

**HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION AND SUCCESS
INITIATIVES COUNCIL**

**Monday, February 4, 2008
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Texas Education Agency Board Room
Room 1.104
1700 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas**

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order**—Chairman Robert Scott, Commissioner of Education
- II. Introductions** — Chairman Scott
- III. Adoption of Minutes from January 25, 2008 Council Meeting**—
Chairman Scott
- IV. Briefing on Research in Development for Current High School
Completion and Success Initiatives** – Barbara Knaggs, Associate
Commissioner, State Initiatives and Ellen Montgomery, Director,
Evaluation, Analysis and Planning, TEA.
- V. Lunch**
- VI. Invited Testimony on Implementation of High School Reform and
College Readiness Initiatives** – Texas Grantees
- VII. Other Business**
- VIII. Adjourn**

High School Completion and Success Initiative Council

February 4, 2008

Minutes

The Council will meet in open session and after determining the presence of a quorum, deliberate and possibly take formal action, including emergency action, on the following agenda items.

I. Call to Order

The High School Completion and Success Initiative Council convened its meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, February 4, 2008 in Room 1-104 of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Austin, Texas

Present: Commissioner Robert Scott, Commissioner Raymund Paredes, Chris Patterson, Rosa Maria Vida, James Windham, Don McAdams, Rod Paige, Christopher Barbic.

II. Introductions

Commissioner Scott reminded the members of the requirement to complete the 90-minute open meeting training as soon as possible as the deadline is rapidly approaching. He introduced Angela DeLeon, the staff member who will assist them with travel related questions and mentioned that the Council Web site is now operational.

III. Adoption of Minutes from January 25, 2008 Council Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 25, 2008 minutes as written. The motion carried.

IV. Briefing on Research in Development for Current High School Completion and Success Initiatives

Barbara Knaggs, Associate Commissioner, State Initiatives, Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Ellen Montgomery, Director, Evaluation, Analysis and Planning, TEA provided a briefing including a summary of the current research and an overview of the program evaluations conducted thus far.

A summary of the research literature reveals four key elements in successful dropout prevention and college readiness programs:

- Access to a rigorous academic core curriculum,
- The prevalence of personalized learning environments for students,

- The provision of academic and social support so that students who are behind grade level succeed in college prep programs, and
- Relevant teaching and learning

The following summary of the lessons learned presented in the current research as well as through programmatic findings by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Education Work 2000-2006 were presented to the Council. These are:

- Results will take root more quickly in new schools than in redesigning existing schools.
- Change is very hard in existing schools and requires the sustained commitment of leadership and the engagement of the community and teachers.
- Change efforts must be comprehensive and go beyond structural change alone.
- District commitment is critical.
- Turning around a low performing school takes time (3-5 years).
- Only rarely is a high-poverty, chronically under-performing school turned into a consistently high-achievement school.
- Radically different and intensive methods are the most successful to educate poor, minority students up to national standards.

Dr. Montgomery summarized findings that impacted the evaluated programs both positively and negatively. Programs were evaluated for sustainability, affect on student achievement and student outcomes, and the overall academic climate of the school. The complete evaluation reports are available on the TEA Web site.

Dr. Montgomery noted that evaluation results have been employed by TEA's grant managers to enhance and improve the guidelines of the funding programs for subsequent award cycles. Highlighted in the presentation was the upcoming THSP evaluation, a longitudinal, long-term study to gather more program specific and activity-appropriate data. The Council noted that the school district governance structures have a significant impact on student success and suggested that this data could be included in the evaluation.

The Council discussed the possibility of evaluating academic deficit and academic support issues including, AP course taking, college readiness testing, and whether the student entered college directly from high school. Commissioner Scott noted that these elements may be considered in the strategic plan and that the plan itself must be completed by March 15.

V. Lunch

In deference to time limitations and the number of invited guests, the Council continued the meeting with a working lunch.

VI. Invited Testimony on Implementation of High School Reform and College Readiness Initiatives.

The first invited guest speaker was John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Texas High School Project, Communities Foundation of Texas. He began his presentation with comments about changes over time within the American high school and provided a summary of the Texas High School Project (THSP).

Mr. Fitzpatrick concluded with the following list of Lessons Learned:

- The primary focus should be on academic rigor, not school structure.
- Most high schools fail at college readiness.
- Math and science are both challenges and opportunities.
- Middle school matters.
- Districts are a key unit of change.
- Parents and the community must be engaged for students to succeed.

A question and answer period followed in which Mr. Fitzpatrick made the following points:

- We need to expand data collection to include what happens to students after high school.
- The school model is not changing because there is no real competition to drive a change.
- The dialogue for change should focus on combining different strategies with a message of hope and urgency.
- Failing schools can be saved by advocacy for the teachers and students to do something different than the current structure.

The next invited guest speaker was Lori Fey of the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF). Ms. Fey provided a brief summary of the Foundation's work and its approach to high school reform in Texas. MSDF uses lower graduation rates, lower high school exit exam passing rates, lower college readiness to direct its work to areas of greatest need. The alignment of goals between the THSP and the MSDF Board attracted them to invest to the THSP initiative.

Ms. Fey provided the following key lessons and challenges in the areas of systemic change and support to students:

Fix the system:

- Equal focus on implementation and impact measures is critical.
- Districts that deliberately select a program to meet specific needs and goals, do a better job.
- Clear definition of 'what good looks like' is difficult to articulate and make operational.
- Districts are looking for effective solutions but struggle to remain focused.

Support the kids:

- High challenge, high support environments work for students.
- Focus on academic rigor is key to persistence and success in college.

In closing, Ms. Fey asked Council members to be clear and targeted in their recommendations such that they can be easily understood.

The next invited speaker was Dr. Abelardo Saavedra, Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (ISD). Dr. Saavedra provided a summary of the programs initiated in Houston including:

- Early College High Schools (ECHS). The first of which began 5 years ago and is called Challenge ECHS (Challenge ECHS). Twenty one people graduated last year with a high school diploma and a college degree. The district has already approved funding for a total of 5 early colleges in the next year. Because of the centralized funding and the number of students attending, it is difficult to fund the schools, especially due to dual credit curriculum resources, which are not funded by the state. Regardless of the difficulties, dual credit is offered in almost every high school in Houston.
- Redesign Schools. The total number of unacceptable campuses in Houston ISD dropped last year from 25 to 6. The district supports value-added growth models for their schools, but feels that it needs more alignment of standards.
- Advanced Placement (AP) classes are offered at all schools. The number of students taking AP exams has nearly doubled in the past five years.
- Students taking the Standard Achievement Test (SAT) has increased in Houston, while decreasing nationally.

Council members solicited Dr. Saavedra's comments on reconstitution of failing schools and a college-bound culture. He said that this is an important step. Teachers in these schools were not put back in the reconstituted schools, they were either put in other schools, in the substitute pools, or were bought out of their contract. In some cases, they were also given further training, although this option is expensive. Dr. Saavedra stated that a college bound culture begins in elementary school with the teachers providing information and the opportunity to actually visit college campuses for students as well as their parents.

The next invited speaker was Dr. Virginia Miller, Principal of Los Fresnos High School which is a participant of the High Schools That Work program and a member of the Enhanced Network. Dr. Miller mentioned that the changes instituted at Los Fresnos High School were a joint decision between the campus, the district and the school board, and were made after reviewing the kinds of businesses and colleges around their area and what they wanted from their students. Over 70% of their students graduate as career-tech students. The district has developed 29 Career Technology Education (CTE) programs and 8 of them are dual enrollment and core curriculum courses. Additional focus areas are Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and special need students.

With a graduation rate currently between 80-85%, the district is considering early college high schools as a dropout prevention method. It is Dr. Miller's experience that students have the desire to go to college, but have to look for funding. She also mentioned the cultural issue that families want their students to go to college close to home.

The next invited speaker was Ms. Annette Griffin, Superintendent of Carrollton-Farmer's Branch ISD. Ms. Griffin provided a brief overview of the district which has both an ECHS and T-STEM program. Ms. Griffin made the following points:

- Children want rigor.
- Children love technology.
- Children love to multitask.
- Community Colleges have space limitations for additional programs.

- Some college professors are resistant to having high school students on the college campus and are reluctant to teach them.
- Finding high quality teachers is a challenge, which sometimes requires alternative certification, intensive training and teacher mentoring.

Commissioner Paredes stated that he would work to make changes necessary in the Community College Accountability System to ensure that college faculty was supportive of having high school students on campus.

A discussion ensued regarding the availability of qualified teachers, teacher training and the use of state funds. Ms. Griffin confirmed that with training, current teachers may be able to develop the level of quality necessary for success in an ECHS or T-STEM school.

Dr. Paige mentioned that quality education is a problem throughout the world. China has recognized that a certain segment of the student population will get a world class education, but the key is to get down deeper into the total population. Ms. Griffin explained that reading ability and limited English proficiency are big problems and that you can identify the best teachers because the students like them and perform for them.

The Council then heard testimony from panels of invited guests. These panels were constituted by program area and facilitated by Jan Lindsey, Senior Director, College and Career Readiness Initiatives, TEA and Dr. Ana Tilton, Chief Program Officer, Texas High School Project, Communities Foundation of Texas.

Early College High School Panel

Panelists included: Joel Castro, Principal, East Early College High School, Houston ISD; Dr. Lucy Hakemack, Principal, Early College High School at Mountain View College, Dallas ISD; Christina Richardson, Principal, Bryan Early College High School, Bryan ISD; Dr. Frances McArthur, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Bryan ISD. The Early College High School program is designed to create a college-bound culture, ideally located on a college campus. Dr. Tilton highlighted the high expectations and principles common across these schools. All of the programs stressed the relationships between faculty and their students.

Discussion ensued regarding the size of these schools. The Council suggested that staff may wish to research the relationship, if any, between these programs and a normal public school based upon the size of the funding allocations.

Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (T-STEM) Initiative Panel

Panelists included: Tina Dellinger, T-STEM Coordinator, Corpus Christi ISD, and Dr. Dean Fontenot, T-STEM Center, Texas Tech University. The discussion of the T-STEM programs included the challenges of teacher quality, teacher retention, and student data collection. The T-STEM blueprint was praised for guiding their development and implementation. It was mentioned that high school teachers and middle school teachers are vertically planning their curriculum to ease the student transitions.

Education Leadership Panel

Panelists included: Dr. Shirley Johnson, Assistant Professor, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, and Tracy LaQuey Parker, Director, The UTeach Institute, the University of Texas at Austin. Panel members discussed the use of Education Leadership grants to train teachers and principals to be change agents in their schools. One challenge noted by the panel was the faithful replication of the models within schools funded in subsequent years.

High School Redesign Panel

Panelists included: Rey Madrigal, Principal, Harlandale High School, Harlandale ISD; Daniel Girard, Principal, and Akins High School, Austin ISD. High School Redesign funds are awarded to schools that are academically unacceptable to implement a redesign program that is comprehensive, transformative, and supported. Funds were used to increase course rigor, TAKS tutoring, teacher training, and to establish AP and dual credit courses on campus as well as to develop structures that facilitate strong relationships between students and educators. To promote teacher buy-in, one school established professional learning communities and assessed incremental progress every three weeks. Panel members stressed that it wasn't just the restructuring, but the changing of the practices used to teach and reach the students. The major challenges noted were: changing the perspectives of teachers and changing the power structure within the schools

VII. Other Business

Commissioner Scott stated that the agenda of the next meeting, February 15, will include time for a thorough discussion of the strategic plan and recommendations for inclusion in the strategic plan. Ms. Chris Patterson provided the Council with questions covering the statutory charge of the Council to be used to guide the Council's discussion. Commissioner Scott asked staff to provide preliminary responses to these questions.

Council members reiterated their interested in being aggressive and in recommending decisive actions.

VIII. Adjourn

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Meeting Handouts

- Presenter List
- Closing the Gaps, the Texas Higher Education Plan – Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Closing the Gaps Goals and Targets Summary - Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Governor’s Business Council, Higher Education and Global Competitiveness
- Industry Cluster Initiative
- Destination 2010, FY2004-FY2009 Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce Development System – Texas Workforce investment Council
- Destination 2010, 2007 Update – Texas Workforce Investment Council
- Texas Business & Education Coalition Strategic Plan
- Mississippi Department of Education State Dropout Prevention Plan
- Arizona Models of Effective Strategies Application
- State and District-Level Support for Successful Transitions into High School - National High School Center
- Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide - U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

List of Presenters
High School Completion and Success Initiatives Council
February 4, 2008

Research Supporting the Development of Current Initiatives

Barbara Knaggs, Associate Commissioner, State Initiatives, TEA
Ellen Montgomery, Director, Evaluation, Analysis, and Planning, TEA

Private Foundations

John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Texas High School Project – Communities Foundation of Texas
Lori Fey, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation

Superintendent Address

Dr. Abelardo Saavedra, Superintendent, Houston ISD
Annette Griffin, Superintendent, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD

High Schools That Work

Dr. Virginia Miller, Principal, Los Fresnos High School

Grantee Panels

Led by Jan Lindsey, Senior Director, College and Career Readiness Initiatives and Dr. Ana Tilton, Chief Program Officer, Texas High School Project – Communities Foundation of Texas

Early College High School

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Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (T-STEM) Initiative

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