide a Status Report Regarding the Decision by TEA
June 19	Parent/Community Meeting to Communicate TEA's Decision to Close Johnston and to Allow for Re-Purposing
June 24	Parent/Community Meeting to Learn About "New Tech High School," Garza High School, Dual Credit Opportunities & AISD's Career and Technology Education (CATE) Program.
July 15	Johnston Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting

July 19	Parent Fair (to encourage parents to submit choice applications)
July 31	Parent/Community Meeting to Learn About "Early College High School" Model with a Presentation by George I. Sanchez Charter High School
August 9	Parent/Community Meeting to Set Priorities for Selection of Instructional Models for the 2009-2010 School Year
August 26	Letter to Eastside Memorial High School Parents Requesting Feedback on Priority Issues on the Future of Eastside
September 10	Parent/Community Leadership Team Meeting
September 16	Meeting with Core Subject Teacher Leaders

### **Data Review to Identify Student Needs**

AISD consulted existing data about Johnston High School and commissioned an in-depth data analysis by The Parthenon Group to ensure that the needs of students were fully examined and understood. Meeting student needs was one of the primary criteria established in the selection of new models for the new high school.

Data that contributed to the review included:

- Senior Exit Survey (May 2008)
- Parent Climate Survey
- Student Climate Survey
- Teacher Faculty Survey
- PEIMS and AEIS data
- Student employment questionnaire (Appendix C)
- Data Analysis by The Parthenon Group

Findings from these data indicate there are critical student needs that must be addressed by any model considered for implementation, including:

- Instructional strategies to serve English Language Learners and Special Education students.
- Academic support to incoming ninth graders to increase reading and math skills.
- Efforts to reduce high mobility and increase the percent of students who enter as freshmen and graduate as seniors.
- A college-going culture integrated throughout the school to provide hands on information and assistance to both parents and students.
- Support for students who are over-age, under-credit for their grade level and need assistance to acquire credits towards graduation.

### **Student Demographics (2008-09)**

- 538 – Students Enrolled
- 83% - Hispanic
- 17% - African American
- 1% - Anglo

- 22% - Special Education
- 24% - Limited English Proficiency
- 80% - Economically disadvantaged (2007-08)
- 33% - Over-age, under-credit (2007-08)

### **Performance – TAKS (2007-2008)**

- 50% of all students met the standard for Math
- 69% of all students met the standard for Reading/ELA
- 39% of all students met the standard for Science
- 69% of all students met the standard for Social Studies
- 19% of Students Achieved Higher Education College Readiness in ELA (2007)
- 19% Students Achieved College Readiness in Math (2007)

LEP students show significant performance gaps in all core subject areas on TAKS.

### **Student Tenure**

- Less than half of the students were zoned for Johnston attended Johnston. Of the 1,118 students in the attendance zone in 2007-08, 473 were enrolled in Johnston in 2007-08, and 645 attended other high schools in the district.
- Of the Freshman Class in 2005-2006, only 34% of students are still enrolled as Juniors in 2007-2008 (Source: Parthenon Analysis).

### **Academic Preparedness**

- Two-thirds of freshmen entered Johnston academically under-prepared in 2007-08, having failed to meet the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS standard on Reading only, or on Math only, or on both Math and Reading. However, it is significant to note that the percent of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students entering Johnston academically under-prepared has *decreased* over the last three years (Source: Parthenon analysis).

### **Other factors that affect performance**

- 41% of seniors reported having family care responsibilities outside of school, compared to 24% of Seniors district-wide (Source: Senior Exit Survey).
- An estimated 25% of *all* students were employed in May 2008 (Source: Student Questionnaire).
- 54% of Seniors reported that they were employed during their senior year with 30% working more than sixteen hours per week (Source: Senior Exit Survey).
- Of all students who were employed, almost half (48%) reported being tardy because they worked late the night before, and 53% said their work schedule affected their ability to complete homework (Source: Student Questionnaire).

### **Post-Secondary Factors**

- Percentage of students taking SAT in 2007-08 declined by 10%.
- Mean score on SAT decreased in 2007-08, while district scores increased.
- The percent of students submitting a 4-year college application declined to 39% in 2007-08, compared to 53% in 2006-007.
- Students are twice as likely to be first in the family to attend college (63%) as compared to students district-wide (30%).
- 50% of mothers of Johnston students did not graduate from high school, compared to 18.6% district-wide. 5.7% of mothers had a college degree vs. 37.5% district-wide. Students whose mothers had a college degree had 2x the college enrollment rate of students whose mothers did not finish high school (3x more likely to enroll in 4-year college).

(Sources: 2007 and 2008 Senior Exit Survey; SAT Test Results 2006, 2007; Parthenon Analysis)

### **Computer Access**

- 38% of seniors reported that they did not have a computer at home or had a computer without internet access, compared to 13% of students district-wide (Source: Senior Exit Survey).

### **Instructional Models - Options for Eastside Memorial**

AISD requested the assistance from the Texas High School Project, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation in identifying successful instructional models that might be adopted at Eastside Memorial High School. Each of the twelve recommended models was contacted for an interview and site visits to exemplar schools were made if appropriate. At the end of the process, four models emerged as possible options to be implemented on the campus.

Instructional models aim to create ideal environments for teaching and learning that are supported by learning theory and research. The success of any instructional model can be measured by its efficacy in honoring each child's developmental level, culture, language and need while preparing each child for meaningful participation in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century social and economic context.

Staff members made site visits to the following schools to review the models first-hand:

- Challenge Early College High School (Houston ISD)
- Student Empowerment Academy at Jefferson High School (New Tech High in Los Angeles Unified)
- New Tech High School Napa
- Sacramento New Technology High School
- Harmony Science Academy in Houston (T-STEM school)

- IDEA Public Schools in the Rio Grande Valley,
- Manor New Tech High
- International School of the Americas in San Antonio (Global Studies School),
- Henry Street School for International Studies in New York City (Global Studies School)
- College of Staten Island High School for International Studies (Global Studies School)
- New Tech High Academy at Akins.

Staff also contacted the models listed below as possible partners to provide 21<sup>st</sup> Century education at Eastside Memorial. These models were not included on the list of viable options, however, primarily because they are regional models with no plans to expand beyond their geographic area at this time. It should be noted that some of these schools are implementing successful programs and interventions that should be explored for possible implementation at Eastside, such as extended class hours and community service.

The following models are not viable options at this time (reasons provided):

- YES Academy (Houston) – State charter school. Not ready to expand outside of Houston.
- KIPP Academy (Austin) – State charter schools. Interested in forming its own school district in Austin.
- Harmony Science Academy – State charter school. Strength is not Bilingual or Special Education.
- Green Dot (California based) – Not interested in expanding beyond California at this time.
- Uplift Education (Dallas) – State charter school. Not a high school model.
- Talent Development (Baltimore based) – Not interested in expanding to Texas
- High Tech High – Limited to San Diego area only
- IDEA Public Schools in Rio Grande Valley – State charter schools. Interested in further discussion, but 2009 is too soon for implementation.

The IDEA Academy, which operates nine schools in the Rio Grande Valley, is a promising model that should be explored in more depth. Although not the right timing for adoption at Eastside Memorial in 2009, it may be a school to consider in the future as part of AISD's portfolio of schools. IDEA schools are state charter schools at this time, but may be open to a district charter conversation.

Based on how they rated on the established criteria, the following models were identified as possible models to be implemented at Eastside Memorial High School:

- New Tech High
- Early College High School
- Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Academy (T-STEM)

- Global Studies School

### **Criteria for Selection of Model**

Based on data analysis, research conducted, and the priorities established by stakeholders, the following fourteen criteria have been established to evaluate new instructional models recommended for Eastside Memorial:

#### **Student Need**

- Does the model serve students with a similar profile to Eastside Memorial students, including the following groups of students:
  - English Language Learners
  - Students who don't meet standard on TAKS
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - Highly mobile
  - Special Education students
- Has the model had success on state accountability tests with these groups of students?

#### **Teaching and Learning**

- Is teaching and learning central to model design?
- Is the instruction engaging, hands-on, and relevant to student's lives?
- Is the pedagogy rigorous?
- Is curriculum aligned with state standards?
- Has it proven successful in preparing students for state accountability tests, college, and meaningful careers?

#### **College Readiness**

- Are college and career readiness skills integrated into the model?
- Are dual credit courses available and expected?
- Is college assistance readily available?
- Are development courses available to prepare students to take dual credit courses?
- What is the track record for graduates in terms of college enrollment and college success?

#### **Development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, including technology**

- Are 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills integrated into the instruction and curriculum including:
  - Use of technology
  - Critical thinking
  - Student initiative
  - Team work
  - Practical application of skills

#### **Integration of Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs**

- Can a variety of CTE programs be offered as part of the model?

- Does this model create a clear pathway of preparation for students seeking meaningful careers?
- Are opportunities available for internships or on the job training?

### **Integration of intervention and social service programs**

- Does the model have flexibility to integrate academic interventions, changes to schedule such as extended hours, social service support, or community service?
- Does the model have the flexibility to provide a successful academic path for students who must work while attending school or who have children of their own?

### **Systems for parent empowerment and community involvement**

- Does the model encourage parent and community involvement?
- Is there a system in place to empower parents to advocate for their students?
- Is there a parent engagement program?
- Are external partnerships encouraged?

### **Non-Selective Enrollment**

- Are all students who apply eligible to attend?
- Is there a pre-screening or selective admission process?
- Can students be asked to leave the school?

### **Governance**

- Will AISD operate the school?
- What relationship will the parent organization have with AISD?
- What agreements, MOUs, or contracts are necessary?
- Is the model a state or district charter school?

### **AISD Capacity and Experience**

- Does AISD have experience to implement the model?
- Is this a new model for the district?
- What capacity – in terms of resources, facilities and training – would be required for AISD to implement the model?

### **Technical Assistance**

- Is there a founding organization that will provide technical assistance (including professional development) to implement the model?
- Is outside technical assistance on-going?
- Does the model provide professional development to train teachers in the skills necessary to deliver instruction?
- Is there a network of other schools sharing lessons learned and best practices?

## **Cost**

- What is the cost to the district to implement the model?
- What are the on-going costs?
- Does the model come with some outside financial support?
- Does AISD have resources to implement the model?

## **External Partnerships and Support**

- Is there a likely partner to provide financial support to implement the model?
- Will this model attract support from community and business partners?

Based on these criteria, the following models were identified as viable models to be considered for adoption at Eastside Memorial – with a careful analysis of ongoing costs included in that consideration:

- New Tech High,
- Early College High School,
- Global Studies School, and
- T-STEM

Appendix D provides a matrix that matches the criteria with the characteristics of each model.

## **Summary of Viable Models**

Each of these models targets low-income students of color who require a different educational system that is designed to meet their needs in order to improve the percent of student who will graduate high school and enroll in college. Additional details on each model are included in the notebook provided to the Board.

### **New Tech High**

New Tech High School offers students hands-on, collaborative learning in a small school setting. Organized under the umbrella of the New Tech Foundation, there are currently forty New Tech schools operating in eight states. The pedagogy is focused around the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as: collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and communication. Students use these skills to meet state-required achievement goals in a project-based learning environment. The student-to-computer ratio is one-to-one, which enables creative presentations, research, and communication. Students apply their knowledge through team projects, modeling real-life work situations, job assignments, internships, peer reviews, and connections to community, college, and career experiences. Collaboration among administrators, teachers, and students is a core feature of the New Tech school culture, as are college-readiness skills and dual credit college courses. Students are empowered to take responsibility for their behavior and their learning in the context of the school

culture. Some New Tech schools integrate a thematic focus such as science and math, while others, such as Akins, have a more general studies approach.

The New Tech Foundation provides unique resources to its partner schools – standards based curriculum on-line, assessment tools, electronic grade book and other data reporting tools, an electronic student “briefcase”, a national curriculum library, and best practice lesson units from other New Tech schools, all organized in a unified technology platform. The Foundation also provides professional development to all teachers so that they have the necessary skills to develop and deliver Project-Based-Learning instruction. These services are included in the partner cost over four years. New Tech schools target struggling students and operate in many urban districts that serve low-income students whose schools have been chronically low-performing.

Designation as a New Tech school requires an application to the New Tech Foundation and there are annual costs associated with professional development for teachers and on-going technical assistance. (Sources: Learning Tour: Manor New Technology High School, New Tech Foundation)

### **Early College High School (ECHS)**

Early College High School is a bold approach, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Early College High Schools partner with institutions of higher education, blending high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete high school diploma and the first two years of college. There are 160 Early College High Schools across the United States.

The schools are small (400-500 students) and are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English Language Learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and one to two years of transferable college credits – tuition free. Schools provide a multiyear transition plan that gradually introduces students to college-going experiences and the demands of college coursework, while providing a wide variety of supports tailored to individual needs.

ECHS is not a curriculum or an instructional program, but a model that includes a set of programmatic features each ECHS should have in place. An application to the Texas Education Agency is a prerequisite for designation as an Early College High School. There are costs associated with the technical assistance to establish an early college school. TEA may not have a fourth round of grants available until after the legislative session in 2009. (Sources: Early High School News)

### **International Studies Schools Network (Global Studies Schools)**

Since 2003, Asia Society has worked in partnership with school districts and charter authorities to create the International Studies School Network (ISSN), a national network of design-driven schools that are achieving success in attaining their core mission to develop college ready, globally competent high school graduates. There are currently twelve schools in six states. The ISSN has also begun to develop academies within a few high schools in this country (including Austin High School), but most of its schools are stand-alone schools for approximately 400-500 students.

These schools are all dedicated to providing a rigorous, engaging internationally-focused education for primarily urban and minority students to prepare them for college, the changing workforce, and a lifetime of learning as 21st century global citizens.

The mission of each ISSN school is to create an environment for learning and development in which every student is prepared to succeed in college or other post-secondary education and to compete, connect, and cooperate within an interconnected global community. To achieve this mission, each of these schools faces a common challenge: to understand what the new knowledge and skills are that students need in a global era and how these can be thoughtfully integrated within the core curriculum in ways that ultimately contribute to students' overall school performance. Students are required to take four years of a foreign language and the curriculum, including literature, social studies, and science, are taught in their global context.

Designation as a Global Studies school connected to the Asia Society requires acceptance by the Society, and there is cost associated with their professional development and technical assistance. The Asia Society has provided funds to AISD to open the Global Studies Academy at Austin High through a grant they received from the Gates Foundation. The Society is awaiting notification of a new round of funding from Gates in October (Source: International Schools Studies Network).

### **Texas – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Initiative**

The Texas Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics Initiative (**T-STEM**) builds on state and local efforts to improve mathematics and science achievement among all Texas students and focuses on increasing the number of students who study and enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers. T-STEM offers a proactive and strategic approach to empower Texas educators with the tools needed to transform teaching and learning methods for the new century.

The mission of T-STEM Academies is to develop school models that provide a rigorous, well-rounded, education with outstanding science, technology,

engineering and mathematics (STEM) instruction. Current academy models are small learning communities, schools-within-schools, new traditional and charter schools and T-STEM Early College High Schools. These STEM-focused school models graduate students who are prepared to pursue post-secondary level coursework and careers in STEM. T-STEM Academies will serve as demonstration sites to showcase best practices in STEM teaching and learning. The academies are committed to transforming instructional practice to model real-world contexts for learning to improve student achievement for all students.

### **Comparison of Models**

Each of the four models described above has unique strengths and weaknesses. A matrix in Appendix D compares each model against the criteria used for evaluation.

All four models can be implemented by AISD with technical assistance provided by founding organizations, but require an application to be designated a school under each model. There is a cost and potential funding sources associated with each instructional model. College readiness with enrollment assistance and dual credit course opportunities are a priority for each model, although Early College High Schools have advantages because of their unique status with TEA. Each model has the flexibility to integrate intervention programs and support for struggling students and values parent and community involvement. Global Studies schools have less emphasis on CTE programs. The major differences among the models are around the instructional focus of each model and how 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are integrated into instruction.

**New Tech High** ranks highest against the established criteria. Teaching and learning is central to the New Tech model with project based learning as the core instructional system, focused on engaging students with innovative curriculum. New Tech provides professional development for teachers to build classroom teaching skills, assessment tools, and a technology platform for delivery. New Tech integrates 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into every part of its operation, and college readiness and enrollment is expected of all students. The web-based instructional program is the one model that addresses the issue of student mobility and attendance directly, since students can keep up with their work via computer even if they miss school. New Tech students at schools such as Jefferson High School in East Los Angeles have similar demographics to the students at Eastside Memorial and have made significant progress. Jefferson was the worst performing school in California in 2003 and is now one of the top performing schools in Los Angeles Unified. New Tech most closely integrates the priorities established by students, parents, and community members, and AISD has experience implementing this model at Akins High School. The cost to implement New Tech includes expenses for computers for each student which is a foundation of the New Tech instructional delivery system, and a contract with the New Tech Foundation to provide for professional development, on-going

support for planning and implementation, and access to all technology tools. An estimated budget is attached.

**Early College High Schools** provide a strong model to bridge the college gap for students who may not attend without the strong support and focus offered by these schools. Advantages are the expanded set of course offerings available to students starting in the freshman year and the fifth year of high school that is offered. The advantage of attending a high school that focuses on “college” is a strong motivator for students. In the last year, Early College High Schools in Texas have initiated a strong focus on teaching and learning as a core part of the model. AISD staff has concern that struggling students with multiple academic challenges will not be served well by the college lecture approach they will encounter in courses taught by college instructors. In addition, students must pass the college entrance exam before they are eligible to take dual credit courses, and even though assistance will be provided along the way, some students at Early College schools may not qualify for college work, creating an expectation that cannot be met. Finally, grants from TEA to provide financial assistance to implement an Early College High School are not expected to be open for application until after the legislative session in 2009.

### **Global Studies School**

A Global Studies High School, as part of the International Studies Schools Network (ISSN) sponsored by the Asia Society, emphasizes the international context of the high school curriculum, whether it be in the sciences, social studies or literature. The program requires four years of a foreign language and the use of technology to work with students connected to the program in other countries. As at the Global Studies Academy at Austin High School, the program would offer Spanish and the study of Mexico, South and Central America as a concentration. The schools use a great deal of team teaching, cooperative learning and curriculum integration (language and social studies, for example). The schools chart career pathways for international business and communications, foreign relations, and careers in the U.S. growing from domestic connections with the global economy. The Network provides staff development and curricular support—through lesson plans, materials, etc.—for the schools. Start-up costs for schools in the International Studies School Network of the Asia Society have been supported by the Gates Foundation. The network is currently negotiating with the foundation on another round of funding.

There are currently four schools in Texas that are members of the ISSN. The two newest programs are the Global Studies Academy at Austin High and a similar academy at Mathis High School in Mathis, Texas, both begun this year. The Mathis School is emphasizing the advantages for bilingual students who come into the program as Spanish speakers. A third school opened two years ago in Houston. The International School of the Americas in San Antonio was founded twelve years ago. It is an open-enrollment school of the Northeast School District, but it draws its students by lottery from all school districts in Bexar

County. The school's completion rate has ranged from 98% to 100% and almost all students graduate with a Distinguished diploma. AISD staff members have visited the school in San Antonio, as well as two ISSN schools in New York City.

Continuing support from the Gates Foundation or another funder would be necessary to supplement the partnership with AISD, as the staff development for school leaders and teachers is provided through this funding. It includes materials, access to resources, and intensive summer training with other members of the ISSN network. The network focuses on delivering the integrated curriculum with a global emphasis. For a school such as Eastside Memorial, delivery of this curriculum would be strengthened by a clearly defined teaching and learning platform, such as that offered by the New Tech model. Conversations between the New Tech Foundation and the Asia Society are currently under way about the possibility of collaborating in several high schools across the country.

### **Texas – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Initiative**

T-STEM Academies seek to address flattening or declining levels of students graduating with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In order to meet the goals of the T-STEM Initiative, T-STEM Academies must actively recruit and provide support structures for students who are low income, from underrepresented student groups, at-risk, and/or first generation college-goers. The selection policies of the academies must reflect the desire to serve the students with the greatest need, not the students who already excel in math and science. These goals would clearly meet the needs of students at Eastside Memorial High School.

The T-STEM Academies will have multiple sources for support as part of the larger T-STEM Initiative including technical assistance provided by universities, the Texas High School Project, Texas Education Agency, and the T-STEM network.

The T-STEM Academy model appears to be complementary to that of the New Tech High model, with both having strong emphases on project-based learning for students, professional development requirements for staff, and the integration and use of technology in all aspects of teaching and learning. T-STEM is strongly supported by those in leadership roles in Texas government, industry, and the non-profit sector.

Funds are currently available through competitive, discretionary grants through the Texas Education Agency and the Texas High School Project to support the start-up and early implementation of T-STEM academies. Grantees may receive up to a maximum of \$480,000 to establish academies serving grades 9-12, with funding to begin in March 2009.

### **Student Outcomes**

Funding partners have begun to evaluate the effectiveness of these models, but studies have only produced initial results at this time because many schools are

just graduating their first groups of students. Funders have continued to support expansion of these models based on the initial outcomes, and there are some promising trends.

- At Akins High School, the 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in the New Tech High Academy had higher passing rates on their 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Exit-Level TAKS test than did other currently enrolled 12<sup>th</sup> graders at their school. In some cases, the New Tech 12<sup>th</sup> graders scored better than all the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students tested district-wide during 2007-2008.
- Manor New Tech (also a T-STEM school) is scoring significantly higher than the comprehensive high school (Manor High School) on 2007-2008 TAKS in all four core subject areas: 21% higher in Math; 26% higher in Science; 14% higher in Social Studies; and 15% higher in Reading/ELA. Students at Manor New Tech are also scoring considerably higher than the state standard in all subject areas.
- Jefferson High School in East Los Angeles (LA Unified) was the worst performing school in California and experienced massive riots on the campus in 2003. It was considered a school with a pathology of brokenness and was chronically underperforming. Jefferson divided into small learning communities at that time, including a New Tech High called the Student Empowerment Academy (SEA). SEA made significant performance increases the first year it opened is now one of the top performing high schools in LA Unified.

### **Options**

Other districts have successfully combined different models to expand the opportunities available to students. For example, both New Tech High and Early College High Schools can also be a T-STEM school with thematic focus on math, science, and technology. Although Global Studies schools are generally stand-alone schools or academies, New Tech and Global Studies are interested in working together to merge their two models, although this collaboration would result in a higher overall cost to implement.

Based on these possible combinations, options for the two new models at Eastside include:

- New Tech High stand alone
- Global Studies School stand alone
- T-STEM School stand alone
- Early College High School stand alone
- New Tech High with STEM or Global Studies focus
- Early College High School with STEM focus
- New Tech High with STEM or Global Studies focus that is designated as an Early College High School

### **Costs of New Models**

There are costs associated with any effort to address the chronic low performance at Eastside Memorial, and significant state, local and private funds have already been expended over the last four years on the campus to increase performance. Likewise, there will be significant costs to implement a new, effective instructional model at Eastside in 2009-2010. The following costs are common to each model that is under consideration by AISD:

- Curriculum development
- Professional development
- Technical assistance with external partners and organizations
- Facilities
- Technology infrastructure

New Tech schools require a one-time upfront cost to purchase computers for each student. Estimated costs for each model will be provided.

### **Recommendations**

Because of the instructional strengths of New Tech High, AISD recommends opening two New Tech Highs on the Eastside Memorial campus, each to have a specific theme that will be determined once funding options are known. New Tech is a research-based model that provides a technology structure (or platform) for “how” students learn, with engaging instruction that is relevant to students’ lives as the foundation of the model. The “what” students learn will be determined based on variables such as student interest, student need, or funds available. Opening the two new schools as a STEM New Tech and a Global Studies New Tech is a compelling combination that brings the best of three models together for Eastside Memorial.

Simply said, New Tech is an opportunity to create a school in which students want to come to school and are interested in what they’re studying.

The following comments from students at New Tech High at Akins on the day of the ribbon cutting for their new facility testify to the power of a school that engages student interest:

- “This is where the future is.”
- “If I can’t be at school, I can continue to do my work.”
- “It’s like family at New Tech, and I don’t have that at home.”
- “I know what I’m learning will be useful later on in my life.”
- “ My favorite project was when I got to design all the sound stages for a music festival and had to use physics and all that stuff to figure out where the sound waves would be going so that you couldn’t hear the music from one stage at another stage. That was really fun.”

## **Considerations for implementation of New Tech High:**

- The Project-Based-Learning that is central to instruction at New Tech will be the foundation of learning at each school, providing the engaged, relevant teaching that students need.
- The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills students learn as part of their New Tech experience will be valuable to them for college, career, and life.
- College readiness will be integrated throughout the schools and students will be expected to graduate with dual college credit. Creation of a partnership with Austin Community College and a College and Career Support Center to serve the entire campus is already underway.
- AISD will explore applying for an Early College designation from TEA to make additional opportunities available to certain students.
- Different themes for the two schools will provide distinct choices for students between a more liberal arts focused education such as Global Studies, or a math/science approach, such as STEM.
- AISD will continue to engage parents, community, and students around the selection of a theme for each New Tech school. Should funding not be available for either STEM or Global Studies, AISD will be ready with alternatives.
- Career and technology programs will be designed around the themes and student interest and integrated into the available curriculum.
- Providing each student with the technology skills from the New Tech experience will itself be an advantage when students graduate, especially for students who are less likely to have computers available to them at home. More importantly, it will ensure that there is not an equity issue among students on the campus, with only one school having technology readily accessible to students.

The Redesign Executive Committee, composed of the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Associate Superintendent of High Schools and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, has endorsed the recommendation to create two New Tech Highs on the Eastside Memorial campus. The Parent/Community Leadership Team, with members from the Eastside Memorial PTSA, CAC, Hispanic Chamber, and Alumni organization, has also endorsed the recommendation. A community-wide meeting will be conducted during the week of September 22 or 29, 2008 to provide an additional opportunity for the community to comment on the recommendation before the AISD Board of Trustees takes action.

## **Additional Questions**

### **Will 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders will be included in New Tech High in 2009-10?**

Yes. Juniors and seniors will be part of New Tech, although they will not have the full experience of students who start the New Tech experience as Freshmen.

### **How will students be selected for the two new models?**

Students from the attendance zone will have first option to attend either of the two new models, but must make an intentional choice to attend. Enrollment in these two new schools will be open to students from any high school in AISD and will be selected by a lottery should the applications exceed the positions available.

### **Because students work in project groups at New Tech High, can students slide by without producing any rigorous work?**

No. Students are much more likely to develop their full range of skills through the New Tech system. Students work in small groups for every project and in every class at a New Tech High. Before beginning each project, each group develops a contract outlining roles and responsibilities as well as how points will be deducted for absences and tardies. For each project, students are assessed on a broad range of skills like work ethic and effort, course content knowledge, collaboration, critical thinking, use of technology, and more. Thus, for every task students are responsible for in a New Tech High they are accountable to their teachers, their peers and themselves and are expected to improve more than just their grades--there's no where to hide.

### **Will students at the two New Tech Highs have the opportunity to participate in athletics and extra-curricular activities?**

Yes. Students will participate together for Band, Choir, sports, and other activities just as they do at LBJ and LASA.