

AISD STRATEGIC EDUCATION PLAN

The Superintendent noted that “every educator in the Austin School District is committed to improvement, and we will continue to embrace those strategies and measures which are proven to be effective — quality teaching utilizing a curriculum that is based upon the *Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills* (TEKS); benchmark testing throughout the school year; and rapid, personalized interventions for struggling learners,” he said.

“This is hard work, and progress is made one step at a time, one day at a time. Even if all our ratings are not where we want them to be, we mustn’t lose sight of the progress we have made over time in helping students reach the passing standards. Students, teachers, and parents are to be commended for their hard work. We must keep our energy focused upon strategically helping all of our learners to continue to improve,” Dr. Forgiore said. “In today’s world, if you stand still, you fall back.”

A *Strategic Education Plan* has been developed to support all Austin campuses in need of improvement. The plan is based on well-researched best practices in six key areas of school improvement. An individual plan is being developed for each campus to provide support for the specific needs of the campus. Some of the key strategies being implemented include:

- Customized professional development for campus staff in mathematics, science, reading/language arts, social studies;
- Additional support for campus personnel from District instructional specialists in the content areas of high need;
- Provision of specific research-based instructional programs for students needing additional help in reading, math, social studies and science;
- An additional week-long professional development institute for bilingual teachers new to the District;
- Targeted strategies and materials for English Language Learners;
- Student summer programs and camps to prepare for the 2007-2008 school year; and
- Support for student advisories and *Positive Behavior Support* programs to improve relationships and student engagement.
- Additional support for *Impact Teams*, Attendance Committees, and campus principals to monitor and respond immediately to truancy.
- Support for targeted campuses, including dropout specialists for Pearce, Mendez, and McCallum High School, and a *Twilight School* and the initiation of a truancy program for Johnston High School.

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For high schools that are *Academically Unacceptable*, “First Things First,” a proven model, is also being implemented.

“First Things First” seeks to raise the performance of all students to levels required for post-secondary education and high quality employment. “First Things First” is organized around three goals:

- Strengthening relationships among students, school staff and families;
- Improving teaching and learning in every classroom every day; and
- Reallocating budget, staff and time to achieve the first two goals.

“First Things First” achieves these goals through the integration of three key components:

- *Instructional Improvement* through rigorous standards-based instruction that actively engages all students.
- *Small Learning Communities* of students and adults organized around themes; and
- *A Family Advocate System* in which each staff member becomes an advocate for 15 to 17 students.

This summer, the District also initiated its BEST Program, to provide added support for entering sixth graders and struggling middle school students.

“Austin is a school district committed to continuous improvement. Our curriculum planning guides for every classroom are a best practices-model being replicated in other school districts. Teaching and learning in all our classrooms continue to improve, and student performance is on an upward trajectory. It may not always happen as fast as we would like, but our progress is steady and evident among all student groups,” Dr. Forgione said.

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