

Pearce Middle School Redesign and Reassignment Proposal Early College Proposal - 2010-11

The District goal for Pearce Middle School is to meet or exceed the Academically Acceptable standard. However, even if the school meets or exceeds the Academically Acceptable standard, staff members still need to study and create a rigorous and high-quality educational design that supports the creation of a college-going culture. This approach aligns with the Reagan Early College High School and Early College Start Initiative.

In the 2010-11 transition year, rising sixth graders will remain at their elementary schools, and the rising seventh and eighth graders will remain at Pearce Middle School.

Academic Program

The Austin Independent School District will support Pearce Middle School in the creation and implementation of an Early College Initiative for Pre-K - 8th grades for the 2010-2011 school year. The District will enhance the academic program through the implementation of an Early College Initiative. Internal capacity to create a middle school college prep academy will be developed via partnerships with proven partners such as the University of Texas Elementary School, the University of Texas College of Education, the University of Texas Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, and the Texas High School Project. Staff will work on a proposal to present to representatives with the University of Texas at Austin. This approach will serve to strengthen the feeder elementary and middle schools to Reagan High School which will have an Early College High School model. The Early College High School Initiative focuses on the education of students for whom a smooth and successful transition into postsecondary education is a challenging experience. This initiative would begin in the elementary and middle grades to ensure that students are academically prepared to experience success in their high school classes.

If Pearce meets its academic targets and remains open for the 2010 – 2011 school year, the district proposes having the rising 6th grade class remain at their current elementary schools. The rising 7th and 8th graders will remain at Pearce. In an effort to create a quality Early College Model for Pearce Middle School.

A Turnaround Team of core academic teachers and a counselor will work in collaboration with the principal to develop and design a master schedule, a professional development plan aligned to the early college model, and engage in data analysis to identify critical needs. The Turnaround Team will participate in site visits and gather research to collaborate with partnerships such as the University of Texas Elementary School and the Texas High School Project to collect researched-based strategies and models. The Turnaround Team will also be supported in their efforts to lead the design and implementation of the new model as the work is scaled up to transform the instructional program in grades 6 – 8. This leadership team will increase the knowledge and skills of their colleagues at Pearce Middle School by participating in and leading collaborative meetings and Professional Learning Communities with support from district administrators and the external partners. To ensure success of 6th grade students remaining at their elementary schools, members of the Turnaround team will also provide

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support at Webb through student data analysis, tutorials, academic interventions, and transition activities.

For the 2011- 2012 school year, Pearce would begin its year with a new class of 6th graders from its feeder elementary schools. The students who remain at their elementary schools as 6th graders will be given the option of returning to Pearce Middle School as 7th graders. All students across the district who live in the Pearce attendance area will also have the option of returning to Pearce. The district will also continue the implementation of its current transfer policy to accommodate any student in the district who wants to attend Pearce to experience its new Early College Model. Full implementation of the Early College Model will occur in the 2012 – 2013 school year.

The table below represents projections of numbers of students assigned to Pearce Middle School over a three year period.

Table 1: Numbers of Students Assigned to Pearce Over Three Years

Grade Levels	School Year 2009-2010	School Year 2010-2011	School Year 2011-2012
8 th	151	136	127
7 th	163	128	148
6 th	149	146	155

In addition to the Early College initiative, the school will assess each student using the innovative Internet-based system *Naviance* for individual career interests and to determine areas of academic strengths and weaknesses. *Naviance* was included in the 2009-2010 school year, and this tool is aligned with the feeder high schools.

Access to a rigorous, common curriculum for all Austin ISD students is an evidence-based best practice and a non-negotiable expectation. In compliance with Board policy and goals, and to ensure equal access to rigorous learning across all disciplines, for all students, student groups, and special program areas, the following procedures regarding the district’s instructional program have been established. Within these parameters are (the “whats”) of teaching and learning as described below, and principals and teachers are encouraged and will be supported to employ autonomy in the instructional processes (the “hows”) of implementing the curriculum and instructional program.

The District’s rigorous curriculum standards will apply to the grade level teams. These are based on the TEKS and are designed to ensure that students learn the skills and knowledge to be successful in college and careers. Pearce students can and will be prepared to be successful as they transition from middle school to high school. To meet the demands of the high school curriculum, students must be able not only to recognize and recall knowledge, but also to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information. A strong instructional model—due to daily collaborative planning of instruction through focused PLCs, thematic-based instructional units (including culminating activities, project-based learning, field-based experiences), and systematic monitoring of student assessment data leading to effective intervention and enrichment opportunities and data-driven instruction—i.e., teaching students what they need to learn. In order to effectively serve this highly diverse and increasingly mobile population of

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students, the district will provide a well-defined and sequenced curriculum that outlines the learning standards for every subject area in every grade level and course.

Pearce Middle School will focus on creating an environment where students, staff and community feel secure and inspired to learn. In order to address the academic and social development of students, the campus will implement the Response to Intervention process. The campus will integrate and align Response to Intervention (RtI) with Positive Behavior Support (PBS) tiered strategies and the IMPACT process to address the barriers to learning and the academic needs of all students.

To increase academic achievement at Pearce Middle School, the district and campus must integrate robust supports for English Language Learners. The ESL initiative in the Middle Level Education Plan is centered around a framework for improvement which includes the following components: Data Analysis, Leadership Development, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, and District Level Support. Within these components a co-accountability structure will exist between and among all stakeholders, including district leadership, campus leadership, and classroom teachers. A special emphasis will be placed on the teaching and learning of math and science. The Office of Bilingual Education/ESL will provide support in the implementation of the TEKS and ELPS through collaboration with the Curriculum Office and Special Education Office to ensure the ELPS strategies and content are embedded in the Instructional Planning Guides. The English as a Second Language (ESL) Program for middle students is an intensive instructional program designed to meet the linguistic needs of English Language Learners in preparation for success in the more rigorous content and elective courses they will face in their academic futures. The expectations for ELLs are to be able to learn academic content through the English language and to compete academically with primary English speaking students. All students who speak a language other than English will be provided with the opportunity and resources to learn English as a second language so that they may achieve academic success in general education classes, pursue their lifetime goals and function effectively as informed, productive members in our society.

Based on feedback from the LPAC committee, student schedules would reflect ESL courses and sheltered courses that use second language acquisition strategies to make instruction more comprehensible and meaningful. Sheltered courses include math, science, social studies, and language arts. Elective courses should require listening, speaking, reading, writing and comprehension skills based on the language proficiency of the students assessed at the start of the school year.

All courses for ESL students provide instruction based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The ESL program addresses the affective, linguistic, and cognitive needs of all students and provides ELLs with instruction for the acquisition of basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. The program ensures that ELLs are provided the same academic and extracurricular opportunities as the students enrolled in general education classes.

Instruction is made comprehensible for ELLs by providing intensive English language development and sheltered content courses that each use proven ESL methodologies. ESL teachers use state-adopted materials and supplementary materials to provide instruction based on the TEKS. Sheltered courses are general education courses that provide the same content as is

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offered to English proficient students, but the instruction is modified to include second language teaching strategies. They use the same state approved texts and follow the same TEKS from those courses. Sheltered courses are taught by teachers who are certified in their subject areas with ESL certification or with extensive training in sheltered instruction/ESL methodologies. It is recognized that native language development and support are powerful ESL strategies that can lower the anxiety level and facilitate the academic achievement of ELLs.

Feedback regarding ELL planning and student progress will be provided to campus leadership and teachers for the purpose of improving quality instruction and learning for ELLs. The Office of Bilingual Education/ ESL will provide professional development, guidance, and tools for monitoring instruction, and emphasis will be placed on effective integration of the ELPS in core curriculum instruction, with a focus on content based language and literacy. In addition, the Office of Bilingual Education/ ESL, in conjunction with the Middle School Office, would work directly with campus administrators to develop culturally and linguistically responsive instruction for ELLs at each grade level, that focuses on eliminating the achievement gap and creating an exemplary program for ELLs. Leadership development would include:

- Development of a common vision of instructional support for ELLs
- Analysis of issues related to the schooling of ELLs organized around: structures, resources, teaching and learning, and data gathering and analysis
- An understanding of the process of language acquisition
- An understanding of the principles that characterize quality instruction for English learners and a common language for communicating expectations
- The creation of a vertically aligned vision of quality schools and programs for ELLs

To address the achievement gap, the teacher and administrator professional development model will focus on key strategies for increasing student achievement. The professional development model will provide teachers with intensive skill development in utilizing assessments, data analysis, interventions, using the Driven by Data framework by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. The outcome of the professional development will provide the staff with rigorous assessments that drive great teaching and engage teachers in deep analysis of interim assessment results to facilitate in-course corrections that guarantee higher student learning results.

Principal professional development will be driven by the Behavior Event Interview results conducted by the Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy. The leadership team will receive leadership development in the following areas: 1) developing and implementing the Early College initiative; 2) leading and facilitating effective assessment analysis meetings; and 3) fostering a productive data-driven culture that defines a higher bar for rigor for all students. All of this is embedded within a strong instructional leadership model that includes observation and feedback, curriculum planning, and leading professional development.

The Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy includes an innovative approach to the recruitment, selection, and development of principals, one that is specifically geared to insuring the principals are equipped to lead a turnaround campus. The process is multi-phased and builds on the work of Public Impact and its research on consistent cross sector findings of turnaround leader actions (2007).

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The process of identifying leadership development needs for principals currently serving in turnaround schools is similar to the process utilized during the past year by the Leadership Development Center, now the Office of Educator Quality, to provide targeted professional development for all AISD principals. Specifically, staff used the Vanderbilt Assessment of Education (VAL-ED), a 360 degree assessment which utilizes a multi-rater, evidence-based approach to measure the effectiveness of school leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning. The VAL-ED measures *core components* and *key processes*. Core components refer to characteristics of schools that support the learning of students and enhance the ability of teachers to teach. Key processes refer to *how* leaders create those core components.

As is illustrated in Table 2, the Turnaround Leadership Competencies assessed by the Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy in the Behavior Event Interviews closely align to the core components assessed by the VAL-ED. Indeed, if there are differences, they are differences in degree rather than of kind. Thus, the intervention strategies that the Educator Quality personnel have implemented this past year can be adapted to work with administrators in turnaround schools.

Table 2 Alignment of Turnaround Leadership Competencies and VAL-ED Components/Key Processes

Turnaround Leadership Competency Cluster	VAL-ED Core Components	VAL-ED Key Processes
Driving for Results	High Standards for Student Learning Rigorous Curriculum Quality Instruction	Planning Monitoring Implementing
Influencing for Results	Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior	Supporting
Problem Solving	Connections to External Communities	Communicating
Showing Confidence to Lead	Performance Accountability	Advocating

To ensure fidelity of implementation of the academic program, The Office of Accountability will collaborate with academic and school leadership teams to design progress monitoring tools and structures that will assess implementation quality and provide meaningful feedback to administrators and teachers. Instructional adjustments will be made as a result of the analysis of the progress monitoring tools.

Student Support Services

Pearce will have a master schedule to ensure that all students have access to required courses/programs needed for promotion in core and enrichment areas. The campus master schedule will provide students with access to rigorous courses and college-ready programs and ensure interventions for struggling learners are scheduled within the regular school day (as well as outside of the school day) to accelerate learning.

PBS will be the school-wide student management system. PBS addresses barriers to learning by providing students with a support system predicated on the belief that all children can be

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academically and socially successful. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results for all children and youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional. Additional components of PBS will be implemented such as “Possible Selves” and “Self-Advocacy” that help students develop a belief in themselves and a vision of a successful future. Administrators and teachers will receive and review quarterly reports from the AISD evaluation team and will make changes and adjustments based on the data included in the reports.

The counseling staff will expand the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID is an in-school academic support program to prepare students for college eligibility and success. AVID places academically average students in advanced classes. AVID levels the playing field for minority, low-income and other students without a college-going tradition in their families.

Each student will have a personal 9 Year College, Career and Life plan for long-term achievement that will take them from 6th grade through the first two years of college, identifying specific goals for school success, including TAKS preparation and graduation. In addition, the plan will include specific actions each student will commit to in order to ensure his or her success and the resources to be provided to support students on their journey. The 9-Year College, Career, and Life Plan includes three tiers: planning for middle school, planning for high school, and planning for after high school. Students will base their own individual goals and plan on the tenets of self knowledge, educative and occupational knowledge, and career planning.

Community Services

Pearce will also have a Family Resource Center. The Family Resource Center has the potential of impacting not only individual families, but also macro-level systems by aligning external and internal resources and by being a “home” for parents to connect with the various youth focused initiatives that need parent participation and support to be effective. The FRC Manager will sit on the school’s IMPACT team to make and receive referrals for families or youth with support needs. The FRC is developed in full collaboration with the District Parent Support Office and works to align and build capacity for parent services and leadership with the campus Parent Support Specialist. All information will be provided in English and Spanish to parents addressing ways they can continue to support the social and academic development of students. To increase parent communication, Pearce will use School Messenger, an automated attendance monitoring system, to communicate with parents on a weekly basis.