



Austin Independent School District

**SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT ON  
DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK**

*Prepared by the Office of Planning and Community Relations  
October 13, 2009*

## **Summaries of Stakeholder Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework**

A Framework for the AISD Strategic Plan to 2013 was initially developed by the Superintendent and Cabinet, based on guidance from the Board of Trustees, in an administrative retreat in July 2009. Subsequently, a Cabinet subcommittee met several times to refine the draft Framework, which was made available for public review and comment on September 11, 2009. The public review draft of the Framework is provided on the following page, and includes the Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, Strategies, and Measurable Outcomes for the Strategic Plan. The complete Strategic Plan will consist of the Framework and an Implementation Guide. The Implementation Guide will include Key Action Steps and Performance Targets.

Stakeholder input on the draft Framework was gathered in several ways, as outlined below. Summaries of various stakeholder input are provided in this document.

### ***Online Input***

Stakeholder input was received online from the period of September 11 through September 24, 2009. A total of 34 persons provided input (1 student, 15 parents, 13 AISD staff members, and 5 community members).

### ***Community Conversation***

A community conversation was held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School. The event was facilitated by Austin Voices for Education and Youth, and was attended by over 300 individuals. Following an introduction by the Superintendent and an opportunity for questions and answers, participants broke out into several small discussion groups. Each group looked at the entire draft Framework, but also focused on specific strategic areas, including Curriculum and Instruction, Community, Staff, Leadership, and Resources.

### ***District Advisory Council***

The District Advisory Council (DAC) provided initial input on the draft Framework at its annual retreat on September 15, 2009. The DAC provided continued input in a special meeting held on September 24.

### ***Individual Interviews***

Input was received from interviews with 19 individuals in the community with expertise in several subject areas. Interviews were conducted from September 25 through October 8, 2009.



## AISD Strategic Plan to 2013 Public Review Draft of Framework

DRAFT  
Subject to Revision

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

A strong foundation put forth by the Board of Trustees for the academic achievement and personal success of every student.

#### Mission (What We Do)

In partnership with our community, AISD exists to provide a comprehensive educational experience that is high quality, challenging, and inspires students to make a positive contribution to society.

#### Vision (Where We Want to Be)

AISD will be the premier urban school district, instilling a passion for life-long learning.

#### Values (What We Believe in)

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Equity
- Respect
- Child-Centered

### STRATEGIC FOCUS

A balance of perspectives including education, community, staff, and resources.

#### Goals (What We Want to Accomplish)

1. All students will perform at or above grade level within three years.
2. Achievement gaps among student groups will be eliminated.
3. All students will graduate ready for college, career, and life in a globally competitive economy.

#### Strategies (How We Will Achieve Our Goals)

1. Provide high-quality, culturally relevant curriculum and instruction that is rigorous and engaging.
2. Build strong relationships with students, families, and the community.
3. Attract, develop, reward, and retain a high-performing and diverse workforce.
4. Provide effective and efficient leadership throughout the system.
5. Align resources to accomplish priorities.

#### Measurable Outcomes (How We Will Check Our Progress)

*As applicable, data will be disaggregated to identify any over- or under-representation.*

1. State, national, and international student achievement results
2. District and campus accountability ratings
3. Graduation and dropout rates
4. Discipline and attendance rates
5. State student health indicators
6. Student participation in community service, physical education, and fine arts
7. Post-secondary enrollment and first year completion
8. Student perceptions related to treatment, safety, success in schoolwork, and life relevance
9. Parent perceptions related to treatment, safety, involvement, and communications
10. Teacher and principal retention, diversity, and experience rates
11. Employee appraisal indicators related to achievement of district goals
12. District financial status and bond rating

## **Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework Summary of Online Comments**

*The following input was received online from the period of September 11 through September 24, 2009. A total of 34 persons provided input (1 student, 15 parents, 13 AISD staff members, and 5 community members).*

### **Mission, Vision, Values**

- The mission statement needs to include the word “compassionate”
- The term “premier school district” is vague

### **Goals**

- We can't realistically eliminate achievement gaps, but we can reduce them – we need to be realistic
- Some students, due to severe disabilities, can only strive for independent living
- Respect for self and others, good citizenship, and living a productive life that contributes to society are as important as test scores

### **Strategies**

- Need to place greater emphasis on the relationship between health and student achievement; stress being healthy and making healthy choices

### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Need to make sure we have things we can really measure; don't have too many measurable outcomes, and concentrate on the ones that mean the most
- Need to include Special Education and Gifted/Talented in measurable outcomes

### **Key Action Steps**

- Need to stress dual language programs and learning other languages
- More resources need to be directed to the lowest-achieving students
- Need to prepare many students for alternatives to college
- Need to place emphasis on character development
- There is no equity in low-income neighborhoods; more resources need to be provided to East Side communities
- A lot more support needs to be provided to parents; get more information to parents
- Libraries need consistent and systematic funding to support student needs
- Need frequent evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and people
- Enhance professional development to give educators and support staff the tools they need; professional development will be key to the success of the plan
- Need more evaluation of teacher performance as related to student performance
- More emphasis is needed in providing early interventions so that students do not fall behind
- Need to provide parents greater encouragement to attend district and campus functions
- Need more ways to identify and eliminate wasteful spending across the district

### **Communications**

- In communicating progress, make sure to identify failures and weaknesses as well as successes and strong points
- Email messages and web information are the preferred means of communication for more and more people these days

**Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework  
Summary of Community Conversation Comments  
Discussion Groups Focused on Curriculum and Instruction**

*The following input was received from participants in discussion groups focused on **Curriculum and Instruction** during a Community Conversation held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School.*

**Vision, Mission, Values**

- The promotion and modeling of social justice should be the part of the mission of the district
- Replace child with student under Values
- Add student engagement and participation under Values
- Add respect for the environment
- Add graduation for all students
- Add creativity as a value
- Add equality across schools across student populations

**Goals**

- Strong support for Goal 2
- The part of the Mission calling for a “positive contribution to society” needs to be referenced in goals
- Goal 1 is not achievable due to mobility of student population (40% at eastside schools)
- Replace with “All students have access and encouragement to become bilingual and bi-literate”
- Also add reducing the drop out population and equity of resources
- Stronger focus on special education in goals
- Add critical thinking as a goal
- Add support for English as a Second Language students
- Add all students knowing at least two languages by graduation
- Add a goal to lower the focus on TAKS

**Strategies (Overall)**

- In Strategy 3, say “teachers” not “workforce”
- Create feedback loop between teacher, especially at high need campuses, and upper level administrators – this way administrators can here directly what is happening on the classroom level
- Add student mobilization as a strategy
- Add family supports as a strategy
- Enhance teacher communications on ways to monitor student progress
- Dropout Prevention Specialists in all middle and high schools.
- Create a master plan of where the resources are going and ensure the highest need campuses have the highest quality resources
- Testing accountability pushes student out- schools want to make the grade.
- Positive discipline techniques should be promoted.
- Simplify the language of the strategies

**Focus on Strategy 1 (Curriculum and Instruction)**

- Our curriculum must be project based, inquiry based, and well researched
- Self-paced and Vo-Tech programs in place

- Ensure the curriculum empowers all student populations – Asian, Hispanic, Black, gay, and lesbian
- Appeals to multiple learning styles
- Ensure the curriculum helps students get to next grade level especially during transitions from elementary to middle to high school to college and work
- Ensure teachers are trained to execute strategies
- Engage the community to support schools and students, especially special needs
- Scottish Rite Dyslexia/Dysgraphia programs at all schools at all levels
- Dual language programs from elementary to high school.
- Stronger connection between work and school.
- Requirements, such as 4 year math and science, must be backed up with effective supports to ensure all students have a chance at success
- Block classes must use project based lessons otherwise it is hard for students to pay attention to such long lectures
- Teachers need the freedom to teach
- Strategy 1 should be engaging for both teachers and students

### **Key Action Steps**

- Dual language programs promoted at the Elementary, Middle and High School levels.
- Dual language programs should replace bilingual ed.
- Less homework in the High School due to family work obligations- more project based learning during school day in high school.
- All resources on campuses should be used.
- Provide trainings for teachers to implement project based learning curriculum
- All schools should have strong fine arts programs- dance, music and digital media.
- All High School campuses should be pushing dual enrollment in high school and ACC programs.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Add personal engagement and satisfaction to outcomes for students; could be measured with open ended student questionnaire
- A suggestion box should be open for students all year long.
- Delete state health indicators; the proposed framework does not seek to focus on student health

### **Communications**

- The district should provide regular report cards on district progress with the new strategic plan
- Identify person responsible for each outcome and why it was or was not met
- Every CAC and PTA should have an opportunity to comment on the draft plan during its regular meeting

### **Other Comments**

- CAC membership should be regulated in terms of attendance and structure so that more stakeholders are heard
- When I take a look at the goals all I see is testing
- We want our students to give back to community, we want community to give back to schools
- I want all students to be at grade level; I don't want TAKS to be the measure
- Music is a language
- Bring the neighborhood back to neighborhood schools

**Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework  
Summary of Community Conversation Comments  
Discussion Groups Focused on Community**

*The following input was received from participants in discussion groups focused on **Community** during a Community Conversation held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School.*

**Vision, Mission, Values**

- Mission statement should include reference to equity/fairness
- Why the premiere district? How do we measure?
- Vision statement should mention student achievement
- Good to mention life-long learning in vision statement
- Values should include creativity, collaboration, community involvement, relationships

**Goals**

- Goals 1 and 2 are unrealistic and unclear, with no timeframe/groups mentioned
- Add a goal for social-emotional learning and removing barriers to learning
- Goals are student-centered; should there be a goal for teacher retention, community/parent involvement, etc.

**Strategies (Overall)**

- Add support to Goal 3 (support teachers)
- Add support (and legal compliance) for ELLs and Special Education
- Possible strategy to identify barriers through looking at where we are now

**Focus on Strategy 2 (Community)**

- Continue to build parent engagement through on campus parent support, parent education, coffees, involvement in classroom, focus groups, going to parents (especially ones who don't usually participate)
- Continue to build community engagement through going to community meetings, volunteer opportunities, school councils, focus groups
- Increase volunteer involvement through having a volunteer coordinator on each campus
- Have students involved in decision-making on each campus
- Work hard to provide a welcoming atmosphere for parents on each campus
- Family Resource Center on each campus to reach out and involve families
- PTAs adopting other PTAs to support each other
- Form parent/community/student advisory groups or councils for each school, or improve the CAC structure
- CAC, PTA are not functioning well on many campuses; need other approaches to make these work
- PBS is working well to encourage relationship building, need to help parents and community understand

**Key Action Steps**

- Make the strategic plan user friendly

**Measurable Outcomes**

- Need to be accessible to the community
- Teacher training to support children from all backgrounds
- Opportunities for more authentic assessments not based on high-stakes testing

- Add measures for effectiveness of after school, service providers, community and parent engagement
- Track how many students enroll in college and graduate, how many get a job and how long it took them (data from Ray Marshall Center)

#### **Communications**

- Twitter, webpage, newsletter, school communication to homes and community
- Austin Neighborhoods Council
- Going out to church coalitions, community organizations
- Through “Our Voice” Community Conversation participants, UpClose participants
- Don’t depend on AISD webpage as key conduit of information; not read by many but insiders ... it’s just a starting place.

#### **Other Comments**

- Make strategic plan a living document with a constant cycle of input and updates from stakeholders ... don’t just put in on a shelf

**Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework  
Summary of Community Conversation Comments  
Discussion Groups Focused on Staff**

*The following input was received from participants in discussion groups focused on **Staff** during a Community Conversation held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School.*

**Vision, Mission, Values**

- Include the word “all” in front of “students” to emphasize our concern with equity
- Add words to emphasize that this is our vision for every student
- Like continuous learning focus; keeping up with technology and jobs
- There is nothing about multicultural/multilingual focus

**Goals**

- Be clear about target dates for goals
- Unsure whether goals should be more practical
- Would be helpful to have more context; these are our goals in the context of our challenges; clearer about where we are and where we want to be

**Strategies (Overall)**

- Easier to evaluate strategies if we have clear, measurable goals; want “accountable talk”
- More emphasis on learning, less on standardized testing
- Make hard decisions about resources (like staff positions) to increase equity
- Add strategy regarding social services/supports
- Need reference to culturally relevant curriculum and instruction

**Focus on Strategy 3 (Staff)**

- Need actions to create positive work environment for staff; supportive bosses, feeling valued, stability
- Supportive environment encourages risk-taking
- Need more teacher-directed professional development
- More training in how to connect with and teach students in developmentally-appropriate and culturally-competent ways
- Need to more support for beginning teachers ... more mentoring
- ASK teachers what rewards/incentives should be
- Positive Behavior Supports

**Measurable Outcomes**

- Increase return rates for parent survey
- Disaggregate any measures/data

**Key Action Steps**

- Merit pay: reward teachers sharing good ideas and practices; find ways to include Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade; base on student growth, not passing rates

**Communications**

- Want to see follow-through on input and recommendations. Track progress over time
- Report progress through newsletters, email, AISD paper

**Other Comments**

- Need to start dual language for students in earlier grades

**Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework  
Summary of Community Conversation Comments  
Discussion Groups Focused on Leadership**

*The following input was received from participants in discussion groups focused on **Leadership** during a Community Conversation held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School.*

**Vision, Mission, Values**

- Add parents and community
- Add preparing students for real life
- Add diversity to Values
- Add accountability to Values
- Add creativity to Values
- Child-centered should reflect whole child, not just academics
- Delete “premier” (too competitive); keep life-long learning
- Add “In which every child has the opportunity to fulfill their potential”

**Goals**

- Delete Goal 1 ... may be unattainable
- Should focus on measurable improvement
- Add measurement for how many graduates can secure employment after graduation

**Strategies (Overall)**

- Reinvest in libraries in an equitable manner
- Address lack of equitable distribution of staff and resources
- Change language from achievement gap to opportunity gap

**Focus on Strategy 4 (Leadership)**

- Reduce district mandates that interfere with campus leadership efforts
- Develop site based leadership efforts
- Use Garza as a model for campus based leadership programs
- Leaders are not just campus and district administration figures there are community leaders and on campus informal leaders; the district should expand its definition of leadership.
- More transparency in decision making
- Employees should be allowed to speak on key issues affecting the campus even when they disagree with administration
- Promote student leadership
- Rephrase Strategy 4 to say “Create an atmosphere that promotes/fosters leadership
- Increase budget to train leaders
- Empower campus leaders to create an efficient communication strategy concerning district, state and national mandates.

*Note: No comments on Measurable Outcomes, Key Action Steps, or Communications*

**Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework  
Summary of Community Conversation Comments  
Discussion Groups Focused on Resources**

*The following input was received from participants in discussion groups focused on **Resources** during a Community Conversation held on September 22, 2009 at Travis High School.*

**Vision, Mission, Values**

- Don't like competitive sound of "the premier"
- Statements are missing a human element
- Doesn't include much about students enjoying learning

**Goals**

- Keep standard high but "grade level" limiting; discussed keeping wording more open versus setting a specific standard for all students
- How do we define "closing the achievement gap" for individual kids
- Add goal about raising levels for all schools, focusing on improving high-achievers too
- Clarify time frame (3 years from when?)
- Put the word "all" in front of "students" ... inclusive of all students
- All students have the opportunity to reach their potential

**Strategies (Overall)**

- Like the strategies overall; more organic, while goals seem more rigid
- Workforce strategies need to be more specific; who are you referring to
- Involve parents through educational classes, informal gatherings, family resource centers
- Need strategies for reconnecting with middle schoolers
- Where are textbooks as a resource; every student should have access to them at school and home
- Need the capability to have great teachers help new teachers develop their skills, including classroom management skills
- Teachers are under a lot of pressure to perform; need to address this
- Need strategies that follow through to get kids to college
- Need strategies that are proactive, not just reactive

**Focus on Strategy 5 (Resources)**

- Define "resources" (financial, facilities, people including parents, community, business)
- A lot is expected and a lot is done with very little; there is pressure on parents to subsidize the school; Title I schools have more resources in some ways
- Equity issues in staff development; it is only available when a school is failing; we want to invest in our staff; every teacher at every school having the same skill set
- Start by assessing the resources we have and assessing their effectiveness; backwards as is
- Look for "biggest bang for the buck" approach; strategies that are most needed and most effective
- Resources must follow kids as they move from campus to campus ... Title I, migrant, NCLB transfers, etc.
- Need adequate Parent Support Specialists to reach parents
- Positive Behavior Supports works where implemented with fidelity
- Older schools are falling apart, have old equipment, lack of computer access and space; new schools get the money
- Even new schools have portables ... poor planning

- Give Associate Superintendents (in partnership with principals) the power to assess the needs of the campuses and decide the resources they need
- Within Professional Learning Communities take inventory of resources and share among schools
- Create “critical response teams” of instructional coaches to address needs
- Use community resources more effectively (ACCESS)
- Know where the kids are, identify needs of kids, and get resources to kids; need improved communication to do this
- Hire jobs/specific roles based on data; what is shown to work with specific populations of kids
- Use family resource centers/PTAs as an avenue for communication
- Master principals should train other principals, rather than being moved from school to school
- Look more closely at feeder patterns when allocating students to facilities
- Review staffing formulas at schools for support staff; are there functions that could be combined
- Try to keep high schools small and more personalized

### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Use program evaluation data more
- Testing an important measure, but move it down the list of priority
- Find ways to measure the ways the system is failing in relation to discipline rates, not just criminalizing kids. Need less threat of punishment in schools.
- Improve parent survey rate of response—create incentives for parents and kids to respond
- AISD must respond to survey results—clear implementation with a timeline.
- Do the outcomes measure goals or strategies? Each goal and strategy should be measurable.
- How to get student feedback on impact? Surveys should measure all aspects of school experience—encompass the whole campus

### **Communications**

- Need a large variety of strategies; do what it takes to get people here (churches, news, campus fliers, neighborhood papers)
- Monthly or quarterly open forums to report/discuss progress
- Use social networking (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.)
- Must address trust issues when thinking about accountability

### **Other Comments**

- All students need to know that we care about them
- Parents want dual language opportunities for their students
- IPGs take away creativity from teaching
- Eliminate state testing; minimize assessments and maximize value
- Focus on improvement year to year

## **Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework Summary of District Advisory Council Comments**

*The following input was received from members of the District Advisory Council (DAC) in two meetings: September 15, 2009; and September 24, 2009.*

### **Vision, Mission, Values**

- Terms like “premier school district” or “world class school district” are vague and hard to define
- Make the mission statement say “all students”
- In the vision statement, say “create a foundation for life-long learning” rather than “instilling a passion”
- “Child-centered” is an adjective while the other values are nouns
- Need to define the values – they are nice words but not sure what they mean

### **Goals**

- Leave “development of the whole child” to parents, and make schools focus on education
- Closing the gaps requires new thinking, and no new thinking is evident here
- Probably need to qualify “within three years”
- Not sure what “at grade level” means

### **Strategies**

- In strategy #2, add “involvement”

### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Measurable outcome #1 involves gathering a lot of information, not just TAKS – will be a major task
- Need a measurable outcome for staff allocations
- Watch out for too many indicators – get ones that really mean something
- Make sure the doable things are in the plan, and not everything we can think of
- Need to demonstrate the actual results of professional development
- Need to include proper identification of Special Education students

### **Key Action Steps**

- Need to place more emphasis on turning Academically Unacceptable schools around
- Aggressive targets are useless without real changes in the classroom
- Monitoring should result in needed supports
- How can we make drastic improvements with diminishing budgets
- Need better program evaluation to guide resource allocation – we need to make sure we’re using our money wisely and funding our priorities
- Need to market school successes
- Need to be more urgent with campuses on the brink of being Academically Unacceptable
- Need to make sure the plan is really used

### **Communications**

- Need better communications between central office and campuses – need one, master calendar
- A communications plan will be critical to relaying the connection between the strategic plan and performance of individual district employees – there may be a lot of apprehension over this, especially with teachers

## **Input on Draft Strategic Plan Framework Summary of Comments from Individual Interviews**

*The following input was received from interviews with 19 individuals in the community with expertise in several subject areas. Interviews were conducted from September 25 through October 8, 2009.*

### **Vision, Mission, Values**

- The Vision should come first, before the Mission
- Need to define “comprehensive educational experience”
- In the Vision and/or Mission, need to include: student health; cultural competency; importance of education; student achievement; relationships with families
- “Premier” is not good enough
- Values need to include: professionalism; self-accountability; efficiency; stewardship of resources

### **Goals**

- Goal 1 is very ambitious
- Need to include high moral work ethic
- “Ready for college” needs to be defined
- Celebrate achievement and push kids to excel, not just pass
- Need to include: student health; essential cultural skills; safety; citizenship
- Goals should also reflect the balance of perspectives seen in the Strategies

### **Strategies**

- Need specific strategies to address schools that are close to becoming Academically Unacceptable
- Include student health
- Need to incorporate fidelity to programs

### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Keep the number of indicators strategic
- Increase frequency and variety of teacher surveys
- Provide more opportunities for students and parents to evaluate teachers
- Changing employee appraisals will be a huge undertaking and an HR paradigm change
- Need to try and measure job success of graduates who do not go to college

### **Key Action Steps**

- Increase early childhood education
- Create an advocacy office within the district
- Effectively use current information in the classroom to increase student achievement
- Engage students in planning and other civic processes
- Expand opportunities for girls and boys schools
- Collaborate in affordable housing efforts to decrease student mobility
- Provide more choice/options
- Strive for world-class facilities
- Provide more opportunities for career training (e.g., engineering and architecture)
- Ensure early interventions
- Strengthen the middle school program
- Implement longer school days, longer school years, and more summer school opportunities

- Better coordinate all available health and human services
- Provide nurses at every campus
- Combine all professional development and leadership programs
- Combine all college readiness programs
- Provide greater incentives for high-quality math and science teachers
- Provide dual language opportunities
- Ensure at least one Parent Support Specialist and at least one police officer at every school
- Provide more resources for translation and interpretation

**Communications**

- Make greater efforts to communicate with audiences traditionally hard to reach
- Utilize students more to inform their parents
- Encourage neighborhood walks and small neighborhood meetings
- Get district leaders out into the community more