



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

Robert Scott
Commissioner

**IMPORTANT
INTERVENTION
INFORMATION**

August 4, 2009

CERTIFIED MAIL

227-901
2008-2009

Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen, Superintendent
Austin Independent School District
1111 West 6th Street
Austin, Texas 78703

Dear Dr. Carstarphen:

This letter is in response to the request of Austin Independent School District (ISD) to repurpose Pearce Middle School (227-901-048). As you know, I have ordered closure of that campus pursuant to the requirements of our state law. Upon an order of closure, a district may not continue to conduct classes at the facility unless approved to do so by this agency. Texas law allows Austin ISD to request to repurpose the facility for a different instructional program for the district's students. I have considered the district's proposal from the perspective of the parents of students previously assigned to Pearce Middle School, as well as the right of every student to have access to quality educational opportunities. I am granting the district's request to repurpose the facility, subject to continuing state oversight.

Austin ISD has proposed to use a model that would incorporate a teaming approach with a strong focus on providing quality instruction and addressing the unique academic needs of every student. I would especially encourage partnerships with individual tutoring and mentoring programs. I would also encourage the district and campus to partner with the Texas Turnaround Center allowing further support to be given to the new administrative team on the campus. I expect the district to implement the proposal in a focused and consistent manner, and am ordering continued state oversight for that purpose. If a liaison is appointed to the principal who reports directly to you, I will remove the Management Team from oversight of Pearce Middle School and direct them to focus their activities on the other campuses in Austin ISD under their purview.

Austin ISD is hereby authorized to repurpose the facility previously housing Pearce Middle School, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval of the administrative and teaching teams that are currently being assembled. The success of this repurposing plan depends on the leadership and quality of educators that serve its students. I have authorized agency staff to make case-by-case exceptions to the requirement for 75% of instructional staff to be removed for individual teachers who did not teach a subject that resulted in an *Academically Unacceptable* rating, and who have demonstrated quantifiable improvements in student outcomes. I am committed to working

with Austin ISD in a timely manner allowing the repurposed Pearce Middle School to start school prepared and ready this fall.

2. The management team previously assigned to Austin ISD will be retained with the same authority over the campus. The team will continue to have the authority to direct the actions of the principal, superintendent and the board of trustees with respect to the new campus, as authorized under Section 39.135 of the Texas Education Code. As stated above, I will remove the management team oversight of Pearce Middle School if the principal of the campus has direct access to the superintendent's office.
3. Students wishing to transfer from Pearce Middle School may not be assigned to a campus that has been rated *Academically Unacceptable*. While this is clearly stated in the repurposing plan, the plan should be updated to include Lamar or Martin Middle Schools to the list of schools not eligible to accept students as both are now rated *Academically Unacceptable*.
4. The district will implement the plan submitted, including the continuation of the efforts to recruit the highest quality administrative team and effective faculty as possible. The management team, or campus liaison, will report to me regularly on progress as the school year progresses, specifically regarding student performance and completion rates.

I appreciate the effort you, your staff, the Pearce community, and the Austin ISD Board of Trustees have made in developing this proposal for Pearce Middle School. I also appreciate the commitment stated during the Austin ISD board meeting to the eastside of Austin ISD. With a sustained commitment from the district to this plan, the entire Austin community could become proud of the results. Each student served by Austin ISD deserves the opportunity for a quality education, and I look forward to working with the district and the management team to realize that potential.

Sincerely,



Robert Scott
Commissioner of Education

RS/jt

cc: Mark Williams, President, Austin ISD Board of Trustees
Pat Pringle, Executive Director, Region XIII Education Service Center
Ray Glynn, Deputy Commissioner for School District Leadership and Educator Quality, TEA
Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation, TEA
David Anderson, General Counsel, TEA
Henry Boening, Management Team Member
Jamie Morris, Management Team Member