Peer Examination, Evaluation, and Redesign

PEER Committee Report
For
Improving High School Graduation Rates

Presented to:
Kaye Stripling
Superintendent of Schools
Houston Independent School District

Submitted by:
Roberto Gonzalez, Chairman
PEER Committee for Improving High School Graduation Rates

June 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Peer Examination, Evaluation, and Redesign (PEER) Committee exists to bring together outside (external) experts, peers, and Houston Independent School District (HISD) internal service providers to obtain a variety of perceptions and make recommendations to improve the quality of services to students, parents, and the community. The PEER Committee for Improving High School Graduation Rates is dedicated to finding ways to overcome the high dropout rate for minority students in HISD and dramatically improve the graduation rate.

In September 2002, Dr. Kaye Stripling, Superintendent of Schools, called for the formation of a PEER Committee to target improving the graduation rate in the district. Since then, the Strategic Management and Consulting and Student Engagement departments have coordinated efforts to form a committee of stakeholders to examine the dropout issue. Chaired by Roberto Gonzalez of Employment and Training Centers, Inc., the committee also accepted the challenge of looking at ways HISD can increase the graduation rate to 85 percent by 2007.

The PEER Committee met monthly to discuss the best possible strategies to decrease the dropout rate. As a result of these meetings, four subcommittees were formed in order to focus on the main objectives of the charter. The objectives are to:

- Recommend programs and resources to support the prevention/graduation model;
- Evaluate current methods of report dropout statistics;
- Review the process for improving data quality;
- Review parental leadership training programs; and
- Manage communications regarding dropouts and graduation rates to include the positive stories that help the public understand and accept the district's mission.

The subcommittee chairs held ongoing meetings independent of the PEER Committee meetings. The charge of the subcommittees was to delve deeper to understand why students are dropping out; what programs or practices are working; evaluate the methods of computing dropout rates and choose what works best for HISD; assess the quality of data; develop parental involvement strategies; and create an effective communications plan that would help educate the public on how massive the dropout issue is and keep it abreast of the district's progress.

In conducting this work, the committee reviewed data, interviewed numerous individuals in and out of the district, and reviewed research from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Texas Education Agency (TEA) studies related to dropouts. The committee also reviewed reports regarding dropout prevention from agencies and private research organizations. The committee conducted site visits at local dropout prevention programs and met with HISD staff members from various departments regarding research, federal and state compliance, multilingual, and special education issues. As a result, the committee developed more than 40 recommendations to help alleviate the dropout problem in Houston.

Recommendations

The PEER Committee recommends that the Houston Independent School District:

Student Trends and Dropout Prevention

1. Adopt the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definitions for dropout rate and completion rate (page 53).

2. Implement an electronic student tracking system that allows schools to more accurately follow their students within and between districts in the region and state (page 54).

3. Adopt an internal K-12 definition of dropout (page 54).

4. Conduct a study that looks at a K-12 completion rate.

5. Study dropout rates to reflect each grade level, from kindergarten to grade 12.

6. Make a clear distinction between students who receive a high school diploma and those who receive an equivalent when using completion rate data.

7. Require students who leave school (drop out) to complete a dropout survey.

8. Administer an exit survey to every senior eligible for graduation or to those students who leave school.

9. Advocate to the state for an incentive system to recover students who have dropped out.

10. Advocate to the state to review and simplify leaver codes.

11. Advocate to the state to reevaluate its accountability system.

Student Support Initiatives

12. Create more alternative and intervention programs that support students in achieving their educational goals.

13. Create a database of existing programs and initiatives (page 57).

14. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and initiatives (page 58).

15. Create directories of community resources and referrals for students, parents, and school and district administrators (page 58).

16. Create a school climate that embraces students, parents, faculty and staff, and visitors (page 58).

Data Quality

17. Strengthen the quality of the data-reporting process (page 60).

18. Strengthen the audit process to ensure that schools are reporting all dropouts (page 60).

19. Establish an internal auditing team to review data quality and report findings directly to the Superintendent of Schools, to provide input to district superintendents and principals (page 63).

20. Establish a system that incorporates checks and balances and includes provisions for rewards and sanctions as they pertain to data quality (page 61).

21. Coordinate with other entities that maintain student databases to access information about students and their families to follow up on students who leave the district. Entities may include the Texas Department of Human Services, Texas Workforce Commission, law enforcement agencies, and other social service agencies.

22. Purchase software, databases, and/or database services designed for similar searches, as utilized by state and social service entities.

23. Establish procedures as they relate to the data reporting system and strengthen central office responsibility and authority.

24. Integrate technology to its fullest for maintaining and reporting student data for all schools (page 61).

25. Identify schools with best practices and consider standardization of those practices (page 61).

26. Offer additional staff development to district and school administrators on data quality and compliance issues.

27. Establish districtwide, standardized practices for monitoring and responding to student attendance/truancy issues (page 61).

28. Develop stronger communication with parents and students regarding student records (page 62).

Parental Leadership

29. Adopt an asset-based parent leadership model that provides information, improves communication, establishes dialogue, and empowers parents in all schools (page 62).

Student Retention

30. Implement a plan to reduce grade retentions and keep students at the age-appropriate grade level (page 48).

31. Provide tutoring and individualized instruction (page 48).

Graduation/Dropout School Assessment Model

32. Develop an internal school assessment model to evaluate school climate, practices, performance, and other factors that may impact the graduation/dropout rate. This model should include data, such as attendance/retention rate, school-choice ratio, percentage of special population, graduation rate, entered postsecondary college rate, and other measurable criteria (page 41).

Dropout Oversight Committee

33. Establish a graduation/dropout oversight committee that meets quarterly to monitor district progress by reviewing graduation/dropout data, programs, and goals, and report its findings and recommendations to principals, superintendents, and the School Board.

At Risk Criteria

34. Expand the states at risk criteria.

35. Provide improved services to at risk students (page 40).

Teacher Assessment

36. Develop teacher assessment models that include evaluation of teacher effectiveness, such as class attendance rate, student pass/fail rates, number of students passing course objectives, student evaluations, and teacher attendance rate.

K-12 Reform

37. Expand its current high school improvement model to all grade levels, which include setting high expectations, personalizing the learning environment, providing adult advocacy for each student, managing an effective teacher student ratio, aligning the curriculum between courses and across grade levels, and providing real-world experiences to students (page 51).

Media and Legislation

38. Develop and implement a media campaign focused on graduating students and preventing dropouts.

Immigrant Students

39. Study immigrant initiatives and practices affecting students, such as grade placement and awarding of credit, and modify its practices.

40. Design services to assist at risk immigrant students, including an immigrant Newcomer Learning Center, and review policy regarding assessment and placement (page 36).

41. Study the mobility issue and its impact on student success.

42. Develop initiatives aimed at addressing mobility-related problems affecting student achievement.

Next Steps

During the past eight months, the PEER Committee has vigorously looked at the complex problem to improve the high school graduation rate and reduce the dropout rate in HISD. Clearly, HISD has made great strides to address this issue. However, they have not been enough. Much more must be known and understood about the challenges for HISD students to stay in school from prekindergarten through high school. Increasing the graduation rate to 85 percent in 2007 can be accomplished with a coordinated effort. That must include business leaders, government officials, social service agencies, health professionals, colleges and universities, community-based and religious organizations, and active participation of teachers, students, and parents. In addition, all of Houston's stakeholders must renew their efforts to address this issue collectively. This multifaceted problem requires all stakeholders to be at the table for a multifaceted solution.

There has been a steady improvement in the graduation rate that is currently 72 percent. HISD has added gains of about 12 percent from school year 1999-2000 and five percent from school year 2000-2002. Most of the gains in the graduation rate have resulted from a reduction in HISD dropout rates and from the number of students still in school and obtaining a General Education Development (GED) degree. In order to meet the 85 percent completion rate, HISD must reduce the dropout rate by an additional 50 percent, reduce the number of GED recipients, and increase the number of students completing high school in four years.

	Historical Rates				**Projected Rates**			
Year	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Graduation Rate	**59.6**	**68.5**	**72.0**	*74.0*	*77.0*	*79.0*	*84.0*	*85.0*
GED	**5.8**	**5.1**	**4.0**	*3.5*	*3.2*	*3.0*	*2.5*	*2.0*
In-school	**12.1**	**11.1**	**11.0**	*10.5*	*9.8*	*9.0*	*7.5*	*7.0*
Dropout Rate	**22.5**	**15.3**	**13.0**	*12.0*	*10.0*	*9.0*	*6.0*	*6.0*

In 2001-2002, HISD graduated 7,829 students. Approximately 10 percent, or 780 students, graduated after completing five, six, or seven years in high school. In order to meet the stated goals, HISD must graduate more than 9,250 students each year. This represents an increase of approximately 1,400 graduates.

It is hoped that the recommendations made in this report, as well as other district initiatives, can positively impact students lives and help the district fulfill its objectives of providing a quality education for all students and preparing them to succeed in society.

The PEER Committee has only touched the surface of the dropout issue and recognizes that this report is by no means an end in itself. There are still many unanswered questions and pressing

issues that are left to discuss and resolve. However, these recommendations give HISD a foundation on which to build as Houston continues to grapple with the factors that cause students to drop out of school. "Houston *we* have a problem!" The dropout issue is everyone's problem. The community, parents, students, school and district administrators, business, and media must work together to keep Houston's students in school. The committee also realizes the monumental task that lies ahead in putting the recommendations into action. It will take time to identify and place qualified people in leadership roles to begin implementing the recommendations.

PEER CHARTER

Background

In 1984, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 72, which mandated sweeping reform in the state's public education system, including several aspects of the dropout issue. It authorized the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to implement a system for collecting data on student dropouts and to begin developing a program to reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate (Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office and Texas Education Agency, 2000). As a result, the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA) was asked to assess the state's dropout problem. Under contract with TDCA, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted the study and concluded that one-third of Texas students drop out before completing high school (LBB, SAO and TEA, 2000). Few Texas school districts reported having dropout prevention programs, and fewer had evaluation data for those programs.

Several years later, the Legislature passed HB 1010, which significantly increased state and local responsibilities for collecting student dropout information, monitoring dropout rates, and providing dropout reduction services. The definition of dropout was added to the statute. However, in 1995, with the adoption of the Texas Education Code (TEC) the statutory definition of dropout was eliminated. Subsequently, the State Board of Education (SBOE) repealed the dropout definition. Currently school districts look exclusively to statutory criteria when reporting numbers of students identified as at risk (LBB, SAO and TEA, 2000).

There have been numerous concerns from all stakeholders about (1) the definition of dropout used in the accountability systems, (2) the method of calculating dropout rates, and (3) the accuracy of dropout data reported by school districts. As a result, beginning with school year 2003–2004, the SBOE approved a nonbinding resolution that calls for a revision of the TEA computation of dropout data. The proposed calculation and methodology will be identical to that used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the United States Department of Education (DOE).

Research shows that there is no "right" method for computing dropout data. HISD is held accountable, however, to TEA standards and must follow its policies and procedures. Most importantly, the district is also accountable to its students. Therefore, HISD is making a concerted effort to increase its graduation rate to 85 percent by 2007.

Case for Action

"Houston, we have a problem!" While 84 percent of Anglo students in HISD schools graduated in 2001, only 55 percent of African-Americans, and 43 percent of Hispanics did so, according to a story that appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*, (November 16, 2001). The source of the *Chronicle* statistics is the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research's study, "High School Graduation Rates in the United States." The perceptions of some campus leaders seem to mirror the report's findings. The *Chronicle* story quotes an HISD principal's belief that "…only one in three students makes it from the ninth grade to the senior class." In addition, principals and

administrators cite the impacts of numerous critical factors, such as mobility, not accurately taken into account in the dropout statistics.

They also note that there are different kinds of dropouts, and there are different ways to talk about dropouts. This dilemma was cited in a second *Chronicle* article on August 21, 2002, which reported that "the National Center for Education Statistics found that five percent of Texas high school students dropped out in school year 1999-2000 in contrast to the one-percent dropout rate reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA)…the two calculations are based on the same data, but there are…big differences in the way the rates (are) calculated."

Thus, based on media report, and personal observations, it is the public's perception that Houston has an overwhelming dropout rate, and not enough students are graduating. Parents and community members view the typical "funnel effect" of 10 elementary schools, each with approximately 600 students, feeding into two middle schools, each with only 1,500 students. They see this number narrow to one high school, graduating only 300 to 400 students, and come to the same conclusion: that Houston has a serious problem.

It is a problem that affects the entire community. Nongraduation of a high number of students translates to high numbers of low-skilled, low-wage earners; decreased attractiveness to businesses seeking to relocate; increased employee training costs; tax base deterioration; increased numbers of single, dependent parents; increased reliance on public assistance; lack of access to advanced academics; stunted spirits; and increased probability of involvement in the penal system. As the Manhattan Institute Report states: "In short, high school graduation is a very important predictor of young people's life prospects."

The Houston metropolitan community relies on HISD and six other significantly smaller school districts to provide K-12 education to public school-age children. As the oldest and largest district, serving the widest demographic spectrum of the area's population, HISD bears primary responsibility for the life prospects of most of the young people in the Houston area. In this context, high school graduation rates are seen as a critical measure of the performance of HISD.

How well Houston is performing, then, should not be based on varied perceptions, but on reliable performance measures. Data received from reliable and consistent measurement standards will allow for the continuous improvement of the systems aimed at decreasing the dropout rate. Such data would include accurate accountability for students, reliable tracking of their movement, and critical evaluation of preventive and proactive programs. All these measures should be brought to bear on preventing dropouts and increasing the number of students who graduate from HISD and Houston-area high schools.

Mission and Objectives

The dropout phenomenon is not a natural result of the theoretical K-12 educational process. Rather, it is the outcome of some systemic wrong, suggesting a serious disconnect on the path between input and output. When the district looks at the middle schools and high schools in Houston, it appears that all the right ingredients are present: good administrators, good teachers, Shared Decision Making Committees (SDMC), the right curriculum and numerous programs designed to address dropout and graduation rates. The programs are preventive and proactive, yet

the problem persists. The PEER Committee is challenged to discover the source of disconnects and to prevent and/or correct them.

The mission of the committee will support HISD in making strategic shifts that promote a higher graduation rate. The goal is to have an 85 percent graduation rate within the next five years. The objectives of the PEER Committee are to:

1. Develop a dropout prevention/graduation model that embraces the expectation that all students will graduate and connects at least one responsible adult to each student from pre-k to graduation;

2. Recommend programs and resources to support the prevention/graduation model;

3. Evaluate current methods of reporting dropout statistics;

4. Review the process for improving data quality;

5. Review a parental leadership training program; and

6. Manage communications regarding dropouts and graduation rates to include the positive stories that help the public understand and accept the PEER Committee mission.

Specific tasks include:

1. *Developing a new paradigm to complement the present attempts to keep students in the system, and a sub-goal of recovering and bringing students back into the system when they have dropped out.* Experts in the field of educational research suggest a need for several shifts in thinking regarding dropout prevention, beginning with a new paradigm that allows all students to experience the expectation of being on a graduation track and the expectation that they will graduate. The paradigm would include the establishment of the expectation during early childhood, with reinforcement despite retention and TAKS or other test failures.

2. *Helping the district and community understand the size and gravity of the dropout problem and determining if additional funding and other resources need to be spent in this area.* Another suggested shift regards a problem definition and scope. Is the dropout problem an "elephant" or a "flea?" The PEER Committee must assess the magnitude of the problem, and this should be the first order of business for the committee. The problem scope and definition will strongly dictate the kinds of resources devoted to the problem, including their quality and quantity. Not agreeing on the magnitude of the problem could severely limit the group's effectiveness. Many districts across the country treat the dropout problem as a bookkeeping project. That treatment is often accompanied by a sense of self-fulfilling prophecy, which is an expectation that certain students will drop out. This expectation results in low- dollar expenditures for dropout prevention and recovery.

3. *Creating a process for continual assessment and evaluation of dropout prevention programs, relevant solutions, and professional development programs aimed at dropout prevention.*

4. *Assessing the articulation agreements between HISD and institutions of higher education, as well as articulation agreements between K-12 school linkages within vertical teams.* Articulation agreements are the means by which community colleges throughout the nation are working closely with high schools to give credit for successfully completed competencies, allowing students who pursue vocational education to build on past learning experiences without duplication of instruction.[1] This is one of many educational strategies to encourage potential dropouts to remain in school and complete workforce and certification programs. Within the district, feeder pattern linkages may articulate agreements concerning various student-learning communities as students move from elementary to middle to high school.

5. *Redesigning reporting methods and increasing data integrity.* There is a need to rigorously examine the statistics related to dropout reporting and set measurement standards**.** Who should be coded as dropouts? What factors are not accurately accounted for in the dropout reporting and statistics used by state and federal agencies? To what extent is mobility erroneously factored into dropout statistics? To what degree are the immigrant and foreign-born counts contributing to the statistics? Are new information gathering processes and tracking systems required to produce accurate, relevant data? What role would the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) play in this search for data quality?

   For example, many states do not include GED students in enrollment statistics, as is done in Texas. How does this impact the HISD dropout rate? Leaver codes (codes used to identify students who *left* a school or district) and the information reported through the codes also need to be examined. The number of leaver codes increased from seven to 42 from 1991 to 2002, resulting in an inverse correlation between the number of leaver codes and the dropout rate. These codes delineate reasons, such as intention to enroll, GED, death, incarceration, and transfers, which are extremely useful and accurate in some instances. In others, they need to be closely examined. Two additional questions remain: 1) Are the students reported under some leaver codes really enrolled anywhere? and 2) should they be counted as dropouts if their enrollment cannot be verified?

6. *Improving data quality.* Who is mining the data at the input level? Is an administrator or school business manager accountable for the data, or is the information in the control of clerical staff? Is clerical training adequate? Are new training inputs required by administrators? These are among the many questions that must be addressed regarding data quality.

7. *Move from a deficit model to an asset-based model in parent leadership training.* In this parental involvement model, parents are regarded as first teachers, as resources to schools, and as having the ability and willingness to help in the classroom. District leaders must involve parents in decision-making, networking, and training.

---

[1] There are articulation agreements between 4-year colleges and universities aimed at advanced placement in academic programs, as well.

Scope of Analysis

Analysis is required in the following areas:

1. Methods and systems of information management in dropout reporting;
2. Identification of successful districts and programs;
3. Best methods of disseminating program information/evaluation, so campuses can determine if programs are viable solutions for their classrooms, campuses, community, (e.g. Project GRAD, Coca-Cola Valued Youth, First Things First, and district office initiatives in feeder patterns);
4. Role of the counselors (new legislation regarding role of counselor);
5. Articulation agreements between community colleges, universities and high schools,
6. Importance of an advocate for every child;
7. Role of parental leadership and leadership training;
8. Importance of extracurricular connection;
9. Role of business;
10. Resource expenditures to address problem;
11. Cost/benefit analysis;
12. Resource identification: consultants, community resources, grants, etc.; and
13. Impact of decentralization.

Limitations

The following limitations will affect the committee's recommendations and suggestions for improvements:
- State statutes; and
- Texas Education Agency rules and regulations.

Suggested Methodology

- Suggest reporting methods;
- Analyze integrity of data;
- Project impact of calculating dropout rate, utilizing revised reporting measures;
- Coordinate focus groups; and
- Survey parents, teachers, and students.

Suggested Strategies

- Benchmarking best practices (academic and environmental);
- Map processes;
- Review the related literature;
- Study successful schools and best practices;
- Interview parents, teachers, students, and stakeholders;
- Survey students; and
- Facilitate panel forums.

Products

- Comprehensive model that promotes the graduation rate;
- Evaluation process for monitoring dropout prevention programs and professional development programs;
- Recommendations for new legislation and/or changes in current legislation, if necessary;
- Recommended calculation for computing dropouts; and
- Comprehensive analysis of the quality of data as it relates to leaver codes.

Peer Committee Members

Name	Title	Organization
Roberto Gonzalez, Committee Chairman	Vice President	Employment and Training Centers, Incorporated
Glenda Alvarez	Principal	Chavez High School
Steve Amstutz	Principal	Lee High School
Lois Bilby	Parent	HISD Parent Advisory Board
Cynthia Clay Briggs	Executive Director	Communities in Schools- Houston
Iris Blanco	Student	Madison High School
Rose Ann Blanco	Director	LULAC National Education Center
Linda Clarke	Executive Director	The Houston A+ Challenge
Carolyn Conner	Education Chair	NAACP
Sharon Jacobson	Executive Director	Project GRAD
William A. Lawson	Pastor	Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church
Gloria Legington	Principal	Madison High School
Rogelio Lopez	Senior Educational Associate	IDRA
George Martin	Principal Intern	Chavez High School
Sylvia McMullen	Manager	Education and Workforce Committee- Greater Houston Partnership
Carlos Moreno	Vice President	Community and Educational Outreach- UT Health Science Center
Michael Caomy Nguyen	Asian Community Representative	VN TeamWork
Justin Pinset	Student	Lee High School
Mary Ramos	District Director	LULAC
Sylvia Ramos	President	Houston Community College- Southeast Campus
Monico Rivas	Principal Intern	Lee High School
Richard Torres	Executive Director	Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Jose Treviño	District Superintendent	Southeast District Office- HISD
Jan West	Director of Education	Houston Area Urban League

Central Office Support

Armando Alaniz	Assistant Superintendent	HISD- HS Performance and Accountability
Roberta Cusack	Director	HISD- Student Engagement
Jaime de la Isla	Assistant Superintendent	HISD- Student Engagement
Nikki Thomas	Training Coordinator	HISD- Strategic Management
Jonita Wallace-Kuykendall	Director	HISD- Strategic Management

Peer Committee Activities
2002-2003

September 2002

16	Initial PEER Core Team Meeting*:* discussed and planned the agenda for the first PEER Committee meeting.
23	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed the format for the PEER Committee Press Conference.
27	PEER Core Team Meeting: met with Dr. Kaye Stripling to discuss the PEER objectives and charge for the committee.
30	Press Conference: announced the formation of the PEER Committee and its charge. Initial PEER Committee Meeting: determined the resources the committee needed in order to move forward.

October 2002

7	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed subcommittee foci.
16	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed agenda items for the next meeting.
21	PEER Committee Meeting: created subcommittee topics.
24	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed format for focus group meetings.

November 2002

11	PEER Committee Meeting: heard presentation from Dr. Paul Cruz, Deputy Commissioner for Dropout Prevention and Initiative, Texas Education Agency (TEA).
12	HISD Teacher Ad Hoc Meeting: presented to teachers on the work of the committee and conducted a dropout survey.
18	PEER Core Group Meeting: discussed survey outcomes from the teacher ad hoc committee meeting.
19	Southwest Chamber of Commerce Meeting: discussed the dropout rate and the importance of increasing student achievement in Houston.
20	PEER Core Group and Subcommittee Chairs Luncheon: updated subcommittee chairs on main objectives and next steps for the committee.

December 2002

10	PEER Core Team Meeting*:* prepared agenda for next meeting.
13	Student Ad Hoc Meeting*:* discussed the dropout issue with students and conducted a survey to get feedback on why their peers are dropping out.
16	PEER Committee Meeting*:* received updates from subcommittees.

January 2003

9	PEER Core Team Meeting*:* focused on main objectives and outlined major tasks to be completed. District Advisory Committee Meeting: presented to the committee and conducted a survey on dropouts.

Peer Committee Activities Continued

15	PEER Committee Meeting: discussed the recent Research Brief on dropout rates. Invited Kathryn Sanchez, Assistant Superintendent of Research and Accountability, Jacel Morgan, Multilingual, and Gilbert DeAnda, Data Quality, to answer the committee's questions on data quality.
27	The Texas Education Agency Mid-Winter Conference Presentation: presented HISD initiatives to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates.

February 2003

12	PEER Committee Meeting Presentation: Armando Alaniz, Assistant Superintendent for High School Performance and Accountability; discussed current reform efforts taking place within HISD.
24	PEER Core Team Meeting: met to discuss the outline for the final report.
28	Subcommittee Chair's Luncheon: met with subcommittee chairs to discuss the outline and key sections of the final report.

March 2003

12	PEER Committee Meeting: met with Faye Jones, Special Education Department Manager, to discuss how Special Education students are calculated in the completion and dropout rates; discussed at risk data, final PEER report and subcommittee reports.

April 2003

1	PEER Core Team Meeting: met to discuss draft PEER Report.
15	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed PEER meeting and draft PEER Report and set meeting schedule for future meetings.
16	PEER Committee Meeting: discussed PEER Report; members offered feedback and input.
22	PEER Core Team Meeting: finalized PEER Report.
23	PEER Core Team Meeting: met with Dr. Stripling to discuss the PEER Report and the rollout process of final product.
25	PEER Core Team Meeting: made revisions to Draft Report.
30	PEER Committee Meeting: updated committee members on revised recommendations and rollout process for final PEER Report.

May 2003

9	PEER Core Team Meeting: discussed final changes to the PEER report and made arrangements for the final PEER committee meeting

June 2003

3	PEER Committee Luncheon: celebrated committee members for their work in serving on the committee.
10	Press Conference and Board Workshop: Roberto Gonzalez submitted the PEER report to Dr. Stripling and Board Members. A board workshop was held to explain the report to board members, the media, and others.

Subcommittee Objectives and Membership

To accomplish the daunting task of improving HISD's graduate rate, the PEER Committee was divided into four subcommittees. These subcommittees were formed to correlate to the PEER's five objectives. Chairman Roberto Gonzalez appointed subcommittee chairs to lead the way in researching ways to decrease the dropout rate. The subcommittees were as follows:

PEER Committee Objectives	Subcommittee Members
Student Support Initiatives *Objective I: Recommend programs and resources to support the prevention/graduation model.* 1. Examine feeder pattern efforts to address dropout. What initiatives are in place? 2. Replicate High Schools that Work and/or other reform programs 3. Allow all district programs and initiatives with high school focus to present to the committee, i.e. Schools for a New Society 4. Develop and research new programs and initiatives for ninth graders 5. Explore graduate profile and look at current systems in place address with dropout issues	**Cynthia Clay Briggs, Committee Chair** • Roseann Blanco- LULAC • Thomas Brooks- Harris County Juvenile Probation Department. • Ann Clark- Community Volunteer • Jaime de la Isla- Student Engagement- HISD • Diana Dominguez- Communities in Schools Houston • Paz Guerra- Community Services • Ginger Harper- Community Youth Services • Venita Holmes- Research and Accountability- HISD • Sharon Jacobson- Project GRAD • Jayne McCullough- High Schools that Work- HISD • Ernest McMillan- Fifth Ward Enrichment • Debra Nelson- Safe and Drug-Free Schools- HISD • Cheryl Solomon- Health and Medical Services- HISD • Alfredo Tijerina- Family Services • Nikki Thomas- Strategic Management and Consulting- HISD • Jonita Wallace-Kuykendall- Strategic Management and Consulting- HISD
Student Trends and Dropout Prevention *Objective II: Evaluate current methods of reporting dropout statistics.* 1. Develop common definitions of dropout 2. Define what the dropout rate should be, as a committee, to accurately reflect the problem 3. Analyze the dropout problem 4. Examine the demographics of dropouts 5. Review number of students entering HISD after snapshot date. Where are they coming from? 6. Examine resiliency factors (asset building) 7. Review criteria for at risk students and develop ways students can quickly be identified 8. Review the tracking process as it relates to district, schools, and state 9. Examine trends from 10 years ago concerning dropouts	**Linda Clarke, Committee Chair** • Glenda Alvarez- Chavez HS- HISD • Steve Amstutz- Lee HS- HISD • Lindsey Argall- Project GRAD • Obrey Holden- Texas Business and Education Coalition • Jim Lancaster- Houston A+ Challenge • George Martin- Chavez HS- HISD • Michele Pola- Houston A+ Challenge • Harry Selig- Research and Accountability- HISD

10. Explore ninth-grade data when they were considered a part of junior high 11. Summarize data by each high school, reflecting first-time whole cohort groups 12. Examine leaver codes for ninth graders and other grade levels	
Data Quality *Objective III: Review the process for improving data quality* 1. Research why students are not attending school 2. Create focus groups and surveys for students and community 3. Research surrounding districts' efforts, if any, to reduce dropout rates 4. Examine other school districts' best practices. 5. Examine surrounding district's Ninth Grade Centers 6. Explore why students' are staying in school	**Roberto Gonzalez, Committee Chair** • Armando Alaniz- High School Performance and Accountability • Roberta Cusack- Student Engagement and Charter Schools- HISD • Gilbert DeAnda- Data Quality- HISD • Jaime de la Isla- Student Engagement- HISD • James McSwain- Lamar HS- HISD • Pat Ramirez- Lamar HS- HISD • Lydia Sobhi- Central Administrative District- HISD • John Taylor- Federal and State Compliance- HISD • Cheryl Wilhelmsen- Lamar HS- HISD
Parental Leadership *Objective IV: Review a parental leadership-training program.* 1. Explore parents' expectations regarding student achievement 2. Create parent focus groups	**Rogelio Lopez and Jan West, Committee Chairs** • Lois Bilby- Parent Advisory Committee- HISD • Albert Cortez- IDRA • Josie Cortez- IDRA • Yojani Hernandez- IDRA • Sharon Jacobson- Project GRAD • Roy Johnson- IDRA • Michael Nguyen- VN TeamWork • Aurora Yoñez-Perez- IDRA • Andrea Sosa- IDRA • Nikki Thomas- Strategic Management and Consulting- HISD

PEER REPORT

Introduction

Graduating from high school is the first step toward a promising career and financial stability. Education is the gatekeeper for financial stability and the ability to lead a happier, more fulfilling life. Earnings of individuals are closely tied to educational attainment. A high school diploma translates to $100,000 more per lifetime and more than $1,000,000 for individuals with a college degree. The following is a chart of average annual earnings in the United States by educational attainment:

Education Level	Average Annual Earnings
No High School Diploma	$16,124
High School Diploma	$22,895
Bachelors Degree	$40,478
Post Graduate Degree	$63,229

Source: U.S. Census

America's free-market economic system is cruel and unforgiving to the less educated. Students who do not complete high school earn lower incomes, are more frequently unemployed, and have more limited job opportunities than high school graduates. There are fewer opportunities for less-educated persons to move up the economic ladder when compared to previous generations.

Noncompleters, who many refer to as dropouts, are more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates and make up a disproportionate share of the nation's prison and death row inmates, thus imposing a burden on all levels of government. The adverse impact that dropping out of school has on both those who drop out and society itself has long been recognized.

Many people recognize equity in educational opportunity as a major civil rights issue. It is not surprising why people are so passionate about the education of children and their economic prospects. Because the dropout rate is such a meaningful measure of a child's well being and school performance, the methods used to measure it are both important and controversial. Although there are a variety of organizations measuring the dropout rate, using different methodologies, there is little consensus about the actual numbers of students who drop out. This emotional issue causes people to look for someone to blame, and at the forefront is the Houston Independent School District, Houston's largest public education system. While there are measures the school system can utilize, the problem is still very complex. There are many variables, and the dropout problem requires a combined effort of school, family, business and community to ensure that all students succeed.

According to the Census Bureau, Texas has one of the highest dropout rates in the nation- only two states have a higher percentage of students who drop out of high school, Arizona and Nevada. In Texas, the dropout rate is one performance indicator, which, when grouped with

other indicators of academic excellence, contribute to the overall rating of a school and its district. While schools with high ratings are given positive recognition by the Texas Successful Schools Award System, schools with low ratings can be sanctioned.

Using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) methodology, about 68 percent of students graduated from HISD in October 2002. Additionally, approximately 13 percent were not enrolled in a high school program. The Texas Education Agency's (TEA) school accountability data indicate a much lower percentage of one percent. Other groups have analyzed the same data using other methodologies and have concluded that the rate in Houston is nearly 50 percent.

No matter which dropout rate is quoted, there are people who do not accept nor believe the numbers. Reporting of dropouts has become a hot political issue and is surrounded by enormous controversy. Who is to be counted? How should they be counted? These two questions reside at the heart of the dropout issue, which is currently under review by the Texas Legislature. The State of Texas will more than likely adopt the NCES method to comply with a national standard as mandated in the "No Child Left Behind Act" passed in 2001.

The HISD graduation rate has increased, and the dropout rate, by all measures, has decreased. However, HISD is below the state and national averages for completion rate and above the state and national averages for dropouts. (See Appendix A).

Many groups and individuals believe that the reduction in the dropout rate has been accomplished by changes in the leaver codes, along with other reporting and administrative maneuvers. *Compounding the controversy are issues of data quality and integrity*.

Dr. Kaye Stripling, HISD Superintendent of Schools, asked the PEER Committee to examine the graduation rate, the dropout rate, parental education models, and dropout prevention efforts and make recommendations to the district. In analyzing the completion/dropout rate, the committee looked at completion, dropout, and at risk definitions. Some of the different methodologies for counting dropouts will be discussed in this report followed by a brief discussion of reasons students drop out and some ideas for dropout prevention.

The graduation rate has risen as graduation requirements have been changing and made more demanding over past decades. There are state and national efforts to raise standards. Recent changes in the state accountability system and the implementation of the revised exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test move the bar higher. There are efforts to make graduation requirements more rigorous, such as the Texas Scholars initiative. Future graduation requirements will certainly change to meet college and university requirements as well as the demands of the workplace. Higher completion goals are a moving target, as is the dropout problem. The dropout problem is dynamic and subject to changes, along with economic conditions and government policies.

Improving the completion rate cannot be accomplished without addressing dropout issues and understanding other factors relating to demographic trends in Houston. Immigration, migration, and mobility have a profound impact on HISD accountability. It is likely that many of Houston's high school students never attended elementary school in HISD or in Houston, nor do many elementary students complete high school in HISD.

Multiple approaches to dropout prevention exist, and many experts believe that dropout programs should be tailored to the needs of the student population being served. Although the problem has long been recognized, efforts to reduce the number of dropouts show mixed results. There are no simple solutions to complex problems. Subsequently, it is imperative that the problem be thoroughly understood before solutions can be recommended.

Computing Graduation/Dropout Rates

Most agree that there are three categories of high school students: (1) in-school, (2) graduates (completers), and (3) noncompleters. However, there is disagreement on who should be included in each group and when they should be counted; this is a major part of the controversy.

- **In school** refers to the students currently enrolled and attending school or temporarily absent from school due to illness. Issues with in-school definitions include how to count those who are home schooled, those enrolled in a GED program, those who left school and indicated they would enroll in another public or private school and have not documented the enrollment, and those who entered college without a high school diploma.

- **Completers** represent the portion of young adults not enrolled in high school or who are defined as having completed high school. Depending on the measure, completion may be characterized by a single benchmark, such as receipt of a diploma. Another high school completion measure is the regular high school completion or graduation rate. This rate is the number of public high school seniors who earn a regular diploma in a given year stated as a percent of the number of entering freshman four years earlier.

The next category of students represents those that are not in school and *have not completed high school*. The true definition of *noncompleters* and which group should be considered *dropouts* are also the bases for much of the controversy.

The question must be asked: Why are dropouts counted? Some methods determine the number of students in need of service. Other methods focus on the accountability measures for schools.

The word *dropout* has only recently entered the vocabulary. Fifty years ago, most American children did not finish high school, but a dropout problem was not communicated. Until recently, the conversations have centered on high school completion, not dropping out. Measurements of high school completion/graduation as part of a student's educational performance have been increasing steadily. In 1940, only 40 percent of students completed high school, whereas 78 percent completed high school in 1972 and 84 percent did so in 1980. The high school completion rate reached 87 percent in the early 1980s and has remained relatively stable over the past decade. *An important fact is that the state did not begin to collect dropout data until 1984; and TEA did not begin including dropouts as an accountability measure until 1994.*

There are multiple ways to determine the dropout rate, but no one measure is appropriate for all situations. Dropout figures vary depending on which dropout or school completion measure is used, primarily because calculations use different age groups, data, or definitions of dropout. As a result, users of dropout and completion data must familiarize themselves with the many

measures available and select the measure or measures that best meet their needs. The most common methods for measuring dropouts are provided below:

Noncompletion Rate is 100 percent minus the completion rate. This method is the simplest, but does not give an accurate assessment of school performance or the reason students leave school early.

Status Dropout Rate is concerned with the status of individuals in the workforce and in society. Almost all noncompleters are considered dropouts. The status dropout rate is useful in measuring the percent of youth and young adults who are not enrolled in school and who have not earned a high school diploma or equivalent credential, but it does not indicate how well schools are preventing students from dropping out in a given year. This is commonly used by government agencies concerned with services to individuals or those measuring impact on the economy. This rate reveals the extent of the dropout problem in the population and can be used to estimate the need for further education and training designed to help dropouts participate fully in the economy and life of the nation.

Event (annual) Dropout Rate provides a better measure of how well schools are performing in a given year since it measures the percent of who dropped out of school during a specific period of time. Educators use the *event dropout rate*, which measures dropouts as a measure of school performance. Since the measure is used for accountability, this method is inclined to include district-controlled students or those who fall under the district's responsibility. For example, students who have been expelled from school are included as a status dropout but may not be included as an event dropout.

Cohort Dropout Rate measures what portion of a group of students drop out over a period of time. Cohort groups are usually in a single grade such as the seventh, ninth, or tenth grade measured against the scheduled graduating class six, four, or three years later. This method measures how a group of students fares in the system. Variations of this method differ in which members are *added to* or *taken from* the cohort group. Maintaining proper documentation of students and their outcomes is a huge problem. This method may provide a distorted view of a school's performance when student mobility is high. Who should get the accountability data - the school where the student attended the ninth grade or the school he or she graduated from?

Attrition Rate estimates the percentage of students from a class of ninth graders not enrolled in grade 12, four years later. The attrition rate provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available.

> IDRA conducts a comparison of the ninth-grade enrollment with twelfth-grade enrollment four years later and allows for the determination of the number of students lost during their high school years. The attrition rate is calculated by: (1) dividing the high-school enrollment at the end year by the high-school enrollment in the base year, (2) multiplying the result from calculation one by the ninth-grade enrollment in the base year, (3) subtracting the result from calculation two from the twelfth-grade enrollment at the end of the year, and (4) dividing the result of calculation three by the result of calculation two.

The attrition rate does not take into account any of the reasons that the beginning and ending enrollments differ. Therefore, there is no way to distinguish attrition rates resulting from dropping out, grade-level retention, students transferring to private schools, death, or early graduation. The attrition rate can fluctuate because of factors that are not considered a reflection of school performance, such as the student mobility rate, and factors Texas has chosen not to include as performance measures, such as retention rates. When used as a proxy for a longitudinal dropout rate, the attrition rate overstates the dropout problem. Furthermore, the attrition rate does not always correctly reflect the status of dropouts. The seventh through twelfth grade longitudinal dropout rate is higher than the grade nine through twelfth longitudinal dropout rate because the seventh through twelfth-grade rate includes students who dropped out of seventh through eighth grades as well as students who dropped out of ninth through twelfth grade. The opposite is true of the attrition rate. An attrition rate based on grade seven is lower than the grade nine attrition rate. Also, dropouts who return to school, but must make up a grade, continue to count as part of the attrition rate. Differences are compounded. High mobility and growth rates across grade levels and between schools can distort the attrition rate.

Texas Education Agency Dropout Rate

Many students leave school each year without successfully completing a high school program. So what is the dropout rate? Dropout rates published by the TEA, a key component of the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), have been criticized in recent years for not presenting an accurate picture of the dropout phenomenon in Texas public schools. This criticism has filtered down to HISD and has had adverse affects on the district's image and the ability of the district to apply for federal funding.

The TEA definition of dropout is a product of the accountability system. It excludes some groups of students who typically would be considered dropouts. *The TEA dropout rate also includes seventh and eighth graders; and as a result, the overall dropout rate is held artificially low because smaller portions of students in these lower grades are dropping out.*

The agency's definition excludes students for two policy reasons:

(1) to avoid providing unintended incentives for district behavior that is not in the best interests of students; and
(2) to avoid unfairly penalizing districts and campuses through the rating system. The exclusion of these students from the dropout count results in a lower dropout rate.

The TEA identifies a student as a dropout if the individual is absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer and does not return to school by the fall of the following year, or if he or she completes the school year but fails to re-enroll the following school year.

TEA calculates the estimated longitudinal dropout rate by subtracting the annual rate as one percent and raising the resulting retention rate to the sixth power. The retention rate is then subtracted from one percent for the final estimated longitudinal dropout rate. The estimated longitudinal dropout rate does not track a cohort or group of children as they progress from seventh grade through twelfth grade. It does not count how many seventh graders in a certain

class drop out before the twelfth grade. Rather, it merely provides an estimate of the dropouts based on one year of data.

Students in the following categories are identified as TEA dropouts:

- students who drop out as defined above;

- students from special education, ungraded, or alternative education programs who leave school;

- students who leave school and enter a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school (e.g., cosmetology school); and

- students enrolled as migrants and whose whereabouts are unknown.

Students in the following categories are not included in the dropout count, though some of the categories are reported on other TEA reports:

- students who die;

- students who drop out as defined above, before the seventh grade;

- students who are out of school for temporary periods with an approved excuse;

- students showing regular attendance at a state-approved alternative program;

- students enrolled as migrants who have a subsequent school enrollment record;

- students known to have transferred to another public school, adult or alternative education program, or home schooling;

- students who move to another grade level;

- students who enroll in college early;

- students transferred or assigned to another public institution or state-approved educational program; and

- foreign students who return to their home country.

The TEA dropout calculation as an annual indicator does not accurately portray the success or failure of districts and campuses to keep students in school until they graduate. As a snapshot of school dropouts over a single year, the annual dropout indicator measures a different group of students over a more limited period of time than other calculations, such as a longitudinal dropout or high school completion rate; therefore, it produces a lower rate as a result.

National Center on Education Statistics Dropout Definition

The United States Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) annually collects a standard set of data from every state. Since 1991-1992, NCES has been collecting data to report an annual dropout rate for those states that meet NCES requirements for

data quality and comparability. The dropout definition is based on a snapshot count of students at the beginning of the school year.

As defined by NCES, a dropout is an individual who:

1. Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year;
2. Was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year;
   a. Did *NOT* enroll on October 1 as of the current school year;
   b. Was *NOT* enrolled on October 1 as of the previous school year but was expected to be in membership (i.e., was *NOT* reported as a dropout the year before);
3. Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved educational program; and
4. Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
   a. Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
   b. Absence on a temporary basis due to suspension or school-approved illness; or
   c. Death.

Differences Between NCES and TEA Definitions of Dropout

TEA and NCES both define a dropout as a student who is enrolled in school at some time during the school year but either: (1) leaves school during the school year without an approved excuse or documentation of having transferred to another school; or (2) completes the school year but does not return the following year as expected. The following students are considered dropouts under both definitions:

- Students who leave school for academic reasons, such as poor attendance or failing grades.
- Students who leave school for job-related reasons, such as pursuing a job or joining the military.
- Students who leave school because of family-related concerns, such as pregnancy or marriage.
- Students who leave school because of homelessness and migrant students whose whereabouts are unknown.
- Students who leave school and enter a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school.
- Students who leave school and whose whereabouts are unknown.

The following students are *NOT* considered dropouts under *EITHER* definition.
- Students who transfer to another public or private school, are being home-schooled, or enroll in college early.
- Students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere.
- Foreign students returning to their home country.
- Migrant students for whom a subsequent school enrollment record is available.
- Students who graduate or receive a GED certificate.
- Students who die.

GED Recipients. Students who receive a high school equivalency credential are not considered dropouts under the TEA or NCES dropout definition, nor under the definitions used by most other states. They are considered completers by NCES and are classified separately.

Summer Dropouts. Students who complete the school year but do not return the following year as expected are counted as dropouts from the grade and school year for which they fail to enroll.

Recaptures. Recaptures are students removed from the preliminary or initial dropout tallies. Students who leave during the school year but return by the January Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) resubmission date of the following school year, are not considered dropouts by TEA. Students who receive a GED certificate by March 1 of the following school year are not considered dropouts by TEA.

Students who leave during the school year but are enrolled on the October PEIMS snapshot date of the following school year are not considered dropouts by NCES. Students who receive a GED certificate by the October PEIMS snapshot date of the following school year are not considered dropouts by NCES.

Under the NCES definition, dropouts are removed from the dropout count if they return to school the following year and are enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date. (PEIMS data submitted in the fall represent a snapshot of the district on a selected date, usually the last Friday in October.) Under the TEA definition, dropouts are removed from the count if they return anytime before the January resubmission date. Recaptures who must be added back to the NCES dropout count include students who return to school but leave again before the PEIMS snapshot date and students who do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date. Adding recaptures increases the dropout count significantly. Under the current leaver reporting system, leaver records are not submitted for students who return to school after the summer break.

Although NCES requires states to submit dropout counts for the seventh through twelfth grades, the annual dropout rate published is a grade 9-12 rate. The calculation also differs from the TEA methodology. NCES uses fall enrollment (a count of students enrolled on the fall PEIMS snapshot date) in the denominator rather than cumulative enrollment (a count of students enrolled at any time during the school year).

Once a student has been coded as a dropout in PEIMS by TEA, the student cannot be counted as a dropout again and is considered a *recovered dropout*. Recovered dropouts are classified as at risk. NCES makes no distinctions between recovered dropouts.

Categorizing Leavers and Dropouts

Researchers describe noncompleters as *dropouts, push-outs, throw-outs, tuned-outs, pullouts*, and other clever names. Others use leaver or withdrawal codes that document the specific reason a student leaves school before graduating.

Leaver Code Matrix

The Leaver Code matrix includes a tabulation of all leavers as reported by schools and HISD. These data may be adjusted and modified following a TEA review.

It is important to understand why students leave if dropout prevention and intervention initiatives are to be designed and implemented. Texas leaver lodes are developed for use in an accountability model and not necessarily for intervention purposes, nor to provide insight to the student's decision to leave school.

TEA LEAVER CODES AS REPORTED BY HISD FOR 2000 - 2001		
Completed High School Program		
01*	Graduated	7,829
19*	Completed graduation requirements except passing exit-level TAAS	154
31*	Completed GED	233
63*	Graduated previously, returned to school, left again	
64*	Completed GED previously, returned to school, left again	3
Moved to Other Educational Setting		
28*	Intent to enroll in a public school in Texas	7,229
29*	Intent to enroll in a private school in Texas	1,195
73*	No intent but documented enrollment in a public school in Texas	532
74*	No intent but documented enrollment in a private school in Texas	88
07*	Intent to enroll in school out of state	1,397
06*	No intent but documented enrollment in school out of state	181
21*	Official transfer to another Texas public school district	346
22*	Alternative program working toward GED or diploma	2,470
72*	Alternative program by court order	28
70	Alternative program not in compliance with compulsory attendance	18
71	Alternative program not working toward GED or diploma	59
60*	Withdrew for home schooling	210
24*	Entered college early to pursue degree	7
25	Entered college but not pursuing degree	1
Withdrawn by District		
17*	Expelled for criminal behavior	
26	Expelled for reasons other than criminal behavior	6
62*	Withdrawn for non-residence or falsified enrollment information	24
67*	Withdrawn for failure to provide immunization records --	
Other Reasons – School Related		
11	Withdrew/left school because of low or failing grades	47
12	Withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	253
13	Withdrew/left school because of language problems	
27	Withdrew/left school because of TAAS failure	2
14	Withdrew/left school because of age	252
Other Reasons – Job Related		
02	Withdrew/left school to pursue a job	241
04	Withdrew/left school to join the military	3
Other Reasons – Family Related		
08	Withdrew/left school because of pregnancy	46
09	Withdrew/left school because of marriage	41
15	Withdrew/left school due to homelessness/non-permanent residency	27
66*	Removed from the district by Child Protective Services	44

Other Reasons		
03*	Student died	35
10	Withdrew/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problem	1
16*	Returned to home country	1,018
30*	Withdrew/left school to enter a health care facility	37
61*	Incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	423
65	Did not return to school after completing a JJAEP term	
99	Other (unknown or not listed)	673

School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes

HISD 2000 - 2001 LEAVERS		
Ranked by Frequency		
01*	Graduated	7,829
28*	Intent to enroll in a public school in Texas	7,229
22*	Alternative program working toward GED or diploma	2,470
07*	Intent to enroll in school out of state	1,397
29*	Intent to enroll in a private school in Texas	1,195
16*	Returned to home country	1,018
73*	No intent but documented enrollment in a public school in Texas	532
61*	Incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	423
21*	Official transfer to another Texas public school district	346
12	Withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	253
14	Withdrew/left school because of age	252
02	Withdrew/left school to pursue a job	241
31*	Completed GED	233
60*	Withdrew for home schooling	210
19*	Completed graduation requirements except passing exit-level TAAS	154

School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes

HISD Most Frequent Dropout Codes 2001-2002		
99	Unknown, or not listed	673
14	Age	252
12	Attendance	253
02	Pursue a job	241
71	Alternative program, no diploma or GED	58
11	Low/failing grades	47
08	Pregnant	46
09	Marriage	40
27	Homeless or nonpermanent resident	27

It has been said there are as many reasons for dropouts as there are dropouts, and most students have many reasons for leaving school. A national study of tenth graders gave the following reasons for leaving school.

National Study

Reasons for Leaving School	Total	Male	Female
School-related:			
Did not like school	51.2	57.8	44.2
Could not get along with teachers	35.0	51.6	17.2
Could not get along with students	20.1	18.3	21.0

Was suspended too often	16.1	19.2	12.7
Did not feel safe at school	12.1	11.5	12.8
Was expelled	13.4	17.6	8.9
Felt I didn't belong	23.2	31.5	14.4
Could not keep up with school work	31.3	37.6	24.7
Was failing school	39.9	46.2	33.1
Changed school, didn't like new one	13.2	10.8	15.8
Job-related:			
School/job conflict	14.1	20.0	7.8
Had to get a job	15.3	14.7	16.0
Found a job	15.3	18.6	11.8
Family-related:			
Had to support family	9.2	4.8	14.0
Wanted to have family	6.2	4.2	8.4
Was pregnant	31.0	-	31.0
Became parent	13.6	5.1	22.6
Got married	13.1	3.4	23.6
Had to care for family member	8.3	4.6	12.2
Other:			
Wanted to travel	2.1	2.5	1.7
Friends dropped out	14.1	16.8	11.3

Houston Study

The PEER Committee conducted a study similar to the national study. The committee interviewed 201 students coded as dropouts from HISD. A questionnaire was completed for each of the students to obtain data in a similar format to the NCES study referenced above, as well as other information concerning characteristics related to dropouts.

The most positive result was that 82 percent of dropouts contacted less than a year after being coded as dropouts were pursuing an education. Out of the 200 surveyed, 36 students were not attending school, 11 had returned to school and were attending a regular high school, 75 were attending GED programs, and 72 were enrolled in an alternative school. Demographics of the study sample closely correlated with overall HISD dropout data and mirrored other research findings.

Respondents were asked to list the top three reasons for leaving school. School-based reasons for dropping out represented the most frequent reason, tallying 233. Second was family with 125, and third was job related. The least frequent response was "other," which included health, drugs and travel. A major concern is the reported last grade completed indicates that a number of students are dropping out after the tenth grade. Because of the high number of students reentering the education system and the number of school-based reasons, it appears that with more intervention, schools could do more to keep students in school.

The data indicate that males are much more likely to drop out because of school-based issues, especially issues related to socialization and job-related reasons. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to feel the effects of family and home-based issues and pregnancy. Boys are two times more likely to drop out due because of drug and alcohol use.

Characteristics of Dropout Respondents

	Total	Male	Female
Number Dropout Respondents	201	102	99
Age			
16	32	19	13
17	48	26	22
18	60	26	34
19	40	18	22
20	16	10	6
21+	5	3	2
Last Grade Completed*			
7	4	3	1
8	8	6	2
9	34	19	15
10	49	23	26
11	66	36	30
12 (but no exit exam)	37	15	22
Unknown/not listed	3		3

(*Last grade completed as reported by students has a tendency to be overstated and may closely be related to the number of years in high school rather than the completion of credit requirements for the respective grade).

Race Ethnicity	Total	Male	Female
White	29	19	10
Black	53	33	20
Hispanic	109	47	62
Born in the US	74	30	44
Born outside the US	35	17	18
Asian	5	0	5
Native American	1	1	0
Unknown/not disclosed	4	2	2
No	80		
Yes	117		
One Grade	56		
Two or more grades	47		
Unknown/not disclosed	4		

Survey Responses

Reasons	Total	Male	Female
School-related:			
Did not like school	50	32	18
Could not get along with teachers	32	24	8
Could not get along with students	24	17	7
Was suspended to often	12	6	6
Did not feel safe at school	10	4	6
Was expelled	14	10	4
Felt I didn't belong	16	7	9
Could not keep up with school work	33	15	18
Was failing school	23	15	8

Changed school, didn't like new one	19	10	9
Job-related:			
School/job conflict	19	12	7
Had to get a job	37	23	14
Found a job	22	14	8
Family-related:			
Had to support family	17	9	8
Wanted to have family	5	2	3
Pregnancy	33	5	28
Family Problems	46	23	23
Got married	18	2	16
Had to care for family member	6	4	2
Other:			
Wanted to travel	7	4	3
Friends dropped out	17	6	9
Drugs/Alcohol	29	21	8
Health Issues	7	4	3
TAAS	7	2	5

Dropping Out is a Long-Term Process

Various research studies have focused on dropping out as a long-term process of disengagement that occurs over time and begins in the earliest grades. Early school failure may act as the starting point in a cycle that causes children to question their competence and weakens their attachment to school, and eventually results in their dropping out**.** A study examining the first to ninth grade records for a group of Baltimore school children found that low test scores and poor report cards from as early as first grade forecast the propensity of dropping out with considerable accuracy.

This process of disengagement can be identified in measures of student attitudes as well as in measures of academic performance. Studies have indicated that early behavioral problems in absenteeism, skipping class, disruptive behavior, lack of participation in class, and delinquency can lead to gradual disengagement and eventually dropping out. A report summarizing a longitudinal study of inner-city school children found significant relationships between behavioral problems in kindergarten through grade three and misconduct in the classroom at ages 14 and 15. Future school disciplinary problems and police contacts by age 17 subsequently end in higher dropout rates.

For many young people, quitting school is a process not an isolated event. Some students drop out in spirit long before they stop showing up for classes and frequently send signals indicating their potential to give up on school. Increased absenteeism, poor grades, and discipline problems are common red flags that lead to a decision to leave school. Given the intermingling issues and circumstances that can lead a student to quit school, finding a single reason or even primary cause is nearly impossible.

Based on data reviewed, the largest numbers of HISD dropouts are *process dropouts,* meaning they do not drop out as a result of events in their lives. Intervention and programs vary depending on the type of dropout. Event dropouts are more likely to pursue a GED or abandon education. Process dropouts may respond better to alternative education and require additional counseling, personalized instruction, and support services.

Process Dropouts. Research has shown that multiple factors are associated with dropping out, and dropping out of school is a long-term process of disengagement that occurs over time, beginning in the earliest grades. NCES and private research organizations have identified two types of factors: (1) those associated with families and (2) those related to an individual's experience in school that are related to dropping out. For example, students from low-income, single-parent, and less-educated families often enter school less prepared than children from more affluent, better-educated families and subsequently drop out at a much higher rate than other students do. Factors related to an individual's experiences in school could often be identified soon after a child begins school. These factors, such as low grades, absenteeism, disciplinary problems, frequently changing schools, and being retained for one or more grades, are all found at a much higher than average rate in students who drop out. Study of the long-term process of dropping out may provide insights into ways to identify students at risk.

Event Dropouts. Event dropouts are students who leave or do not complete school as a result of an event in the student's life or family situation. Some of the events may be triggered by the student's actions. There are many events leading to a student's leaving school, such as pregnancy, death of a family member, obtaining employment, economic hardship, drug or alcohol abuse, migration and criminal activity, or behavior problems. Some consider expulsions as event dropouts and others include them in a separate category.

Who is At Risk?

Research has shown that multiple factors are associated with the likelihood of dropping out. Two primary factors associated with the likelihood of dropping out are: (1) family characteristics and (2) students' experiences in school. However, identifying students who are likely to drop out is not just a matter of identifying students with high-risk characteristics. Research shows that dropping out is often the culmination of a long-term process of disengagement that begins in the earliest grades. For example, an NCES longitudinal study of eighth graders found that while data show that African-American, Hispanics, and Native-American students were more likely to drop out than Caucasian students, this relationship is not statistically significant after controlling for a student's socioeconomic status. While there are high-risk characteristics for students, there are also a number of school practices and conditions that lead to students dropping out.

The greatest correlation for dropouts is a low socioeconomic status, but other factors such as education of parents, mobility, children of teen- and single-parent households are also major indicators. Dropout rates are considerably higher for Hispanics than for other ethnic groups, and Hispanics born outside the country are nearly three times as likely to drop out as those born in the United States. The difficulty in categorizing dropouts is that many of them have multiple factors that cause them to leave school.

Student and Family Characteristics

Students from low-income, single parent, and less-educated families drop out at a much higher rate than other students. Research indicates that a number of family background factors, such as

socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, single-parent families, siblings' educational attainment, and family mobility are correlated with the likelihood of dropping out. Of these factors, socioeconomic status, most commonly measured by parental income and education, bears the strongest relationship to dropping out, according to the results of a number of studies.

School Experiences

Historically, dropout rates have been higher among students who are socially and economically disadvantaged, lack English proficiency, or are learning-disabled. But school practices, environments, and resources also factor into decisions to quit. School experiences related to dropping out include students having a history of behavioral problems and having higher rates of chronic truancy and tardiness. Similarly, low grades and retention for one or more grades are also found at much higher than average rates among students who drop out.

Schools can do more, including the early identification of at risk children and providing additional attention and resources. At risk students may need ongoing support, tutoring, mentoring, more intensive academic services, and counseling to encourage them to stay focused on their education.

Texas At Risk Criteria

The state has identified student characteristics that may put a child at risk of dropping out of school or in need of more intensive services. The majority of these criteria are *based on school experiences*. The state has listed 13 criteria that determine a child to be "at risk."
A student is considered at risk if he or she:

1. Was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years;
2. Is in seventh through twelfth grade, and did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;
3. Did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student (TAAS/TAKS) and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;
4. Is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or grades one through three and did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year;
5. Is pregnant or is a parent;
6. Has been placed in an alternative education program during the preceding or current school year;
7. Has been expelled during the preceding or current school year;
8. Is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;
9. Was previously reported through the PEIMS to have dropped out of school;
10. Is of limited English proficiency;

11. Is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;
12. Is homeless; or
13. Resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

Other At Risk Factors

In a review of the records of HISD dropouts, the committee found that a large number of the students *were not identified* as "at risk" according to the Texas criteria. The committee would also be interested in seeing what percentage of high school graduates meets the at risk criteria.

1. Although research supports many of the criteria listed in the Texas Education Code (TEC) as having a high or direct correlation to dropouts, there are other factors that place a child "at risk" of dropping out. Other risk factors that researchers have determined to have a high correlation to dropouts are:

2. Children in families with a low socioeconomic status level (receiving public assistance or families with less than $16,000 per year in family income);
    a. Students with a history of high mobility (The U.S. Department of Commerce considers high mobility as changing residence more than once every two years and is more critical when moves take place in high school);
    b. Children in single-parent households, where the *mother* does not work;
    c. Children in single-parent households;
    d. Foreign-born Hispanics; and
    e. Students with parents who have low-educational attainment (less than an eighth grade education or its equivalent).
3. Children with an older sibling that has dropped out;
4. Students with historically high absenteeism and tardiness (high absenteeism is considered to be missing more than *16* days per school year in first grade and increasing each year through middle school and high school);
5. Children born and raised by teen parent(s);
6. Students living in a high-stress home (a high-stress home may include conditions in the home with incidence of child or spouse abuse and violence, a parent or family member who abuses drugs or alcohol, unhealthy living conditions, loss of a family member or loved one, runaway, or other stressful living conditions); and
7. Students with a history of alcohol and substance abuse.

Research indicates that if a child meets more than one of the at risk criteria, the probability of dropping out increases dramatically. For example, a child with a single parent who does not work and has a low socioeconomic status is twice as likely to drop out as a child who is in a single-parent household.

Immigrant Students

HISD has a significant immigrant student population. Immigrants enter the district at all grade levels, from preschool to high school and range from ages three to 21. Immigrants are classified as those who were born outside the U.S., and who have been in a U.S. school for fewer than three complete years. HISD has more than 60,000 students in English Language Learner (ELL) programs. The dropout rate for immigrant students is estimated to be more than 45 percent.

Immigrants come from over 200 nations, but the majority come from Mexico (81 percent) representing more than 24,590 of the HISD student population. The next largest number is from Central and South America (11 percent), and the rest (eight percent) come from other parts of the world. HISD reports that 94 percent of ELL students speak Spanish as their primary language, which makes immigrant and Hispanic issues somewhat synonmous.

There are a number of challenges facing students in addition to learning English, understanding the American educational system, abiding by compulsory education laws, as well as acclimating to American culture. Culture shock can leave children feeling isolated and anxious.

Older immigrant children may not have documentation of their previous education or may have had limited education in their native country. Schools may be placing students in grades because of age and not because of academic skill level. This may explain HISD records reflecting a spike in the number of immigrants entering the ninth grade. This practice will have an impact on the NCES graduation rate and dropout rate. Students placed in high school without the basic education foundation or interest, may be destined to failure and may be *imminent dropouts* at enrollment.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Study immigrant initiatives and practices affecting students such as grade placement and awarding of credit and modify its practices.

➢ Design services to assist at risk immigrant students, including an immigrant Newcomer Learning Center, and review policy regarding assessment and placement.
  – Offer an orientation session for new immigrant students and parents;
  – Provide ungraded developmental classes that include intensive English, social studies (with an emphasis on the U.S. educational and political system), and citizenship; and
  – Provide intensive English classes and basic education for older students who may not have the skills to succeed in high school (students 17 years of age or older).

Hispanic Dropout Rate

Dropout rates are much higher for Hispanics than for other ethnic groups and are affected primarily by the very high dropout rates for Hispanics born outside the United States. Those using dropout or completion data must familiarize themselves with the various measures and select the one that best meets their needs. As a result, Hispanics born outside the country accounted for only 6.6 percent of all 16- through 24-year-olds. They also accounted for more than a quarter of all dropouts in 2000 and thus significantly raised the overall Hispanic dropout

rate and the national dropout rate. In addition, data from 1995 show that more than half (62.5 percent) of the foreign-born Hispanic youths who were dropouts had never enrolled in a U.S. school, and 79.8 percent of these young adults who had never enrolled in U.S. schools were reported as either speaking English "not well" or "not at all." Similar patterns have been identified in several areas of Houston. It is not clear whether or not immigrants have been denied enrollment in HISD schools and what percent of Hispanic dropouts are recent immigrants. Anecdotal data suggest that this is a major issue in several HISD subdistricts. Hispanics may be underrepresented as dropouts due to policies adopted at some schools.

Hispanic Subgroups

One of the problems in addressing the Hispanic dropout problem is the grouping of students as Hispanic. Hispanics come from a variety of countries, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Hispanics are of Native-American, European, and African heritage and represent a combination of cultures. Hispanics are rich and diverse in race and culture - some speak English and Spanish as well as other languages. Some Hispanics are U.S. born or born in U.S. territories while others are immigrants - recent immigrants and undocumented immigrants to the United States of America. There is little data to determine how many Hispanics are members of each of the subgroups in HISD or the actual completion rates and dropout rates of subgroups.

Research indicates that the education level of the parents affects children in a number of ways including the ability of the parents to provide academic support to the children, to communicate with teachers and school personnel and to understand district educational policies and requirements. In addition, education is strongly tied to income. Low income affects each family's ability to provide proper resources needed for children to be successful in school.

There are data regarding the following subgroups of Hispanics:

Mexican Americans. Second and later generations of Mexican Americans drop out at a similar rate as African Americans; however, when issues such as socioeconomic background are factored in, the difference is statistically insignificant. More than 45.7 percent of U.S. born Hispanics have attended college and 15.4 percent hold college or advanced degrees.

Cubans/South Americans. Cubans/South Americans are generally from a higher socioeconomic background than other Hispanics. The Rice University study indicates that the number of Cuban/South Americans in Houston with college or advanced degrees is greater than Caucasians. More than 64.8 percent of Cubans/South Americans have attended college and more than 36 percent have completed college or advanced degrees.

Mexican Immigrants. The more recent the immigration status and the older the child at the time of immigration, the greater probability of dropping out. Although the schools are not responsible for a child's immigration status, it appears that undocumented Hispanics drop out at an alarming rate.

Not all immigrant students are at risk. Students who immigrate to the US and have a solid education foundation in their native country and come from a higher socioeconomic background have a greater likelihood of completing a high school diploma. In 2000-2001,

several of the valedictorians in HISD schools were immigrants. Only 18.9 percent of Mexican immigrants have attended college and only 6.1 percent have completed college.

El Salvador/Central America. Central America was in the throws of war during much of the period between 1980-2000. As a result, many families and individuals left their country to seek economic opportunities in the U.S. due to a shattered social infrastructure. Many students did not have a strong academic foundation. Families from Central America have the greatest high school dropout rate and lowest completion rate of all Hispanics. Immigrants from El Salvador and Central America have the lowest educational attainment of all Hispanics, only 17.8 percent have attended college and less than 3.5 percent hold college degrees.

Hispanic vs. Asian Comparative Analysis. The race/ethnic group with the lowest dropout rate is Asian, while the group with the highest dropout rate is Hispanic. Many suggest the issue is cultural and how families value education. There is little scientific data to support that assumption. Furthermore, Rice University found that both Asian and Hispanic families equally value education. The data point to disparity in the educational background of the parents and family socioeconomic status as a stronger influence. Asians enter the U.S. high levels of educational and professional skills as contrasted with Hispanic immigrants entering Harris County, Texas, with dramatic educational deficits.

Immigration laws have had a profound influence in this matter as well. Asians have been restricted and limited in being granted U.S. visas. Many Asians entered the U.S. to fill human resource needs of American companies. Most Asians entering the U.S. hold college degrees, and many have postgraduate degrees and come from middle-class families. This is contrasted with a larger group of Hispanic immigrants. The majority of Hispanic immigrants have arrived looking for work as a result of family unification or have circumvented immigration laws by entering the country without proper documentation. Many have come to fill jobs as unskilled laborers or work in low-skilled jobs.

Educational Attainment	Hispanic Immigrants	Asian Immigrants
Less than HS	54.4	8.0
HS Diploma	22.9	14.8
Some College	14.3	18.1
College Degree	6.1	34.8
Post College	2.4	24.3

Hispanic vs. Asians	HISD Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate
Asians	86.6	5.5
Hispanics	66.0	14.5

Nationally, the *Hispanic immigrant* dropout rate is three times greater than the overall Hispanic dropout rate. Variables that may have an impact on the graduation/dropout rate for immigrant students are:

- Student's age at enrollment in school;

- Student's educational attainment in home country;
- English proficiency at enrollment;
- Education of parents;
- Socioeconomic status;
- Participation in bilingual education programs; and
- Participation in an ESL program.

Students in Bilingual/English as a Second Language Programs

Not all students enrolled in ESL or bilingual programs are Hispanic, but they do comprise the majority of students in HISD multilingual programs. The earlier students enter school with language limitations and enter a bilingual education program, the greater the chance of graduating from high school. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) conducted an evaluation of HISD services to limited-English proficient students in 2000 and found that children in bilingual programs graduate at higher numbers and have a lower dropout rate than students who decline bilingual services. In addition, exited ELL students had a lower dropout rate than non-ELL students.

ESL programs are offered in middle and high schools. Students in ESL programs fair better than students who do not participate in ESL programs. In general, students in bilingual/ESL programs had higher attendance rates, lower retention rates, and a lower dropout rate than ELL students NOT enrolled in the program.

Migrant Students

Migrant students have been targeted for additional services and specialized tracking. Many migrants enter school with limited English proficiency and come from homes with low-socioeconomic status. In addition, many families are highly mobile as they follow crop schedules and work opportunities. Despite these obstacles, children of migrant families have made dramatic improvement over the years. According to the PEIMS database, the average yearly attendance rate from 1996-1997 to 2000-2001 in HISD was approximately 97 percent for migrant students in grades one through five. During the same period, the average yearly attendance rate for middle school migrant students (grades six through eight) was 94 percent and only 89 percent for high school migrant students (ninth through twelfth grade). For school years 1996-1997 to 1999-2000, these attendance rates are comparable but slightly lower than average students. Attendance is an important factor and a powerful indicator of school success.

Dropout rate and completion rate data indicate that the average migrant student dropout rate (in grades seven through twelve) was 2.4 percent, which was lower than HISD's 3.1 percent average for the same period. Between school years 1996-1997 and 1999-2000, the average graduation rate for HISD migrant students was 72.4 percent higher than for the average HISD student for that period.

Dropouts Without "At Risk" Factors

Despite the high correlation of groups to risk factors, there is a challenge in predicting dropouts. The problem with predicting dropouts is that *many dropouts do not meet any of the at risk*

criteria. While at risk criteria have a high correlation to dropouts, a number of other factors can contribute to a student's leaving school. In a national study conducted by the NCES, 53 percent of dropouts did not meet any of the at risk factors:

- 66 percent were Caucasian;
- 87 percent had an English-language home background;
- 68 percent came from two-parent families;
- 42 percent attended suburban high schools;
- 80 percent had neither children nor spouses;
- 60 percent had C averages or better; and
- 71 percent never repeated a grade.

HISD demographics and circumstances are slightly different from the national picture and other parts of the state. HISD is a large urban district with a high minority, economically disadvantaged population and has a soaring incidence of migration and mobility.

Dropout data provide some interesting anomalies. For example, white males have the highest completion rate, yet they are also most likely to drop out of school and get a GED. Nine percent of white males dropped out of school to get a GED compared to four percent of minority males.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Expand the state's definition of at risk criteria.

➢ Provide improved services to at risk students:
   – Adopt additional at risk criteria for students;
   – Identify at risk students on he basis of current and additional criteria;
   – Provide additional services to them to ensure that they stay on grade level and graduate;
   – Provide an at risk coordinator at each school, when justified, to provide additional counseling and resources to students;
   – Implement a strategy to assist at risk students to complete school; and
   – Tie funding for at risk youth to measurable objectives.

Factors that Impact Dropouts

Many of the dropout prevention and intervention models work from a perspective of the deficiency or characteristics of the student and family and overlook a weakness in or an incompatibility of the school system with regard to the needs of students. The education system worked fine for most of us and for most of the students in school, but there is growing concern that schools must be restructured to become more successful to meet the needs of the current population and the changing requirements of the economic system. Research also indicates that dropout rates are associated with various characteristics of the schools themselves, such as the size of the school, level of resources, degree of support for students with academic or behavior problems, school climate, school policies, methods of instruction, administrative procedures, and actions of school personnel.

Large Schools vs. Small Schools

A summary of the research on school size and its effect on various aspects of schooling found that in terms of dropout rates or graduation rates, small schools tended to have lower dropout rates than large schools. Of the 10 research documents that were summarized, nine revealed differences favoring or greatly favoring small schools, while the tenth document reported mixed results. The small learning communities and small school movements have considerable data supporting this aspect of school restructuring and its impact on student achievement.

School Climate

For many children who come from a low-socioeconomic background, it is difficult for them to visualize completing high school and pursuing a college career, especially if the aspirations of college are not reinforced in the home. The rising cost of education and the need to meet immediate financial concerns overshadow the immense benefits of a college education. Educators need to reinforce the benefits of college and help students establish vision from early ages. In addition, students and parents need to be counseled and instructed in a post-high school plan from middle school. This plan should include:

- Recognizing the economic benefits of a post-high school, college or university education;
- Understanding academic requirements;
- Developing a savings plan and financial aid;
- Providing testing schedules for college entrance exams such as PSAT, SAT, ACT; and
- Arranging college visits.

There are a number of issues with school climate that cause students to feel unwelcome or to feel threatened at school. These reasons may be based on each student's experiences or perceptions and include:

- Safety/violence – fear of gangs, bullying and intimidation by another student or groups of students.
- Race/culture – when a student is a minority race/culture compared to the school population.
- Language barriers – when a student does not speak English and is unable to communicate in his/her native language.
- Individual teachers or administrators (bias and racism) – actions by school personnel that give students a feeling of being mistreated or treated unfairly.
- Non-compliance with school/district policy – students that are not suspended or expelled but told that they are no longer welcomed at the school campus.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Develop an internal school assessment model to evaluate a school's climate, practices, performance and other factors that may impact the graduation/dropout rate. This model should include data, such as:
  - Attendance rate;

- Retention rate;
- School choice ratio (number of zoned students attending other schools; and number of nonzoned students attending school);
- Percentage of special population (English Language Learners, Special Education, low Socioeconomic Status);
- Ratio of special population teachers to students;
- Graduation rate;
- Entered post secondary college rate;
- Annual dropout rate by grade level;
- PSAT/SAT/ACT scores and percent of students taking exams;
- Number of transfers to alternative schools;
- Number of suspensions/expulsions;
- Number of students engaged in extracurricular activities;
- Level of parental involvement;
- Incidence of school violence;
- Number of Texas Scholars;
- Teacher/principal turnover rate;
- Teacher attendance rate; and
- At risk completion rate.

Engaging Nonperforming Students

Most magnet programs, school sports, and clubs require a passing grade or higher grade point average in order for students to participate. This policy may be excluding students most in need of alternative forms of engagement. There may be negative effects of *no pass no play*, and schools may need to find alternative ways to engage students.

After-School Extended Day and Extended-Year Programs

The United States has the lowest number of school attendance days of any industrialized country. HISD students attend from 176 to 180 days per year and attend fewer than eight hours of school per day. With increased academic requirements, schools have cut many nonacademic classes and activities.

Other countries, such as China and Japan, have much longer school days. Students in those countries attend as many as 10 hours per day and attend classes on Saturdays. The school year is 10 months or more. This may account for as many as 35 additional instructional days.

Many charter schools have incorporated additional seat time or attendance requirements in order to assist students in mastering academic content and incorporate other extracurricular activities. Other schools offer after-school programs that include tutorials and extracurricular activities that help develop student talents and academic skills.

Many extended-week and extended-year programs offer children a chance to catch up, keep up, and expand their interests at school. In addition, these programs allow children to be in a safe environment during the critical hours of 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

School Curricula

A large number of students are leaving school early because they did not like school. Results of the surveys conducted on the HISD Web site indicate a need to make school more interesting for students. The following are the top four reasons why children leave:

1. Quality of education;
2. Relevance of curricula;
3. Student disinterest; and
4. Alternative career choice.

High-Stakes Testing

Texas and other states are now requiring students to pass high-stakes exams as a prerequisite for entering the next grade or graduating from high school. Some researchers wonder whether such testing policies will compound the dropout problem among groups that are struggling in the educational system. Testing can indeed be a valuable tool, providing insight on student performance and sometimes providing teachers with more information they can use to improve instruction and academic achievement. Testing is also a useful tool for school accountability. When used improperly, however, it can produce negative outcomes that can have the greatest impact on at risk students. Because many states have only recently begun to use high-stakes exams, limited scientific evidence exists to determine what effects, if any, they have on dropout rates. Issues of concern in high-stakes testing include racial and cultural bias, performance by certain students that do not test well or suffer high levels of test stress and anxiety, and test content.

There are other concerns about the quality of tests many states are using, their influence on the curriculum, and the negative effects of these high-stakes tests on student placement and opportunities to learn. There is also concern about the unintended consequences of incentive systems that reward or sanction schools based on average student scores rather than value-added assessments of student growth. These approaches may create incentives to push low-scorers into special education, and encourage them to drop out, so that schools' average scores will look better. Evidence of rising dropout rates in Georgia, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas has been tied to the effects of grade retention, student discouragement, and school exclusion and transfer policies stimulated by high-stakes tests. While the number of students failing the exit exam is low, there is concern that testing has more negative influence at younger ages.

Texas has relied primarily on test-based accountability. More successful reforms have emphasized the use of standards for teaching and learning to guide investments in better-prepared teachers, higher-quality teaching, more performance-oriented curriculum and assessment, better- designed schools, more equitable and effective resource allocations, and more diagnostic supports for student learning.

In a review of HISD 2000-2001 student leaver records, 154 students failed the exit-level TAAS. TAKS was recently introduced, and the district will not receive data on the student pass rates until 2004.

School Policies and Procedures that Impact Potential Dropouts

There are a number of school policies and procedures that have an impact on potential dropouts:
- Zero tolerance, criminalization of student behavior;
- Referral to alternative schools;
- Enrollment process;
- Hours of operation;
- Attendance policies;
- Carnegie credits;
- Errors in documentation;
- Policy vs. student needs; and
- Age limitations.

Mobility, Migration, and Population Growth

Harris County, Texas, is listed as a county with one of the nation's highest mobility rates. The average American changes residence once every five years; Harris County residents may change residence once every four years, and persons living in apartments are changing at least every two years. Low-income families and Hispanics are changing residence more often. While a number of residents (57 percent) move within the county, many are moving to different school attendance zones. Some people who change residence stay within the same neighborhoods, but some HISD school zones do not adhere to neighborhood boundaries.

Houston is the the fourth fastest growing large city in the U.S. with a two percent growth rate per year according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Texas State Data Center is projecting Houston to grow at a rate of 2.3 percent for the next 20 years. Some urban planners project Houston to grow by 60 percent or by an additional two million people by 2020.

Five Fastest-Growing U.S. Cities with Populations of 1 Million or More in 1998, Ranked by Growth Rate

Rank	City	1998 Population	1990 Population	Change Number	1990-1998 Percent
1	Phoenix, AZ	1,198,064	988,015	210,049	21.3
2	San Antonio, TX	1,114,130	976,514	137,616	14.1
3	San Diego, CA	1,220,666	1,110,623	110,043	9.9
4	Houston, TX	1,786,691	1,654,348	132,343	8.0
5	Dallas, TX	1,075,894	1,007,618	68,276	6.8

HISD High School Mobility Rates

HISD has seen a student population growth from 191,284 students in 1990 to 211,197 in 1998. The 2001-2002 student population is approximately 210,560 students - a decline of 637 students. One explanation may be that school policies at enrollment may discourage families without documentation from enrolling. A second possibility could be that the number of open enrollment charters in the Houston area have increased over the last five years. The state has limited the

number of charter schools; many state charters are experiencing problems, and HISD will more than likely become a high-growth school district in the future.

It is important to understand that not all students enter school in kindergarten. Students enter HISD at all grade levels and throughout the school year. Houston's population continues to grow, and a significant number of new residents are expected to be immigrants. One of the many challenges for the district is to manage growth, limit school size, and meet student needs. HISD has recorded mobility rates of 40 percent or more over the past 12 years. Mobility can have a profound impact on student achievement. Mobility, especially for young children, may cause additional stress as students struggle to orient themselves to the school work and integrate themselves socially. Research suggests that mobility for students in high school can be a significant factor contributing to the dropout problem. Schools with high mobility rates may need to implement programs and services to address the potential negative impact to students particularly in areas with high concentrations of apartment dwellers.

Students who move during the school year may have an increased probability of dropping out, particularly if students change residence during high school. Locating dropouts is a challenge for many HISD schools. The district loses thousands of students because of relocation - among them are 673 high school students who left the district and whose whereabouts are unknown. HISD schools reported that a large number of graduating seniors were never freshman (ninth graders) at their respective high schools. It is unclear how many of these students attended other HISD schools. Research indicates that high mobilty is a factor contributing to the dropout rate and merits closer study by the district.

The 2000-2001 mobility rates for HISD's 23 comprehensive high schools are as follows:

High School	Mobility Rate (percent)
Austin	28.8
Bellaire	10.6
Chavez	29.4
Davis	31.6
Furr	30.5
Houston	24.1
Jones	25.1
Kashmere	29.3
Lamar	15.5
Lee	35.0
Madison	26.2
Milby	23.7
Reagan	25.4
Scarborough	23.5
Sharpstown	31.1
Sterling	28.2
Waltrip	19.8
Washington	27.6
Westbury	28.4
Westside	23.7
Wheatly	40.1

Worthing	20.4
Yates	29.7

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Study the mobility issue and its impact on student success.

➢ Develop initiatives aimed at addressing mobility-related problems affecting student achievement.

Giftedness and Dropouts

While the issue of high school dropouts has received much attention, the subject of dropouts among gifted and talented students has not been adequately addressed in research studies. Many of the at risk criteria assume a student is performing poorly in school or has educational deficiencies. There are a number of students who drop out that have exceptional educational skills yet do not complete high school. Students may be unchallenged at school, bored with school, or lack a feeling of connectedness to school. Others may have family, income, or occupational interests ouside of school that influence their decision to leave school.

Two studies were conducted by NCES, The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 and the Second Follow-up Dropout Questionnaire. Both sought to obtain specific information about gifted dropouts regarding their reasons for leaving school, parent reactions, use of time, future career plans, relationships with parents and peers, and self-concept.

The results from the studies indicated that:

- Many gifted students left school because they were failing school, didn't like school, got a job, or were pregnant, although there are many other related reasons;
- Most parents, whose gifted child dropped out of school, were not actively involved in their child's decision to drop out of school;
- Many gifted students who dropped out of school participated less in extracurricular activities;
- Few gifted students who dropped out of school had plans to return to school;
- Gifted students who dropped out of school had higher self-concepts than nongifted students who dropped out of school;
- Many gifted students who dropped out of school were from low-socioeconomic status families and racial minority groups;
- Gifted students who dropped out of school had parents with low levels of education;
- Gifted students who dropped out of school had used marijuana more than gifted students who completed school; and
- Dropout behavior for gifted students was significantly related to students'

46

educational aspirations, pregnancy or child-rearing, gender, father's highest level of education, and mother's highest level of education.

Retention

"Stop social promotion -- holding students back should ultimately help children" is a sentence that is popular politically and sounds logical. If a student performs poorly one year, then repeating the grade gives him or her a second chance to catch up. Most struggling students do not respond that way, even if educators wish they would. Research on grade retention suggests that failing a student, particularly in the critical ninth-grade year, is the single largest predictor of whether the student drops out. Unless accompanied by targeted and intensive support and intervention, this practice yields no academic gains for the retained students, results in huge management problems, and financially taxes the school system.

Students' past school performance is also related to the likelihood of dropping out of school. For example, research shows that students with a history of poor academic achievement, evidenced by low grades and poor test scores, are more likely to drop out than students who have a history of academic success. In addition, students who are average for their grade or have repeated a grade are more likely to drop out. One study found that students who had repeated a grade as early as kindergarten through fourth grade were almost five times as likely to drop out of school than those who had not. The odds of students who had repeated a later grade (5-8) dropping out were almost 11 times greater than those students who had never repeated these grades. Cumulative research on the effects of retention shows that the negative effects usually outweigh the positive effects. The National Association of School Psychologists notes the following among the negative effects:

- Most children do not "catch up" when held back.
- Although some retained students do better at first, these children often fall behind again in later grades.
- Students who are held back tend to get into trouble, dislike school, and feel badly about themselves more often than children who go on to the next grade.
- The weakened self-esteem that usually accompanies retention plays a role in how well the child may cope in the future.
- Research has shown that children view the thought of flunking a grade to be almost as stressful as the death of a parent or blindness.

Retention is more common for boys, minorities, and students with low socioeconomic status. Widespread retention further exacerbates the racial achievement gap. Research suggests that even when controlling for demographic and family background characteristics, previous school performance, and pre-high school attitudes and ambitions, forcing students to repeat a grade contributes substantially to the likelihood that they will eventually drop out. In one study, sophomores who repeated at least one grade were twice as likely to drop out of school than students who were never retained.

Research also suggests that students who are retained are more likely to drop out of school, regardless of academic performance, behavioral problems, family background or attendance. The relationship between retention and dropout has been studied extensively and indicates an

increased incidence of students leaving school early. Students who are retained have a more than 40 percent increased risk of dropping out, while students who are retained twice have a 90 percent increased risk of dropping out.

Students are retained for a number of reasons that may be based on subjective observations, documented student performance, and school policy. Reasons for retention include:

- Academic failure (especially reading grades one through six and credit course failure grades nine through twelve);
- Poor reading and math skills;
- Immaturity;
- Frequent moves or absences;
- Limited English skills;
- Poor performance on standardized tests;
- School system retention policies; and
- Teacher/principal attitudes regarding retention.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Implement a plan to reduce grade retentions and keep students at the age appropriate grade level.
  – Identify problems that may impede learning and implement intervention strategies at the earliest signs of poor learning development and academic performance from their students.
  – Align student assessment (grades) with course objectives.
  – Identify barriers that cause learning and performance difficulties.
  – Ensure that instructional approaches are student-focused and aligned with course content.
  – Determine if there is a student/teacher conflict.
  – Determine if there is a physical/health issue.
  – Determine if there are emotional issues affecting student learning.
  – Determine if there are family/home issues.
  – Test for learning disabilities, if appropriate.

➢ Provide tutoring and individualized instruction for all schools.
  – Provide counseling.
  – Extend days for instruction and make-up for absences and class work.
  – Conduct testing and assessment to determine if a student has learning disabilities.
  – Monitor attendance.
  – Provide family counseling.
  – Allow students to prepare projects that demonstrate knowledge and skills as make-up work.
  – Provide accelerated instruction/credit recovery.
  – Include competency-based testing options for a comprehensive exam.
  – Employ methods to engage students and reward performance.

– Identify weak or ineffective instructional approaches or determine if the teacher is prepared to provide instruction.

Special Education

Numerous citations in the literature depict the typical dropout as a person with a wide-range of learning problems. Despite the recent growth of literature concerning high school dropouts, only a handful of studies have focused on the higher than average incidence of dropping out among students with handicaps. The Eighth Annual Report to Congress (U.S. Department of Education, 1986) suggests that although many students with handicaps may graduate from school, others exit prior to the completion of their secondary program.

Recent state and follow-up studies confirm this unexplainable attrition rate among students with handicaps. These studies strongly suggest that the dropout rate among students receiving special education services exceed the dropout rate among the general school-age population. Schools conducting retrospective examination of the records of students who left school prior to graduation found 25-80 percent of the students who dropped out might have been eligible for special education services. Other studies indicate that among handicapped students, the dropout rate for special education students is five to six times the rate of those without handicaps. This may be compounded with students that are limited English speakers.

The implications of these findings have special significance for educational policy and practice. More systematic procedures for identifying potential dropouts and better follow-through in providing comprehensive programs that retain students with handicaps must be addressed. Previous studies show that dropout-prone students need to be identified early enough in their school careers to allow some form of positive intervention to be initiated before they enter high school. There is a need for a systematic approach to identifying potential dropouts long before their entry into high school. In addition, it is suggested that more specialized guidance and counseling services be made available to these students prior to their entry into high school, at the time of entry, and throughout their high school careers.

Research suggests that students who are mildly handicapped and capable of being mainstreamed are at greater risk of dropping out, especially those identified as learning disabled, mentally retarded, emotionally handicapped, and hearing, speech, or health impaired. While students with more severe handicaps tend to be captives of the system, students with multiple handicaps who are predominantly educated in self-contained classrooms are much less likely to drop out than their nonhandicapped and mildly handicapped peers.

Based on these findings, it may be necessary to reevaluate the effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEP), the IEP planning process, and the degree to which special education can effectively provide individualized attention in the least restrictive environment. The early introduction of goals and objectives that address methods of student retention and transition-related services may be needed.

Absenteeism and Truancy

Research shows a high correlation of absences in early grades to the likelihood of dropouts in later grades. While there are legitimate reasons for children to miss school, many of the cases of

excessive absences and truancy in early grades are matters of parental neglect or complacency. Truancy is the first gauge of problems in the home. Some of the strategies to reduce truancy include:

- Deal with truancy as a parental problem. Parents should be informed of their children's absences, and the compulsory school laws, regulations and policies.
- Notify parents immediately of their children's absences.
- Allow truancy officers to conduct home visits to locate truant children.
- Refer children and families to appropriate social service agencies to address issues at the home that may affect the student health and well being.
- Provide counseling services to the child to determine if there are school experiences that are adversely affecting the student (such as learning disabilities, relationships with classmates or teachers, or transportation issues).
- Require students to attend after-school or Saturday classes to make up for lost instruction and assignments.
- Value good attendance and punctuality. Teachers should continue to model behavior and enforce school attendance policies, particularly in the early grades. Teachers should also encourage students to attend school and promote school through personal attention. How students feel about teachers and classes, their interest in class, or their perceived relevance of the material impacts attendance in middle and high school. Schools may want to monitor attendance by teachers to identify school-based problems.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Establish districtwide, standardized practices for monitoring and responding to student attendance/truancy issues.
 - Develop strategies that deal with students who have high absenteeism.

The Houston Independent School District's Efforts

Today's knowledge-based economy requires workers who know how to continue learning, who can solve problems, who can work on teams and communicate effectively. However, these are not the skills being taught in most American high schools today. Instead, schools still are using a model developed 100 years ago to train students to work in a manufacturing economy. No other industry uses 100-year-old tools.

Realizing this, the previous Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rod Paige, and Chief of Staff for Educational Services, Dr. Susan Sclafani, met with The Houston Annenberg Challenge (now the Houston A+ Challenge) in 1998 to discuss forming a partnership to reform HISD high schools. The top administration felt that substantial reform efforts had been made at the elementary and middle levels and the focus needed to be on high schools. From these meetings came the "Transforming High Schools" initiative piloted at Reagan High School. Three years later, the partnership of HISD and Houston Annenberg Challenge applied for and received the Carnegie Corporation's *Schools for a New Society* grant.

The *Schools for a New Society* grant, with primary funding from the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has as its goal to transform all of the 24 comprehensive
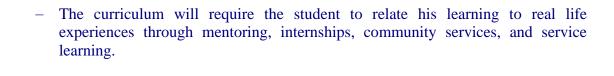
factory-model high schools into 21st Century Learning Centers. These centers will emphasize a rigorous academic curriculum and real-world experience for all students. The initiative involves systemic change at the community, district, and school levels that will personalize the learning environment for all students, while also providing all students with the essential high-level of skills and knowledge they need to prosper in the Information Age.

The goal is to recreate schools so that they:

- Increase student graduation rates;
- Enroll more students in college-bound tracks;
- Enroll more students in Advanced Placement courses;
- Focus on literacy to lower the number of graduates who need remediation in college;
- Increase teacher professional development;
- Increase teacher knowledge and skills in content areas; and
- Provide real-world experience through mentorships, internships and service learning.

The implementation of *Schools for a New Society* will take three years. Presently, the initiative is in the second year of implementation. Eighteen schools have received funding and all 24 high schools actively participate in the planning and professional development. In 2002-2003, nine high schools are implementing smaller learning communities, with another eight high schools planning to implement the concept next school year.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Expand its current high school improvement model to all grade levels, which includes, setting high expectations, personalizing the learning environment, providing adult advocacy for each student, managing an effective teacher student ratio, aligning the curriculum between course and across grade levels, and providing real-world experiences to students.
- Students will choose a theme-based smaller learning community of no more than 300 students in which they take all core subjects, plus a theme-based elective, with a common set of teachers. Students will be in the smaller learning community for a minimum of two years.
- The advocate is a certified staff person who regularly meets with the student, oversees his or her four-year plan, knows and communicates with the parents, and provides a person with whom the student and parent are comfortable in discussing issues and problems.
- The advocate remains with the student throughout his or her high school career.
- Schools will set teacher-student load per semester at no more than 70 students, which allows for more individualized attention to student needs.
- All teachers will possess a variety of instructional strategies from which they provide instruction that is meaningful and allows for a maximum of active participation by the student.
- The structure of the TEA curriculum framework answers three basic questions:
  - What do students need to know?
  - How do schools know that a student knows it?
  - What do schools do when students do not know it?

- The curriculum will require the student to relate his learning to real life experiences through mentoring, internships, community services, and service learning.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Trends and Dropout Prevention

Ascertaining dropout and completion rates is dependent on the definition for each term. Because the state of Texas uses definitions differing from many other states and the Department of Education, it has been difficult to arrive at common formulas for dropout or completion rates. Because of these numerous definitions, contradictions seemingly appear. For example, the Texas Education Agency states that the attrition rate for the class of 2001 for Texas was 36 percent (47 percent Hispanics, 43 percent African Americans and 26 percent Caucasians). The TEA also states that the graduation rate for the class is 81.1 percent and a dropout rate of 6.2 percent. For the class of 2001 for HISD, TEA states the graduation rate was 72 percent, with 12.7 percent dropouts. However, the class began in 1997-98 with 11,918 first-time ninth graders and in 2001 graduated 7,089 students (59.5 percent). IDRA states the attrition rate for Harris County for this class was 46 percent (52 percent African Americans, 29 percent Caucasians, and 60 percent Hispanics). The discrepancy is due to the definitions that determine who is counted.

Because Texas law holds schools accountable for dropouts, TEA has a very limited definition of dropout. TEA does not want to hold schools accountable for situations they cannot control. Although very understandable, the resulting figures produced for the dropout rate and completion rate do not reflect a great number of students who are leaving high school without a diploma or an equivalent. In addition, the committee found the student tracking systems used by the schools to be full of errors and misreporting, thereby affecting the data collected by TEA. Combined, it is not surprising that the data support the idea that the TEA data are not truly reflective. Specifically, the Federal Reserve Board, Southwest, recently found evidence that although the percentage of high school graduates in Texas was increasing, it was doing so at a slower rate than other states over the last five years. Texas has moved from 37 to 43 in state rankings for percentage of graduates.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports annual dropout rates for the state and school districts based on a dropout definition that is nationally accepted. In doing so, the report produces rates that can be compared to other states. It includes many categories of school leavers that have been removed from the TEA dropout definition for accountability evaluation purposes. While there are numerous methods for computing dropout rates and the NCES method has its faults, the committee believes adopting the national standard would give a basis for comparative analysis and measurement of trends in a uniform manner. There is currently a bill in the Texas Legislature that accommodates needed changes in the education code and is expected to pass into law.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

- Adopt the NCES definitions for dropout rate and completion rate.
  - Adoption of NCES definitions would give a more realistic view of the graduation and completion rate, as well as the dropout problem.
  - The NCES definition of dropouts includes a number of categories not considered dropouts by TEA.

- ➢ Implement an electronic student tracking system that allows schools to more accurately follow their students within, and between districts, in the region and state.
  - – Establish an internal tracking system and uniformly defined data fields to identify long-term longitudinal trends within the district as it relates to leavers, completion rates, and dropout rates - using a strict definition as provided below.
  - – The committee found that a vast number of students are very mobile within and between districts, yet no tracking system exists with the capacity to move records rapidly and accurately between districts.
  - – As the system is developed, some things to bear in mind are that the dropout issue is not solely a high school problem and that perhaps it would help to extend the data tracking downward to the first grade and that students are eligible to attend high school until the age of 21.

- ➢ Adopt an internal K-12 definition of dropout.
  - – A student who is enrolled in an HISD school and who does not fall into one of the following categories will be considered a *dropout*:
    - • Is currently enrolled in an HISD school pursuing a course of study resulting in a high school diploma;
    - • Graduates from high school;
    - • Continues school the year following graduation of his class;
    - • Has entered college early pursuing a college degree;
    - • Has transferred out of HISD before graduation date and there is documented enrollment in a public or private school, K-8, or an accredited institution which grants high school diplomas (in-state, out-of-state, foreign, public or private); and/or
    - • Has died.

- ➢ Conduct a study that looks at a K-12 completion rate.

- ➢ Study dropout rates to reflect each grade levels, from kindergarten to grade 12.

- ➢ Make a clear distinction between students who receive a high school diploma and those who receive an equivalent when using completion rate data.

- ➢ Require students who leave school (drop out) to complete a dropout survey.

- ➢ Administer an exit survey to every senior eligible for graduation or to those students who leave school.

- ➢ Advocate to the state an incentive system to recover students who have dropped out.

- ➢ Advocate to the state to review and simplify leaver codes.

- ➢ Advocate to the state to reevaluate its accountability system.

Student Support Initiatives

Recognizing that a positive school climate has a profound impact on student success, all adolescents need supportive communities that provide them with the resources needed to stay in school and graduate. Students at risk of dropping out have an even greater need for these resources; without the support provided by effective, committed organizations and individuals, they are far more likely to suffer their statistically predicted fate.

HISD has a number of programs and initiatives to reduce the dropout rate. One report indicates more than 156 initiatives. While multiple approaches to dropout prevention exist, many experts believe that dropout programs should be tailored to the needs of the student population being served. Although the problem has long been recognized, efforts to reduce the number of dropouts showed mixed results. A variety of state, local, and private programs are available to assist youth who are at risk of dropping out of school. These programs range in scope from small-scale supplementary services that target a small group of students, such as mentoring or counseling services, to comprehensive school-wide restructuring efforts that involve changing the entire school to improve educational opportunities for all students. Three local programs have received national recognition for their impact on school dropouts. They are The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, in which older children tutor younger children; Project GRAD, a comprehensive school reform model that provides integrated programs for kindergarten through twelfth grade students; and Communities In Schools, Houston (CISH), a program that provides a variety of student and family support programs.

HISD is rich in community and business partnerships. Partnerships reviewed focus on providing an array of supportive services to students and their families, including counseling, health care, adult education, and recreation programs. The private sector offers mentoring and tutoring programs, internships, and an array of social services. By building partnerships with business, nonprofits, and other organizations, the district hopes to maximize resources in ways that would strengthen young people and their families. There are considerable efforts underway in HISD, but there is a lack of uniform efforts with strong evaluation components. Programs have been characterized as random acts of improvements and may lack a coordinated strategic effort. The committee realizes that there are numerous programs funded, and/or sponsored by the district, external government, and community sources, as well as those funded through the private sector.

Dropout prevention initiatives are limited in the degree to which they address family-related factors associated with dropping out, such as income. They focus mainly on student-related factors, such as low grades and absenteeism. Some schools offer intervention with food and clothing assistance. While dropout prevention programs can vary widely, they tend to cluster around three main approaches:

- Providing supplemental services to a targeted group of students who are at risk of dropping out is one approach used by many of the observed programs. Some of the more common supplemental services include mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and social support services, which operate either during the school day or after school. These services aim to improve student academic performance, self-image, and sense of well-being;

- Different forms of alternative education are offered for students who do not do well in regular or traditional classrooms. These are efforts to create different learning environments for students; and

- School-wide restructuring efforts for all students is another approach often taken.

National Dropout Prevention Center

Although federal funding for dropout prevention programs has been inconsistent, the National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) has existed for 15 years and is privately funded. NDPC manages a database that provides program profiles, including contact information, for model programs located throughout the country.

NDPC developed a list of effective strategies and information on self-reported model programs. The NDPC is completely self-funded through memberships, grants, and contracts, but does not have sufficient resources to: (1) disseminate information that is available on its database of promising dropout prevention programs and practices, and (2) thoroughly review programs included in its model program listing. NDPC relies on its Web site to communicate information about effective dropout prevention practices to districts, and its data are based on voluntary submissions of program descriptions and promising practices by its members and other experts in the dropout prevention field. NDPC has identified 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the dropout rate. These strategies have been implemented successfully at all education levels and environments throughout the nation and focus on early intervention, improving education, improving the school experience and community involvement.

Early Intervention

1. *Family Involvement* - Research consistently finds that family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.

2. *Early Childhood Education* **-** The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience.

3. *Reading/Writing Programs* **-** Early interventions are used to help low-achieving students recognize that focusing on reading and writing skills is the foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.

Basic Core Strategies

1. *Mentoring/Tutoring* – Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between mentor and mentee, based on trust.
2. *Service-Learning* – This strategy combines community service with learning activities and is characterized by integrating the academic curriculum with a structured time for organized service experiences that meet actual community needs.
3. *Alternative Schooling* – Alternative schools today are designed to provide alternatives to dropping out of school, with special attention to the student's individual social needs and

the academic requirements for a high school diploma. Alternative schools exist at all levels of K-12.

Making the Most of Instruction

1. *Professional Development* – Teachers who work with at risk youth need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they continue to develop skills, techniques, and knowledge.

2. *Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences* – When educators show students that there are different ways to learn, students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners. When educators use multiple intelligences and learning styles to teach the curriculum, they find more students achieve success.

3. *Instructional Technologies* – Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction, which engages students in authentic learning, addresses multiple intelligences, and adapts to student learning styles.

4. *Individualized Instruction* – A customized individual program allows at risk students flexibility with the curriculum. It is a strategy that focuses on a one-to-one learning environment.

Making the Most of a Wider Community

1. *Systemic Renewal* – A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives will provide an organizational structure that allows each school to develop a learning environment that ensures a quality of education for all students.

2. *Community Collaboration* – When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, an infrastructure is created that provides a caring, supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.

3. *Career Education/Workforce Readiness* – Workforce readiness programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to meet the larger demands of today's workplace.

4. *Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution* – Students who don't feel safe at school will not want to stay in school. Dealing with conflict constructively is a skill that, when adopted into a school's culture, will provide a safe environment for learning.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➢ Create more alternative and intervention programs that support students in achieving their educational goals.

➢ Create a database of existing programs and initiatives.
  – Establish a database and/or determine the most effective means of disseminating the programmatic information to all stakeholders.

- Develop a specific, descriptive survey instrument to be disseminated to all HISD principals addressing such areas as health initiatives, counseling and supportive guidance, career and technical studies, and classroom for-credit courses for dropout prevention programs.
- Instruct principals to list all of their programs and/or strategies on the survey instrument. The HISD Superintendent of Schools should send a letter to all principals requesting that they participate in this process.
- Responses will be compiled in a database to establish a baseline for each school.

➢ Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs.
- HISD will engage an external evaluator to perform a program-by-program analysis to determine program effectiveness in reducing the district's dropout rates.
- A description of each program analyzed, as measured through evaluations and supporting data, should be included in the study.
- These programs should be categorized by grade level and mission, (i.e., prevention, intervention, recovery, and/or reengagement).
- Information about programs deemed effective should be disseminated as best practices to principals for consideration and inclusion in their campus plans.
- Completion of the evaluation for the 2002 academic year should be scheduled for January 2004.

➢ Create directories of community resources and referrals for students, parents, and school and district administrators.
- The directories should be distributed at events such as orientations, PTA meetings, and/or with student report cards.
- HISD should mandate an annual training at each campus for effective utilization of the school and community resources in the directories; these trainings could be conducted at faculty meetings or in-service trainings.
- At the high school level, the mandated trainings should be conducted in partnership with an adult advocacy program.

➢ Create a school climate that embraces students, parents, faculty and staff, and visitors.
- Each campus should address school culture and climate in its annual campus plan.
- Each campus should conduct student and parent focus groups that address the school climate. The data will be a baseline for positive school climate and a strategic plan for implementation of means to increase positive school climate.
- Each campus must invite and encourage student participation in campus leadership.

Data Quality

The quality of data collection is vital to a school's operation. It not only is tied to compliance but also has significant financial and funding implications. In addition, data quality (DQ) can be a reflection of school operations and how school personnel interact with students. Obtaining,

inputting, and maintaining data are vital parts of school operations and encompass student records for enrollment, registration, attendance, academic record keeping, leaver coding, testing, services to special populations, and graduation requirements.

Recent incidences in undercounting dropouts in HISD schools can undermine district efforts and initiatives and have an adverse impact on the district's image and the public's perception.

Decentralization has been underway since 1995, and data quality has suffered during this period, causing the district to lose significant funding. The district has maintained close control of finances with centralized budgeting and other fiscal controls. But DQ compliance and other record keeping have lacked the appropriate and requisite checks and balances. In addition, when problems have been identified, personnel reviewing data have had little authority to remedy apparent discrepancies. Also, there does not appear to be an adequate system of rewards and consequences. Clearly, some school personnel underestimate the importance of DQ. DQ is a combination of efforts that includes administrative responsibility, record keeping and data input, but most importantly reflects a process of serving children. Schools must have DQ teams that foster communication and coordination within the district to ensure that the highest standards are met. In addition, there should be clearly written descriptions of roles and responsibilities.

DQ becomes more challenging at the high school level than in earlier grades. Not only are elementary schools smaller, they have considerably fewer reporting requirements than high schools. Elementary school parents of students in early grades are responsible for enrolling their children in school. As a child gets older more of the enrollment process is entrusted to the student. Information gathered at enrollment has a direct impact on the ability of the school to follow up on students who leave school, determine absences or truancy, and communicate with parents.

Of concern to the committee are incidences of breakdowns in the academic reporting regarding graduation. There are cases when either (1) students believe they have graduated and have not met all requirements or (2) students have completed all graduation requirements but, due to errors in the record keeping systems, were not properly credited. This may in part be due to high mobility, transfer of summer records, and other policies such as the number of unexcused absences. However, peer record keeping may also be a factor.

The committee met with HISD's Office of Federal and State Compliance, and other HISD staff members to discuss this matter. The district is making progress in addressing DQ issues and has developed a manual, *Student Record Keeping Relating to Accountability and Compliance 2003-2004*. This manual includes important information for schools and should be implemented with staff development, training, and follow-up. An important business axiom is "people do not always do what is expected, they do what is inspected."

Data Quality and Reporting of Dropouts, Graduates, and Leavers

The school leaver data system does not have adequate safeguards against undercounting dropouts due to poor data quality or misreporting by schools. Data used to rate public school campuses undergo screening as part of an accountability system review by HISD administrators. In addition, there are limited safeguards through the newly established audit process designed to assess data integrity. Given the high stakes associated with the use of the dropout rate in the

accountability system and the absence of concern about the accuracy of the dropout data submitted by schools, the underreporting of dropouts appears to be high.

There also appears to be an underreporting of dropouts through missing in-state transfers, as well as misrepresentation of dropouts by HISD schools. TEA estimates that about 21 percent of the students reported as in-state transfers by districts could not be found in the enrollment records submitted by other districts. Districts are not required to track students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere to confirm that they do re-enroll. Documentation at the time the student withdraws from school showing the intent to enroll elsewhere has been considered sufficient evidence that the student is not a dropout under the Texas definition. This documentation is typically a withdrawal form signed by the parent, although other types of documentation are accepted. For the majority of students (79 percent), this practice has proven to be justified–the students are found in enrollment files or other data files. It is likely that some of the missing in-state transfers are the result of student records that did not match, students who instead enrolled in private schools, alternative schools, or GED preparation programs, or were being home schooled. It is also possible that some never returned to school and should be considered dropouts.

In 1995, the vast majority of students were in fact coded as "99," the code for "whereabouts unknown or not listed." While "99" is no longer the primary reason coded for leavers, it is still the most frequently utilized dropout code with 673 students coded as "99" in HISD in school year 2000-2001. The whereabouts of approximately 38 percent of students classified as dropouts are unknown. Some HISD schools are more effective at establishing internal procedures to ensure that they know where students are and why they are leaving, but many have numerous reporting deficiencies. *It is important to understand that tracking highly mobile students in and out of large urban districts is extremely complex. Schools do not have the number of experts and resources necessary to track these students with precision.*

There are two issues related to missing in-state transfers.
1. Data quality concern – that schools may be misreporting students as intending to enroll elsewhere without sufficient documentation.
2. Dropout definition concern – that students who fail to re-enroll elsewhere are never counted as dropouts.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

➤ Strengthen the quality of the data reporting process.
  – Add all students reported as in-state transfers to the dropout count, if enrollment in another school district cannot be verified.
  – Some students may be dropouts, but others may be the result of data errors or those whose status would not be considered dropping out. Other leaver codes that may be subject to abuse are: "Entered a GED program" and "left to home country."

➤ Strengthen the audit process to ensure that schools are reporting all dropouts.

- It is important that schools match student records from different data submissions, and that schools improve the quality of documentation regarding leavers/withdrawals.

➢ Establish an internal auditing team to review data quality and report directly to the Superintendent of Schools providing, input to district superintendents and principals.
  - The compliance internal auditing systems could be modeled after the system utilized in finance administration.

➢ Establish a system that incorporates checks and balances and includes provisions for rewards and sanctions as they pertain to data quality.
  - In the event of willful misrepresentation and impropriety, appropriate administrative and legal action will be implemented.
  - Revise the accountability system to include incentives for recapturing students.

➢ Coordinate with other entities that maintain a student database to access information about students and their families to follow up on students that leave the district. Entities may include the Texas Department of Human Services, Texas Workforce Commission, law enforcement agencies, and other social service agencies.

➢ Purchase software, databases and/or database services designed for similar searches, as utilized by state and social service entities.

➢ Establish procedures as they relate to the data reporting system and strengthen central district office responsibility and authority.

➢ Integrate technology to its fullest for maintaining and reporting student data at all schools.
  - Tracking students within the district and having access to proper information in real time can improve services to students and assist the district in reporting students.

➢ Identify schools with best practices and consider standardization of those practices.
  - The district should consider standard procedures and forms to document the process.
  - Established data teams at each campus should undergo training and staff development to ensure proper implementation of systems.
  - When possible, practitioners should be involved in the training and cross-training of personnel.
  - The initiative should include an information and communication campaign along with stronger enforcement, and better use of technology.

➢ Offer additional staff development to district and school administrators on data quality and compliance issues.

➢ Establish districtwide, standardized practices for monitoring and responding to student attendance/truancy issues.

- ➢ Develop stronger communication with parents and students regarding student records.
  - – Require documentation for key contact data.
  - – Encourage families to update and report changes in address and telephone.
  - – Strengthen the exit process to ensure that counselors or administrators discuss the need for students to continue their education and report the educational status of each child within one week of withdrawal.
  - – Strengthen language on withdrawal forms to stress importance and accuracy of data and highlight compulsory attendance laws.

Parental Leadership

Studies have also found that dropping out is more likely to occur among students from single-parent families and students with older siblings who have already dropped out than among counterparts without these characteristics. Other aspects of a student's home life, such as the level of parental involvement and support, parent's educational expectations, parent's attitudes about school, and stability of the family environment can also influence a youth's decision to stay in school. For example, results from the NCES study found that students whose parents were not actively involved in the school, infrequently talked to them about school-related matters, or held low expectations for their children's future educational attainment were more likely to drop out.

THE PEER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT HISD:

- ➢ Adopt an asset-based parent leadership model that provides information, improves communication, establishes dialogue, and empowers parents in all schools.
  - – Schools should ensure that school faculty, staff members, and all new employees communicate with parents and share similar language and culture.
  - – Teachers and faculty should be encouraged to continue their education to learn the language and the culture of the students they teach.
  - – All schools should improve the climate so as to welcome, respect, and engage parents.
  - – Schools should establish parent resource centers in schools that provide information in a way that parents and families can use.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The PEER Committee held a number of focus group presentations and posted a survey on HISD Connect, the HISD Web site, to gather information concerning perception of the dropout problem and recommended solutions. Feedback came from students, teachers, and parents and from the public at large via the Internet. The feedback from each group varied but focused on issues concerning students, parents, and schools.

- **In-school students** believed that students needed to work harder or that they were distracted from education because of work and obtaining material possessions such as cars.
- **Out-of-school youth** focused on poor performance in school, negative influence of peers, and poor attendance as contributing factors.
- **Teachers** focused on school-based issues, the need for smaller class sizes, and relevance of curricula. There was also a sense that more should be done in early grades and that dropouts are not only a high school problem.
- **Parents** focused on the need for more parental involvement and improved school climate and other school-based concerns.
- **Community activists** focused on issues of school climate and district policies that force students to leave school or that transfers them to alternative schools.

Results prompted the committee to focus on additional issues related to dropouts, conduct additional research, and recommend further study. In most cases, input from stakeholders is substantiated by dropout research and indicates that all stakeholders feel some responsibility with regard to addressing the dropout problem. Although there are major issues with data and controversy in dropout calculations, as highlighted in the media, none of the groups listed tracking of students as a concern. The results reinforce the position that the dropout problem is a community problem that will require a collective effort to solve.

Major recommendations from focus groups were:
- Provide mentors for at risk youth;
- Improve parental involvement; and
- Reduce class size and improve personalization.

Focus Group Survey Results

TEACHER AD HOC COMMITTEE	
What is the primary reason students drop out of school?	
a. Classes are not challenging	Total: 5
b. Low attendance	Total: 2
c. Low performance in classes	Total: 20
d. Work to support family	Total: 3
e. Pregnancy	Total: 2
STUDENT AD HOC COMMITTEE	
What is the primary reason students drop out of school?	
a. Classes not challenging/not related to real-world issues	Total: 1
b. Excessive absences	Total: 4
c. Poor performance in class	Total: 1
d. Must work to support family	Total: 3
e. Pregnancy	Total: 0
f. Lack of parental support	Total: 6
g. Overage/retained more than one year	Total: 1
h. Too much testing	Total: 0
DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
What is the primary reason students drop out of school?	
a. Classes not challenging/not related to real-world issues	Total: 5
b. Excessive absences	Total: 2
c. Poor performance in class	Total: 6
d. Must work to support family	Total: 5
e. Pregnancy	Total: 1
f. Lack of parental support	Total: 8
g. Overage/retained more than one year	Total: 4
h. Too much testing	Total: 2

Web Survey Results

In order to receive input regarding dropouts from a large audience, the PEER committee posted a survey on HISD Connect, the district's Web site. The committee wanted input from as many stakeholders as possible. The survey had more than 8,000 "hits" and nearly 3,000 respondents. The survey consisted of three multiple-choice questions regarding reasons why students drop out and strategies to keep students in school. The fourth survey question was open-ended, which allowed participants to express ideas not addressed in the survey. The comments represented a wide range of ideas, including some that were categorized into groups of general topics. The results were tallied and are listed below:

	Jan.- Feb.		March		Cumulative	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. In your opinion, what is the primary reason students drop out of school?						
Classes not challenging, not related to real-world issues	111	12.49%	155	13.08%	266	12.83%
Excessive absences	66	7.42%	84	7.09%	150	7.23%
Poor performance in class	209	23.51%	278	23.46%	487	23.48%
Must work to support family	36	4.05%	44	3.71%	80	3.86%
Pregnancy	15	1.69%	18	1.52%	33	1.59%
Lack of parental support	276	31.05%	368	31.05%	644	31.05%
Overage/retained more than one year	88	9.90%	125	10.55%	213	10.27%
Too much testing	88	9.90%	113	9.54%	201	9.69%
	889	**100%**	**1185**	**100%**	**2074**	**100%**
2. In your opinion, which action listed would be the most effective strategy to keep students in school?						
Educate parents about the need for completing school	184	20.70%	230	19.41%	414	19.96%
Provide mentors for at risk youth, K-12	312	35.10%	426	35.95%	738	35.58%
Provide tutorials/after school activities	98	11.02%	115	9.70%	213	10.27%
Reduce class-size in order to keep students from feeling isolated	295	33.18%	414	34.94%	709	34.19%
	889	**100%**	**1185**	**100%**	**2074**	**100%**
3. In your opinion, which resource would make the biggest impact for student success?						
Technology	165	18.54%	220	18.55%	385	18.55%
More counselors at all levels	156	17.53%	220	18.55%	376	18.11%
Smaller class sizes	540	60.67%	711	59.95%	1251	60.26%
Longer school day/week	29	3.26%	35	2.95%	64	3.08%
	890	**100%**	**1186**	**100%**	**2076**	**100%**
4. Do you have any other comments relating to the dropout problem?						

- 46% of respondents believe faculty/staff/counselors are the key to preventing dropouts
- 33% of respondents believe parent involvement is important to increase graduation rates
- 18% of respondents believe smaller class sizes and individualized instruction are key
- 3% of remaining respondents believe the following:
  - too much testing of students: eliminate TAKS;
  - offer more alternative and/or vocational;
  - the school/home/community connection is the key to dropout prevention; and
  - the lack of student motivation is the reason why students drop out.

NEXT STEPS

During the past eight months, the PEER Committee has vigorously looked at the complex problem to improve the high school graduation rate and reduce the dropout rate in HISD. Clearly, HISD has made great strides to address this issue. However, they have not been enough. Much more must be known and understood about the challenges for HISD students to stay in school from prekindergarten through high school. Increasing the graduation rate to 85 percent in five years can be accomplished with a coordinated effort. The effort must include business leaders, government officials, social service agencies, health professionals, colleges and universities, community-based and religious organizations, and active participation of teachers, students, and parents. In addition, all of Houston's stakeholders must renew their efforts to address this issue collectively. This multifaceted problem requires all stakeholders to come together and agree on a multifaceted solution.

There has been a steady improvement in the HISD graduation rate that is currently 72 percent. HISD has added gains of about 12 percent from school year 1999-2000 and five percent from school year 2000-2002. Most of the gains in the graduation rate have resulted from a reduction in HISD dropout rates and from the number of students still in school and obtaining a GED. In order to meet the 85 percent completion rate, HISD must reduce the dropout rate by an additional 50 percent, reduce the number of GED recipients, and increase the number of students who complete high school in four years.

	Historical Rates			*Projected Rates*				
Year	**1999-2000**	**2000-2001**	**2001-2002**	**2002-2003**	**2003-2004**	**2004-2005**	**20052006**	**2006-2007**
Graduation Rate	**59.6**	**68.5**	**72.0**	*74.0*	*77.0*	*79.0*	*84.0*	*85.0*
GED	**5.8**	**5.1**	**4.0**	*3.5*	*3.2*	*3.0*	*2.5*	*2.0*
In-school	**12.1**	**11.1**	**11.0**	*10.5*	*9.8*	*9.0*	*7.5*	*7.0*
Dropout Rate	**22.5**	**15.3**	**13.0**	*12.0*	*10.0*	*9.0*	*6.0*	*6.0*

In 2001-2002, HISD graduated 7,829 students. Approximately 10 percent, 780 students, graduated after completing five, six, or seven years in high school. In order to meet the stated goals, HISD must graduate more than 9,250 students each year. This figure represents approximately an increase of 1,400 graduates.

It is hoped that the recommendations made in this report, as well as other district initiatives, can positively impact student lives and help the district fulfill its objectives to provide a quality education for all students and to prepare them to succeed in society.

The PEER Committee has only touched the surface of the dropout issue and recognizes that this report is by no means an end in itself. There are still many unanswered questions and imminent issues that are left to discuss and resolve. However, these recommendations give HISD a foundation on which to build as Houston continues to grapple with the factors that cause students to drop out of school. "Houston *we* have a problem!" The dropout issue is everyone's problem. The community, parents, students, school and district administrators, business, and media must work together to keep Houston's students in school. The committee also realizes the monumental

task that lies ahead in putting these recommendations into action. It will take time to identify and place qualified people in leadership roles to begin implementing the recommendations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Karl, Doris Entwisle and Nader Kabbani, *The Dropout Process in Life Course Perspective: Part I, Profiling Risk Factors at Home and School*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 2000.

Cardenas, Jose A., Maria Robledo Montecel, Josie D. Supik, and Richard J. Harris, *The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Dropout Prevention Strategies for At Risk Students, Texas Researcher,* Volume 3, Winter 1992.

Cotton, Kathleen, *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance*, School Improvement Research Series, Close-Up #20, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1997.

Dynarski, Mark, Philip Gleason, Anu Rangarajan, Robert, Wood, *Impacts of Dropout Prevention Programs,* Final Report

Finn, Jeremy D. *Withdrawing From School*, Review of Educational Research, Summer 1989, Volume 59, Number 2.

Gleason, Philip, Mark Dynarski. *Do We Know Whom To Serve*: Issues in Using Risk Factors to Identify Dropouts

Greene, Jay P. *High School Graduation Rates in the United States*, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, November 2001.

High School Dropout Rates, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement

High School and Beyond. NCES, *Dropout Rates in the United States:* 2000 *Dropout Rates in the United States:* 1998

Dropout Rates in the United States: 1995, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Kemple, James J., *Career Academies: Impact on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment*, New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, December 2001.

Kemple, James J., Jason C. Snipes, *Career Academies: Impact on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School*, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, New York, 2000.

Kaufman, Philip, Denise Bradby. *Characteristics of At Risk Students in NELS:88*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 92-042,Washington, D.C., 1992.

Kaufman, Phillip, Jin Y. Kwon, Steve Klein, Christopher D. Chapman. *Dropout Rates in the United States*: *1998*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2000-022,Washington, D.C., November 1999.

Kaufman, Phillip, Martha Naomi Alt, Christopher D. Chapman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2002-114,Washington, D.C., November 2001.

Klineberg, Steven L. *Houston's Economic and Demographic Transormations: Findings from the 2002 Survey of Houston's ethnic communities*. Rice University, Houston, Texas 2002.

Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office and Texas Education Agency (2000). *Dropout study: A report to the 77th Texas Legislature.* Austin, TX.

Mathematics Policy Research, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1998. *Impacts of School Restructuring Initiatives,* Final Report.

McMillen, Marilyn. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1995*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 97-473, Washington, D.C., July 1997.

National Institute on the Education of At Risk Students, Consumer Guide, Number 16, March 1996; Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Thomas, G., *High School Graduation Trends and Patterns 1981 to 2000*, Postsecondary Education Opportunity, June 2001.

Understanding Dropouts: Statistics, Strategies, and High-Stakes Testing. Standing Committee on Educational Excellence and Testing Equity, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (2001, 66 pp.; ISBN 0-309-07602-1; available from National Academy Press.

Research and Accountability Department (2003). Completion Rate/Student Status and Dropout Rate: Class of 2001 Dropout Research Brief. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School District.

Renzulli, J. S., and , S. *Giftedness and High School Dropouts: Personal, Family, and School-related Factors* (RM02168). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Schargel, Franklin P, Smink Jay. *Strategies to Help Solve Our Dropout Problem* Eye on Education, Larchmont NY, NY Talented, University of Connecticut. 2002

GAO Report to the Honorable Jim Gibbons, US House of Representatives (2002). S*chool Dropouts, Education Could Play a Stronger Role in Identifying and Dissemination Promising Prevention Strategies.*

Texas Education Agency (2002). Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools. Austin, TX.

Wirt, John, Thomas Snyder, Jennifer Sable, Susan P. Choy, Yupin Bae, Janis Stennett, Allison Gruner, Marianne Perie. *The Condition of Education 1998*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 98-013, Washington, D.C., October 1998.

Research Brief

HISD COMPLETION RATE/STUDENT STATUS AND DROPOUT RATE: CLASS OF 2001

The Texas Education Agency produces an annual publication, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Report, that presents the condition of education throughout Texas public school districts. The AEIS provides much of the demographic and performance data on campuses and districts in the state of Texas through a variety of indicators. While these indicators provide a detailed account of Texas public schools, many indicators involve formulas that are not easily understood. Due to the complicated formulas used in the calculation of these indicators, careful consideration must be employed when interpreting the data from the AEIS. The purpose of this research brief is to familiarize the reader with the following AEIS indicators: Completion Rate/Student Status and Dropout Rate (Annual).

Completion Rate/Student Status

The AEIS report includes a Completion Rate indicator. This indicator is reported for districts and for high schools that have had continuous enrollment in grades 9 through 12 for the four years prior to the reporting year. These rates show the status of high school students after four years of enrollment. These rates are calculated as follows for the Class of 2001, who began as 9th graders in 1997–98.

1. Percent Graduated (Grad): The percentage that received a high school diploma by the end of the 2000-2001 school year.

2. Percent Received GED (GED): The percentage that received a General Educational Development certificate by the end of the 2000-2001 school year.

3. Percent Continued (Cont.) High School: The percentage enrolled as students for the 2001–2002 school year.

4. Percent Dropped Out (Drop): The percentage that dropped out and did not return by the end of the 2000-2001 school year.

As in last year's report, this latter measure is an actual four-year longitudinal rate. The four outcome percentages sum to 100% and are intended to show the status of students in their expected year of high school graduation. All four calculations use the number of 9th graders in 1997–98 *plus* transfers in *minus* transfers out as the denominator. Students who completed all high school course work but failed to pass the TAAS by the Spring of 2001 were counted as transfers out.

Table 1 shows HISD data for the Classes of 1999, 2000, and 2001. **Table 2** (see next page) shows the state data for comparison purposes. Although the percent of graduates for HISD is lower than the state's graduation rate, the percent of students that remain in school after four years is higher than the state level. Nevertheless, the district's graduation rate has improved dramatically over the last three years.

Table 1: Four-Year Completion Status for the HISD by Student Demographics											
	1999				2000				2001		
	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop
All Students	59.6	5.8	12.1	22.5	68.5	5.1	11.1	15.3	72.0	4.3	11.0	12.7
African Am.	62.3	5.0	10.0	22.7	69.3	3.9	9.7	17.1	74.2	2.9	9.2	13.7
Hispanic	51.4	5.4	16.1	27.1	63.0	5.0	14.6	17.5	66.0	4.7	14.9	14.5
White	74.9	10.2	5.6	9.4	81.0	9.6	3.8	5.6	83.1	6.9	3.5	6.6
Asian/Pac. Is.	82.5	2.8	6.9	7.8	86.8	1.5	5.7	6.0	86.6	1.7	6.2	5.5
Male	53.7	7.5	15.2	23.6	61.6	7.2	13.9	17.3	66.5	6.2	13.9	13.4
Female	65.3	4.1	9.2	21.4	74.9	3.0	8.5	13.5	77.2	2.4	8.3	12.0
Eco. Disadv.	56.1	4.4	18.5	21.0	64.4	4.0	16.2	15.4	67.7	3.1	15.2	14.0

Table 2: Four-Year Completion Status for the State by Student Demographics											
	1999				**2000**				**2001**		
	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop	Grad.	GED	Cont.	Drop
All Students	79.5	4.0	8.0	8.5	80.7	4.8	7.3	7.2	81.1	4.8	7.9	6.2
African Am.	74.7	3.1	10.6	11.6	76.9	3.5	9.7	9.9	77.7	3.3	10.6	8.4
Hispanic	70.6	3.5	12.8	13.1	72.8	4.2	11.8	11.2	73.5	4.3	12.6	9.6
White	86.2	4.6	4.2	4.9	86.7	5.6	3.6	4.0	86.8	5.8	3.9	3.5
Asian/Pac. Is.	87.4	2.2	6.3	4.2	88.8	2.3	5.5	3.5	90.0	2.0	4.9	3.1
Male	76.1	4.9	9.9	9.1	77.2	6.0	8.8	7.9	77.5	6.0	9.7	6.8
Female	83.0	3.1	6.1	7.8	84.2	3.5	5.7	6.5	84.7	3.6	6.0	5.7
Eco. Disadv.	71.3	3.8	11.8	13.1	72.6	4.7	11.2	11.6	73.2	4.6	12.3	9.9

Annual Dropout Rate

The annual dropout rate is calculated as the number of students who dropped out of the district across grades 7–12 divided by the cumulative number of students enrolled in grades 7–12 for the school year. The annual dropout rate measures dropping out of school as a single event during a given year analysis. **Table 3** shows the Annual Dropout Rate in HISD and Texas over six school years.

Table 3: Annual Dropout Rate as Calculated by TEA for HISD by Student Demographics											
	1995–96		**1996–97**		**1997–98**		**1998–99**		**1999–2000**		**2000–01**	
	HISD	State	HISD	State	HISD	State	HISD	State	HISD	State	HISD	State
All Students	4.2	1.8	2.8	1.6	3.4	1.6	3.9	1.6	3.2	1.3	1.5	1.0
African Am.	4.3	2.3	3.2	2.0	3.8	2.1	4.5	2.3	3.5	1.8	1.2	1.3
Hispanic	4.8	2.5	3.1	2.3	3.6	2.3	4.1	2.3	3.4	1.9	2.0	1.4
White	2.5	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.8	0.9	1.7	0.8	1.5	0.7	0.7	0.5
As/Pac. Is.	2.0	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.3	0.9	1.4	0.9	1.6	0.7	0.4	0.5
Male	4.4	1.9	2.9	1.7	3.4	1.6	3.9	1.6	3.4	1.4	1.5	1.0
Female	4.0	1.6	2.8	1.5	3.3	1.5	3.8	1.5	3.0	1.2	1.5	0.9
Eco. Disad.	2.8	1.7	1.8	1.6	2.2	1.6	2.3	1.5	2.1	1.3	1.4	1.0

Longitudinal Dropout Rate

Both, the four-year longitudinal dropout rate and the annual dropout rate provide useful information to districts and schools. But the two dropout rates cannot be compared. While the longitudinal dropout rate measures a single group of 9th graders spanning a four-year period, the annual dropout rate is derived from a calculation based on the population of students in grades 7–12 during one given year. The annual dropout rate measures dropping out of school as a single event during a given year. The longitudinal dropout rate, however, is determined by the 2000-2001 end-of-year status for the 1997–98, 9th grade student cohort group. If a student drops out of school at one point during the four years, he/she will be counted in the annual dropout rate. However, if the student returns to school before the end of the four years, he/she will not be counted as a dropout in the longitudinal rate.

Beginning with the 2003–04 school year, the State Board of Education approved a non-binding resolution that calls for a revision of the TEA computation of dropout data. The proposed calculation and methodology will be identical to that used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). For details, see the *Dropout Study: A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature, December 2000* (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/rider71.pdf).

Conclusion

While many of the new indicators used by TEA and HISD involve complicated formulas, they do provide a better measure of the condition of Texas public school education. Where previous indicators tend to be event based, newer indicators look at student progress over a period of years. It is evident that, while district graduation rates are improving, longitudinal dropout rates are decreasing. With continued and increased efforts by schools, parents, communities and students, HISD is confident that progress will be made and all students will complete a quality education program.

Date	Comments	Category	Category
1/23/2003	Use individual, not group, tutors to teach children to read at all grade levels.	Need Small Group/Individualized Instruction	
	All of the answers in question # 1 are reason I have heard. What I think you the committee need to do is find a way to address all on the issues in question # 1. I understand that this must been done with little money. School need to become fun again. I enjoyed going to school for the most part. The love to teach need to find it way back into our teacher. That will not be easy. Going thru school my teacher had a love for what they were going and it helped to make the school year a lot better. You have a long road ahead. Good luck to you and God Bless!	Lack of Motivated/Qualified Teachers	
	You should consider keeping the seasoned mature teachers in the classrooms. We have too many cases of child molestations in HISD. Stick with the people we know. Keep the teachers who have paid their dues, people who have lived in this community, people who have raised their children in the HISD School System. Why are we importing teachers like so much merchandise? This city is full of well-educated, well-qualified teachers. I am an educated person with a bachelor of science degree in mathematics. I have a masters' degree in mathematics' education, however I do not have a classroom or school in which to teach. There are too many politicians in HISD. We need true educators who are willing to work for reform.	Lack of Motivated/Qualified Teachers	
	Small group instruction should be evident in classrooms. Students should have access to plenty of resources, for example, dictionaries, thesauras, encyclopedias	Need Small Group/Individualized Instruction	More Classroom Resources
1/24/2003	Character education would be an excellent component to add to the curriculum. If students will look at themselves and others in a positive light, they will feel better about the world around them. Students today have low esteem and they have a lot of conflicts and pressures that prior generations did not have.	More Character Education	
	From a high school teacher's perspective, students arrive in high school unprepared. They don't have the basics..reading, writing, etc. Some are actually in school for the first time...as an older teenager, and are not literate in their native language either. Smaller class sizes will help but it won't solve the problem of the students being unprepared when they get to high school, i.e. reading at grade level, etc. We used to see 2/3 of the ninth graders just disappear. 1,000 freshman come in...only 300 of them are still there when they are seniors. I don't understand why the Texas legislature voted to require reduced class size, then HISD consistently files waivers to avoid the restriction. Too many classes are overfilled...making it difficult for the teacher to focus on anything but attendance...not on the student's progress.	Need Smaller Class Sizes	
	Dropout rates are highest among Hispanic students. I believe the support must start in re-evaluating the bilingual programs in the elementary levels. First, the consistency of implementing this program is non-existent. No checks and balances are in place to ensure proper instruction is taking place. Annual state assessments obviously are not enough. Second, rushing this population into English has built low self-esteem and confidence which affects all areas of academics. By the time these students are able to drop out and support themselves or their families, they do. My suggestion is to revisit the bilingual programs at the elementary level. Just because a school is exemplary does not mean that an effective bilingual program is being used.	Re-Evaluate Bilingual Education	
	Educate parents about requirements for college, before student reaches high school.	Parent Education	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	My husband was a high school dropout. He is very bright, but family problems seem to have decreased his motivation when he was a kid. I think the school district needs to partner more closely with the family in helping at-risk kids. Perhaps these kids and their families need help finding affordable counseling. Also, my husband's parents were dropouts. Had the school district known the parents' education history, it might have been able to identify my husband as at-risk. I think the survey you're doing is a good idea, but it's a bit flawed. We need to be able to pick more than one option, and the survey should have some more questions, as this is a complex issue.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	In my experience as a high schooler, I found that drugs were a major factor in most drop outs during my high school career. The drugs resulted in excessive absences. Perhaps some sort of drug therapy and/or stricter high school absence policy would help.	Drugs	
1/25/2003	Make classes relevant to real life jobs and directly related to college.	Real-world Relevancy	
1/26/2003	More engagement of the teschers and staff with problem students. Not ignoring their needs.	More Faculty Interest/Support	
1/27/2003	The school need to be grouped by family or houses, and students randomly assigned to these houses from middle school until graduation. Then counselors, mentors and volunteers work with these students. After two days of being absent, someone should call to check as to why these students are absent. Activities should be planned on a monthly basis where each family competes for prizes and encouragement is offered to keep these individuals in school. It's done in elementary schools, but then it seems as soon as a student is in middle school all the concerns are dropped. You can walk into some middle school, and there are no display of the student work. Why not?	Attendance	More Faculty Interest/Support
	Houston ISD has made efforts to improve the quality of schooling by providing various learning environments including programs and schools and care for adolescent mothers, extended programs, vocational education, magnet programs, and vanguard programs among others. Support from the district offices to increase student achievement through career day events, university visits, and business community support would benefit students and communities. Counselors have become schedulers and monitors, rather than offering guidance support and advising. Their title has become a misnomer. Parents must be introduced to the alarming rates (e.g. test scores, academic performance, graduation rates, pregnancy, truancy) and informed that their children are failing due to numerous circumstances far beyond the 180-day academic year. School administration and teachers cannot eliminate all the variables that are barriers and forces against academic success. If "parents are partners," activites from the administration and Board should reflect this more effectively through forums and community leadership. The Board meeting schedule should reflect the working lives of parents. Meetings should be changed	Lack of Parent Involvement	More Faculty Interest/Support
	Most of our children are lost in the high level. I feel sometimes it is because they feel they do not have a adult to talk too. They feel a parent would not understand,is to old fashion to talk too or may also feel that they can not tell everything to mom or dad. So sometimes they make decisions on their own that will cost them not to graduate with their class.	More Faculty Interest/Support	
	Community involvement is the solution here. Parents and community members must share the responsibility of keeping our students in school. Kevin H. Hoffman	School-Home-Community Connection	
	Provide additional training to the teachers so that they can address more problems students encounter at school e.g. peer pressure, bullying, insensitive staff, etc. Teachers and administrators are too quick to suspend, expell and are too punitive when listening would resolve a lot of problems. Teachers need to feel they are valued and increasing their salary is a first step. Next we must reduce class size and involve the parents and community to have students succeed.	More Faculty Interest/Support	Increase Teacher Pay/Smaller Class Sizes

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	I think that schools need to stop teaching as if all students are going to college. We need a return to vacational training. The child that you are servicing is not the child that we were servicing five, ten even twenty years ago. We also need to find a way to understand the cultures of the students that we service. Not every culture values a college education. Many cultures just want their child to be educated and then get a job. Not necessarily a collegerelated or required job.Until we get in touch witht the communities we service we will not be successful.	More Faculty Interest/Support	School-Home-Community Connection
	There was no addressing the question of the quality and preparation of the teachers. Perhaps better training and more dedication would be in order	Lack of Motivated/Qualified Teachers	
	There are many problems in students' homes. In my honest opinion, until we go back to the basics: prayer and serving God, love for all students (less favortism), morals, and not allow children to disrespect other children on school grounds, find out what problems angry students are experiencing at home, it looks pretty bleak.	School-Home-Community Connection	More Faculty Interest/Support
	More teachers, less paper-pushers. Raise standards and hold kids back who do not qualify.	Lack of Motivated/Qualified Teachers	Need Higher Standards
	Smaller learning communities and a student advocate would be helpful to catch kids who fail in the crack and to intervene early when an absence/failure pattern begins to develop.	Need Smaller Class Sizes	More Faculty Interest/Support
	Those students who can not attend schoold during the day should be encouraged to attend Night High School and transportations provided for theses students and other services equal to day students.	More Alternative Programs	
	I believe that if class sizes were smaller, then teachers could pay more individual attention to students needs. I have heard from many teachers that it's too difficult to teach students, care for all of the needs especially with all of the specific needs there are for students today, and be effective. There is more and more pressure placed on teachers when there are so many variables i.e. home issues, self-esteem issues, gender issues, learning,disabilities, mental issues, parental concerns, etc., that are factors in a student's success. These issues are being overlooked so that teachers are the scapegoats.	Need Smaller Class Sizes	
	Must address the growing number of students who are of Latino descent and recognize that their problems may be different from non-Latino students.	Address Student Diversity	
	I do not know the statistics, but I am willing to guess that the dropout rate is also aligned with socio-economic factors as well as family structure issues. Children, no matter how old, need reassurance, stability, discipline, and most of all love and attention.	More Faculty Interest/Support	School-Home-Community Connection
	I think it should be required of the parents to be involved with thier children education and teachers should encourage students to stay in school and help them if they can with that.	Lack of Parent Involvement	More Faculty Interest/Support
	Helping those children who are having trouble in certain subjects, like a tutorial class. A child knowledge should'nt be measured on what he made on a state test because some children do not test well.	Tutorials	
	There is a huge community component - parental involvement, community-based volunteerism - as well school component - how students, parents, community partners and volunteers are communicated with, engaged, and acknowledged.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	Vocational courses are on the brink of extinction. System is focusing on pure academic curricula. A better interaction with community business's to help ensure employment after a student graduates could have a positive impact. If a students can see that the school systems is actively involved in assessing their needs,objectives,achievements and employment goals, their interest in education might have a more positive means to an end.	School-Home-Community Connection	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	The main thing is this. Students are dropping out of school mainly because of school politics. Schools are passing students onto the next grade level in elementary through middle school even though they do not fit the qualifications for promotion. They do this so they will not look back to the administration. Students are no longer earning grades, but are given them. Therefore, when they get into high school and have to meet those credits earned they are unable to do so because they have not learned anything in elementary and middle school. They are also so far behind it becomes impossible for them to catch up; as a result, they drop out. We need to start making students responsible and stop giving them things because they are pregnant, labeled as resource (special education), or live in a poor neighborhood. All students CAN learn and we need to give them the opportunity to do so. If they know they don't have to do anything to pass why would they even bother to try.	Promotion Standards	
	Also if the teachers stop trying act like the better then the students. Because they were young and adoscent, when you remeber how it was back in the day. Some kids you have to subcome to there level and they can relate better. Because all there lives they have been told not do this act like this. Also some children don't have the pleasure of both parnets and that is hard because if you don't make money you don't have clothes, shoes, or to be able to eat a good meal. My kids have both parnets and sometime I have to make up for the father because he is working two jobs. I put my self on there level and we talk and we make suggestion that well work and the work.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	In middle school, children are going through their adolecent years. Their body as well as their mind is changing into young adulthood. All of this is stress to them as well as their schoolwork. Trying to fit in is another issue. In a classroom of 27-35 students, a child is lost. They feel afraid of their teacher or of speaking in front of their peers. They feel afraid that if their answer is wrong, their peers will laugh or their teacher will make a sarcastic remark about it. These are some of the thoughts of an 11 year old girl. As a family member what could I do to help?	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	Many students feel isolated by their teachers in High School, because of personality conflicts. Since most of those students work, they tend to loose interest in school when the teachers are not supportive.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	The district should have a center where a student can walk in and discuss with a counselor/person about any issues that student might have before dropping out. The counselor or person assisting student should follow through in helping that student with the problem whether it is family problem, financial problem, school problem. Most students are just referred from one person to the next and yet does not get the help to keep in school.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	We need counselors that truly care about all students,have better control on disipline issues and make it clear that a further education than high school is very important in our society. Kids today are influenced by everything around them, but school is seen as boreing and something they have to go to. It is not seen as something that is needed and something that will help them out in the future and help them excel above the level their parents attained. The kids who have parents with low education need to be encouraged to continue school, because many parents are content with just having their kids attend school and do not push education. This is just some of my ideas on how to make things better. J. Macias Pearl Rucker Elementary	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	Parent Education
	I think that there is an overall need for many things in the HISD program, students have a short attention span...at least I do and it is not because subject or classes are nto challenging, they are sometimes boring or taught in a very basic and to the point manner. School should be something more appealing and entertaining yet able to educate. More people would benefit from learning and having fun than by stressing all the time.	Boredom	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	I believe testing has gone too far. I mean, in my day, I studied but not to the degree we are placing on our young! You start to implement a system that penalizes students who did not get the correct learning in the early years. This can be disheartening! Plus, the major of parents are not well-educated themselves. This in turn can place additional pressure on both parent and child. We need to step back to address and correct the problems before we step forward. Today's society is paying for all the lack of supervision, parental involvement, lack of mortals, and simple education. We have too many potholes in our education system that needs to be filled with concrete solutions instead of asphalt! You can only catch up so far! Thank you for your time to listen! LET'S GET BACK TO BASICS! REFORM, RESPECT, AND RESTORE the old ways to education!	School Reform	
	I expected more questions than just three. I also think there is too much emphasis on testing. I think teachers should really be held accountable by having raises tied to teacher's performance ratings.	Too much testing	More Teacher Accountability
	From where I stand, the district is really not enforcing the no more social promotion deal they have talked about. There always seems to be a loop hole to get kids to the next grade. They miss out on a lot and then they get moved up a grade and find that there are behind and get frustrated, then feel the need to drop out. This is what I have found to be true with kids I've talked with who have dropped out. Students need to earn credits in middle school so that when they go to high school they feel like they have a chance and would be less likely to drop out of school	Social Promotion	Student Frustration
1/28/2003	When you have major problems at home, wreck in route to work, financial woes, and so on...how do you stay focused at work? Kids have many many issues that they juggle -sometimes school is just not a priority- "survival today" is. An extreme example would be say "starving children" - you know, the ones with the swollen stomaches and flies- well, do you think they're concerned about learning or living? Same difference - except we (Americans) have not reached this level. Kids (all ages) gang members too, want very meuch to learn - that's why they resurface -it's the probation officer, aid and a deep desire to overcome but life's issues are real,in the present. Education is a dream, hope, desire, goal - a future thing.	Struggle with Real-World Issues	
	Students need to feel valued and needed, only people can perform this task..not technology.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	I think a partnership with an at risk student...too let them work vocationally would improve graduation rates especially those who are learning disabled.	School-Home-Community Connection	More Vocational Programs
	The problem with the dropout rate is that parents do not teach their students any respect, manners or the correct way to behave at home as well as school. Most students starting in elementary school through high school refuses to follow any instructions.When the students get the chance to leave school they will so that they won't have to follow any rules. That is why there is a huge drop out rate because they(the students)think that they know it all and the parents back them up 100%.That leads to low test scores, horrible behavior, and a high drop out rate. The first thing that needs to be done is make the parents responsible for their students actions and not the teacher. After all the parents are the first teachers or should be!	Parent Involvement	
	From my own experience with my own 14 year old, Parent support is very important. The self esteem of a child is what makes a child into a successful adult, without parent or guardians to bring about that self esteem in a student, not much shall be gained.	Parent Involvement	
	Parents must be educated when the child is in the womb. Parents make the biggest impact on children. As a parent myself, I believe it is my job to prepare my child for school. It is my responsibility to keep a constant eye on my child's progress. It is the school's responsibility to teach and ask parents to support their efforts. The school system may be able to connect young parents with other parents who have successful stories with their children. Also, spanish speaking parents should be connected with bilingual mentoring parents.	Parent Involvement	School-Home-Community Connection
	For Teachers to be less prejudice because of race.	Prejudiced Teachers	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	Students are changing. As a teacher of the fine arts I do not feel equiped to provide them with the tools to successed in today's world. Technology is changing the work force, leasure time and stress on the job. We need to rethink the way we educate, the things we stress, and socialization in general.	School Reform	
	Parents and teachers must work together. Communication is the key. This communication does not always need to be negative. It may also be positive comments or observations about the students. Children are gifted when it comes to hiding their problems. Even the simple statements may provide insight for the parent or the teacher as to a reason for a certain behavior.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	Students need much more personal attention & instruction. Students need to be helped to stay at grade level from kindergarden on up.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	I wrote a paper as a graduate student at the UHGSSW (1995) entitled: "Hispanic High School Students: A Social Work Practice Paper on how to decrease the dropout rate in Houston." It talks about this social problem and outlines Micro/Macro strategies for Intervention. I think it would be worth your time to read. If you are interested in a copy, please send me your address and contact person. Thanks, Maribel Barrera, LMSW 713-520-0474	Other	
	Getting a high school education is not high on the list of needs for some students. In theory most students will say that they want to graduate, but in actuality lack the determination and drive to fulfill that goal. Many of them are more concerned with other issues such as how they are perceived by their peer, lastest fads, etc., that a high school diploma is not high on the list of priorities. Students are also dealing with a lot of other societal problems, like early pregnancies, working to support their family, abuse, and other psychological issues, that distract them in their pursuit of a high school diploma.	Lack of Student Motivation	
	Some students need counselors in elementary school. They need help building their self-esteem. Many girls in fifth grade become pregnant and do not continue their education. To improve the dropout rate, we must have the resources in place at every school to correct this problem.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	More Resources
	Students need to feel that the school is really interested in them as individuals. They must feel wanted even though they might be only a "C" student or of a minority race that have a high drop out rate.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	Make children aware of cultural differences as early as Pre-K. Teach them to respect, understand, and accept that there are differences and that it's OK! Teach them that although we may be classified under a certain ethnic group (ie. Caucacian, Hispanic, or African American, WE All belong to One Race- the HUMAN RACE.	Student Diversity	
	Success in life has to be directly tied to success in school. We have to reinforce that to students and provide opportunities to see success through mentoring partnerships.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	School-Home-Community Connection
	This is a big problem surrounded via various possibilities from over crowded classrooms, large school environments, lack of identity, lack of or no parental support and media encouraging negative attidutes. Adding more than just mentors and reducing class size, intervention needs to begin in elementary school at the foundation level instilling in the students a desire to learn. Educators can only teach if students have a desire to learn, respect for their teachers and peers.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	Parent Involvement
	Is the committee looking at the success rates of students with disabilities? There is a 74% unemployment rate nationwide of people with disabilities and many of them were under-educated or ill prepared for vocational employment in the High School years. How many students with disabilities dropped out of school? They are neither a separate population nor are they "special" they are students just as the other children are and deserve to be properly educated in our school system regardless of whether they have a physical or mental disability. Thank you.	Other	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	The dropout rate has nothing to do with the previous questions. The main reason for students in high school dropping has do with the classes they are required to take and the long hours involved. The students wish they could just take the requirements for graduation and go home, instead of taking classes that they do not need and have no interest in. They do not mind taking English and Math everyday to prepare them for tests that are required for graduation and college, however they do wonder why they have to take all those unnecessary test that are not required for graduation.	Class Requirements	
1/29/2003	Guest speakers from the community speaking and educating students about school, life opportunities and the relationship between them. Tracking dropout indicators as best as possible based on a student's ID. Things such as: recidivism, socio-economic factors, performance, disciplinary referrals, and school historical data. Incorporating character building education programs such as MindOH!, which is currently participating with 16 HISD middle and high schools, into schools to help students make better life choices. http://www.mindoh.com/	School-Home-Community Connection	MindOH!
	Having a son in high school, I am faced with challenges I did not have to deal with in elementary and middle school. I feel we need more smiles and encouragement for these students. Maybe volunteers that can be visible, maybe walk around during lunches and just ask how they are doing, try to get them to open up about themselves. Offer a meeting area if a student would like to talk to a mentor volunteer. Schools should be a place a student should enjoy going to. Maybe the way a teacher teaches, or instead of disciplining looks in the halls, a more approachable "hello" or "how's it going" greeting. In some schools assistant principals and counselors are supposed to serve as "family leaders;" however, students are not very likely to approach them because of their roles - assistant principals also serve as disciplinarians, and the counselor's role is to help a student follow a specific academic program. Teachers already do so much for our kids and sometimes become to overwhelmed with all they are required to do, that they are not very approachable. Educating parents whose children are missing too much class. Parents are responsible for their children and yes, it can be difficult, it is our job to instill the importan	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	As a substitute teacher for HISD. From what I have seen. The children do not have any stimulation outside of school. The parents need to know the importance of an education. We need to get into the communities and get people to understand the value of teachers and an edducation.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	If grades are based upon the intelligence of the student and their ability to comprehend the materials learned, rather than spitting back phrases and taking tests over the materials which were missed due to absences, then students will have higher GPAs and there will, without a doubt, be fewer dropouts.	Less testing	
	I think citizenship is an issue. If our students were able to go to college and qualify for financial aid and have a promise of citizenship so they can work this would not only benefit the whole country but also I think give students a reason to finish their highschool education. I think too much time is wasted when teaching for a test, if I were in highschool again, I might choose to take the GED and move on to college rather than waste all this time with testing and not learning about real world issues. Smaller classrooms with real world teaching would also encourage our students to finish school. Too often they feel as though the skills taught will not help them in the future. Teachers need to be paid more and need to work less hours so that they can spend more quality time with each student. We need to spend more money on education than defense.	Citizenship	Too much testing/Smaller Class Sizes/Increase Teacher Pay/More Money for Education

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	As a parent of two teenagers, one very successful in school and one trudging along to meet minimum expectations, I think that the junior high experience can affect a student's performance for completing high school. In junior high, too much talk about drugs and making it mainstream conversation distracts curious students and not enough talk about other avenues of social activities for this age group inhibit social growth. Students need to have something that they are "good at" in place to strive for successful recognition. Acquiring credits in junior high for high school could encourage more students to take more levels of math in high school. Failure in a subject should require meetings with parents to find ways to make the child take school more seriously. A lot of teachers do not want to meet with parents when a child is failing. A student needs to see how important it is to pass courses starting in early junior high. They develop useless work study habits in junior high that cripple them for high school.	More Parent/Teacher Involvement at the Junior High School Level	Allow students to earn high school credit in junior high school
	Give more resources to schools and allow them some flexibility in the best way to utilize them. One plan will not work for every school, especially in the urban areas. Students are not going to feel that they are appreciated and that school is worthwhile if they are not being shown that their attendance is important. They need new books, better equipment and more personalized attention. Giving each child a mentor is not going to do that much. A teacher can accomplish much more with a group of students if he or she is motivated, innovative, and supported by the school system.	Decentralization	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling
	I believe more students will drop out now because of the new test coming up which is the TAKS. The test will be more challenging and a lot of the students had problems passing the TAAS. I believe it is really important that the students ate risk be provided with mentors and intensive tutoring because they're really going to need it with all of the challenges ahead of them.	Harder TAKS test	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling
	After talking to students I have taught They state why they would drop out is because of the courses they take and how they are helping them in the real world. The requirements that were required when I graduated were not as much as they are now.	Course Requirements	
1/30/2003	Bilingual education is a big factor in student drop out...the student gets behind from the beginning of his education and it is impossible for the slower or less able student to be able to compete with the student that has had regular english instruction from the beginning of his education. This to me is really the main reason for many students dropping out...I have seen this personally from the stand point of students leaving elementary after 4 years of bilingual ed. and then not being able to catch up, much less keep up with their peers.	Bilingual Education	
	Hispanics are the highest dropout rate in the U.S. The culture is very family orientated, so a strong indicator would be to have family orientated activities that will instill the importance of education from the head of household all the way down to the child.	Parent Involvement	
	Some students drop out of school because they do not feel that they belong. They feel bad if they are underachievers, they feel bad if they have a reputation for be a problem, they feel bad if they are treated different because they may be smarter. They feel bad if the teacher has too many students in class that he/she can't give them a lot of attention. The school environment is stressful because it accommodates perfect students and label and characterize the imperfect students. Outside of school you are accepted as you are and any kind of person gets attention.	No sense of belonging	
	Until HISD decides to seriously address this problem where it forms (middle school) there will be no serious improvement. Students tune school out in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. The ones who get to HS are not prepared to work hard and many deal with that resistance by dropping out. If your middle school teachers and administrators do not prepare students to work hard and complete hours of homework every night, and to respect their education, then nothing will change. HISD needs to look at its middle schools and analyze why students are tuning school out.	Middle School Reform	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	Students drop out because they feel that completing high school is not necessary. They need to be educated on how the process of getting a good job without a high school diploma is quite challenging. Aside from completing high school, students should also be encouraged to extend their education until college. 8th grader at Holland Middle School	Students feel school is not necessary	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling
	i find these are the wrong questions to ask. i think that not everyone should be directed to college. what is wrong with the old way,voc.classes. the children are turned off because they have to work in school and go home to watch tv or play play station. give them interest in 6th grade that is not just college,real life stuff. CUTTING FIRE ARTS DUE TO LOSS OF MONEY TO SCHOOLS WILL NOT HELP THIS DROP OUT PROBLEM. SENT A SURVEY OUT TO THE STUDENTS IN 6-11 GRADES. GET ANSWERS AND SHARE THEM.	Vocational Education	
	We need to emphasize the importance of early childhood. This is not for the sake of teaching them to read sooner but to expose them to the wonders of learning and the experiences of working with others (social skills). Important also would the original point of the rewarding aspect of parental involvement that could very easily be implemented. Nurturing this involvement throughout the later years would be essential. This is not effectively being done now. Last but not least, by implementing birth to age 3 programs in the early childhood centers, we could get a jump-start on identifying children with special needs. We could begin the process of modifying and finding out what works for these children before they get frustrated and decide to drop out of school---to me this is the real reason why children drop out of school (not one of your options). Research tells us that children decide at the middle school level to drop out of the educational system. This was not surprising to me. Years of frustration, stress, and failure (for all special populations%u2014bilingual students and Hispanic students especially included) are strong motivators to seek the immediate relief from the painful school process. It	Parent Involvement	Student Frustration/More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling
	I had some difficulty answering the questions. I'm not sure any of the solutions address the real problems. Reality is a bit more complex than any of these standardized issues and solutions. Poor students feel disconnected from the educational process and society in general. Part of the problem lies with the educational system trying to apply a one-size-fits-all education on a diverse population. We need to realize that different students have different needs. The other part of the problem is more difficult to address. It lies with the fact that urban youths from lower income families feel that there is little opportunity for a decent life for them even if they do graduate. Why should a student study to get a diploma if all it will get them is a minimum wage job? Especially when they can make 10 times that much from prostitution or selling drugs. To really solve the problem will require an attack on multiple fronts. Firstly, I believe that we should emphasize vocational education for certain students with work/study programs beginning in middle school. They need to see a more immediate reward for their efforts, i.e. a paycheck. Ultimately they need to be made to feel that they do have an opportunity for success	Address Student Diversity/Student Needs	Student MotivationVocational Education
	A lot of times our children deal with emotional problems they are unable to handle thus creating barriers to their success. Social Workers and Counselors need to become more involved with helping these children with social issues via homevisits, school visits, and then getting the extra help for academics. If a child has just witnessed violence in his/her home what is the prability that he/she is attending to what is happening in the classroom? If a child has to worry about where do I sleep tonight, how much school academics is he focused on? Let's began to look holistically how we can better serve and educate our children. In order to do that they need to feel safe and know there is someone on campus with their interest at heart. I know HISD is an educational facility, but it's a new day, with children unable to cope with adult problems, however, they face them everyday. Think on these things, please and then let's work on behalf of our children.	School-Home-Community Connection	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling

Houston ISD Web Site Dropout Survey Responses
Open-ended Comments

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	My son may be at risk for dropping out, but I have been more involved his last year in middle school. His reading skills are not what they should be for a middle school student, so reading should be stressed heavily in elementary. Middle school is the time students become frustrated with school because they are not performing like most of their peers. This is in part to their reading ability and study skills.	More Attention to Middle School	
	In my opinion, parents/guardians must become active in the lives of students. Educators can not be the parent/teacher/counselor. We are becoming "burnt-out" and those who wish to continue teaching as I do, are more discouraged by the lack of support from administration, i.e no consequences for inappropriate behavior. The students have no boundaries and have no fear- nothing is done. Our district must exercise NO Tolerence, maybe then we could teach those who are hear to learn.	Parent Involvement	
	Many school districts across our nation hold teachers accountable for things which are out of their control. School boards need to recognize the role of the parent in the educational process. Teachers cannot reverse eleven to eighteen years of parenting or the lack there of. School boards need to start standing up for the professionals that they have hired and take bold steps to inform parents what is expected of them. Until this occurs, the quality of public education will continue to decrease and current dropout rates will not decrease.	Parent Involvement	
	Lack of motivation plays a major role in dropout rate and not having qualified mentors that serve as a big brother or sister.	Lack of Motivation	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling
	Get the kids into English speaking classes sooner. By the time many Spanish speaking kids reach 9th grade, they canot compete because their language skills and knowledge are behind those kids who have been in English classes all the time. While it is great to be bilingual, they must be truly bilingual. Many classes in HISD called bilingual are not bilingual, they are Spanish speaking classes and should be called that. Who are you fooling when the 1st grade bilingual classes are taught totally in Spanish ?	Bilingual Education	
	It is a fact that Hispanic students have the highest dropout rate and I have always had a question (which I have not had an answer yet): The US constitution guarantees a free an public education to every school age child. In a court case, the education of illegal children were also guaranteed under the 14 amendment(I think). My question is: Are the majority of Hispanic dropouts illegal? If they are, don't you think that once they learn they will need a SS# and a legal status to pursue a higher ed. and even to work with a simple HS diploma they loose interest in their education and drop out of school? Melecio Reyes	Undocumented Students	
	Many students are not motivated to learn. They like knowing things but they do not want to make the effort and they do not want to discipline their ownselves in order to better themselves. Many do not have good study habits and they get discouraged easily. In part, I believe that it's because the family isn't supportive. Maybe the family doesn't help them become responsible people.	Lack of Motivation	Parent Involvement
	Drop out reduction is more complicated than a three question survey can solve.	Other	
	As a Hispanic teacher I have recommended for years that HISD take an aggressive stand on cultivating cultural pride. I have seen mariachi, ballet folklorico, parent ESL classes and citizenship classes sacrificed apparently because they don't directly lead to better test scores. Self esteem, parental support and school pride suffer. Let's sacrifice sports, drama and music. They are not on the test either.	Other	
	Teachers and administrators need to be more willing and able to intervene when a student exhibits self destructive characteristics that could eventually result in failure. What tends to occur is the labeling of the student as a discipline problem instead of seeing the behaviors as a cry for help. Until these kids become adults they count on the adults to guide and nurture them.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	I think strong parental support through graduation is another key factor in keeping students in school. I also think it is important to base a student's success on more indicators than a standardized test (i.e.: portfolios, writing samples, drawings, or music/vocal abiblity). Students feel the pressure of too much testing!!!	Parental Involvement	Too Much Testing
	Give all teachers secretaries / aids to assist with helping students, contacting parents, paper-work, etc. Teachers do not have enough time to do all they want to do to help students. It is cheaper to hire teaching assistants then full-time teachers. Most professionals in the business world have secretaries, so why not try this with teachers.	Teacher Support	
	I THINK THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IS THE LANGUAGE. IF THE KIDS COME FROM A HISPANIC FAMILY NO MATTER WHAT THEY NEED TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BECAUSE THEY ALREADY HAVE THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE AND THIS CREATES A CONFUCION WITH THEM AT THE SCHOOL AND IN THEIR LIVES. I AM A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER AND ALMOST ALL THE LD LABEL KIDS THE PROBLEM IS THE LANGUAGE.	Bilingual Education	
1/31/2003	Stronger school / community ties. Keeping parents, residents informed on school events.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	SMALLER CLASS SIZES WOULD PROBABLY HELP THOSE STUDENTS AT RISK. MOST OF THEM ARE EMBARRASSED ABOUT THEIR POOR LEARNING OR AGE OR THEY DO NOT REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT GRADUATION IS. GIVE THEM A WAKE UP CALL ON WHAT HAPPENS TO SOMEONE WITH NO DIPLOMA IN THE REAL WORLD...	Smaller Class Sizes	
	While each of the choices listed in #2 are important, all teachers should be have the ability and desire to make school productive, connected and enjoyable for all children. If parents get their children to school and insist that they behave, all educators should have the knowledge, skills and attitude to keep them interested in learning beyond 12th grade. The motivation issue of young adults really requires much collaborative work between the family and school systems.	School-Home-Community Connection	
	Allow students to make specific comments about specific teachers. Get an idea of what they are thinking about the teachers that teach them. There are teachers that get outstanding evaluation, however, the students will complain that the teacher is not teaching.	Student Evaluation of Teachers	
	I am a parent of two Spring Branch ISD students and I am also a teacher at HISD. My students live in a low socio-economic area of town and do not have nearly as much parental support as the students where my sons attend to school. Students that can afford to attend to places like Silvan or Kumon where they receive tutoring to fill any academic gaps they might have in their learning, that see both their parents are successful professionals, and are exposed to trips, museums, etc. have a considerable advantage compared to students from immigrant families where sometimes the parents themselves can not read, write or have basic mathematical knowledge and the kids have had very few chances to go outside the boundaries of their community. I believe all students are capable of learning but sometimes they really need a reduced class size environment or even one-on-one teaching. I've seen students with two or three grades lower reading proficiency than the grade they're actually at. This can only be frustrating for them (it would be for me if it was my case). I trust you will find the best alternatives to solve the "drop out problem" and will make it accesible to every student, no matter their color, race, or	School-Home-Community Connection	Smaller Class Sizes

Houston ISD Web Site Dropout Survey Responses
Open-ended Comments

Date	Comments	Category	Category
	While Middle School and High School students look for financial assistance in the household. Education is still essential to them. A curriculum that would teach them basic job communication skills. Something like the VOE classes yet this should be required of all students. All students should also be involved with school clubs. It's usually the honor roll students that partake in the clubs and it doesn't seem to offer much opportunity for those students who are below par in academics. Yet being involved with Student Council, Yearbook staff,Foreign Languages,and Drama Clubs; these activities give social interaction that would enhance the students self-esteem and confidence from participating in these school activities. The extra-curricular activities also add to a student's job resume for employment.		
	Not every student is going to do well academiclly . Let's reduce the amount of testing and teach to all levels. An alternative education should be available for those students who need a basic education.	Too much testing	Alternative Education
	I believe that it is very important that class sizes be lowered so Teachers are able to identify at risk children easier.It is ridiculos in my opinion to ask a teacher to try and teach so many students at one time yet expect that teacher to have personal knowledge of every student she/he has.	Smaller Class Sizes	
	I believe you need programs at all elementary schools like the one you have at Oak Forest, with teachers like Ms Krueger-jones, starting the kids with the idea that school is the best place to be, and days like to 100rd day of school and the 101 day. If kids enjoy learing, they will stay in school. Lets put this focus on all of the schools, not just a few.	More Faculty Interest/Support/Counseling	
	All of your options contribute to student drop out rates. I think the primary reason by far is the lack of support from the family environment. Parents, public officals (including HISD's top management) and celebrities need to be good role models for our children to follow. When the highest office in the land (President Clinton) gets away with lying to a grand jury and teenagers learn that you don't have to be held accountable for your actions. The news media (Dan Rather, Tom Brochaw and Peter Jennings among others) also have a moral obligation to report the news without bias. This currently is not being done by the major new orgainizations. More and more individuals are getting their information from the internet and a more neutral members of the media. Parents need hold themselves and their children to a higher standard. Positive reinforcement of good role models should become the norm. When the first 12-1/2 minutes of the local new is all negative you have a huge obstacle to overcome. Gary Hogg (Procurement Services - HISD)	Parent Involvement	School-Home-Community Connection
	Early Childhood = There is a need for all children to have an Even Start. Developmentally appropriate Early Childhood programs have been shown by research to increase student achievement. Mentoring = Resiliency research shows that high expectations, opportunities to succeed and having a relationship with a caring adult increase resiliency in students. Dual Language = This two way immerssion program has been shown to give cognitive and achievement gains to native speakers and English speakers. We have an opportunity to make bilingualism an asset not a deficit and to give English Language Learners the opportunity to learn English and acquire the academic language needed to succeed academically. Research shows it takes 5-7 years to acquire that level of communicative competence. This would decrease the number of immigrant students failing and dropping out at the secondary level. We are testing them and utilizing High Stakes testing to decide their future in a language they do not understand. Smaller Class Size Middle school and High school students do not receive the individualized attention they need. Teachers have so many students they rarely get to know them, connect and establish rela	Early Childhood Programs/Mentoring/Dual Language Programs	Smaller Class Sizes/More Magnet Programs
2/1/2003	Students must feel successful in what they do. Self esteem and appealing the learning to them needs to be reinforced.	Student Self-Esteem	

Leaver Survey

Our records indicate you left school early. Please provide the following information for a study we are conducting.

Please circle the appropriate answer:

Sex: male female

Age:
16 17 18 19 20 21+

Last Grade Completed:
7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th but no exit exam

Race or ethnicity:
_____White (non Hispanic) _____Black (non Hispanic) _____Asian _____Native American
_____Pacific Islander _____Hispanic Born in US _____Hispanic Born outside US

Hispanic-Please list country of origin: _____
(Example: Mexico, El Salvador, Columbia, Honduras,etc)
How many years have you lived in the US: _____
How many years have you lived in Houston: _____

Where you designated as in need of special education services? Yes No
If yes, briefly explain why:_____

Did you ever fail a year in school? Yes No If more than once, how many? _____ Which Grades_____

How many times have you changed residence in the past 10 years? _____

Please indicate the major reason(s) you left school. If more than one, rank the top 3 reasons:

Reasons

School-related:
_____ Did not like school
_____ Could not get along with teachers
_____ Could not get along with students
_____ Was suspended to often
_____ Did not feel safe at school
_____ Was expelled
_____ Felt I didn't belong
_____ Could not keep up with school work
_____ Was failing school
_____ Changed school, didn't like new one

Job-related:
_____ School/job time conflict
_____ Had to get a job
_____ Found a job

Family-related:
_____ Had to support family
_____ Wanted to have family
_____ Pregnancy
_____ Got married
_____ Had to care for family member
_____ Family Problems

Other:
_____ Health issues
_____ Drugs/alcohol issues
_____ Wanted to travel
_____ Friends dropped out

Please list reason not on
listed on survey:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Current Education Status
_____ Not attending school
_____ attending a regular high school
_____ Attending a GED Program
_____ Attending an Alternative School
_____ Other: (explain_____)