

## **Austin Independent School District**

### **Redesigning High Schools for High Performance**

The AISD Redesign Initiative is rooted in two guiding principles: first, that every child--regardless of race, gender, or native tongue--is morally entitled to a rigorous and relevant education; and second, that rigor and relevance is dependant upon relationships that attend to the student's intellectual **and** social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing. After the 2004 High School Audit by the Southern Regional Education Board, it was clear that, in AISD, the traditional American high school structures and central office hierarchies were neither built for nor effective at developing or sustaining rigor, relevance, or relationships--"The Three R's." In response, AISD is currently implementing the following:

#### Relationships Driving Rigor and Relevance

*Advisories:* In each of the 11 comprehensive high schools, one adult is paired with and will serve as the primary contact for 15 to 17 students for 2 to 4 years. Each campus' curriculum has been purposefully designed in order to develop relationships, build positive school culture, and provide regular academic advisement.

*Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):* PLCs are regular forums for teachers and/or administrators and instructional coaches to work collaboratively on an ongoing basis to learn from one another, focus on areas for opportunity, and drive instructional improvements in the classroom.

*Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs):* This year, six of the eleven comprehensives have been broken down into SLCs of no more than 375 students each. Each SLC is thematically centered so that students may choose a course of study that they find interesting. This smaller group of students will be served by a smaller group of teachers for the entire four years.

#### Ensuring Results

In order to ensure quality, sustainable implementation, AISD has established the following:

*Project Management Process:* In collaboration with the Parthenon Group, AISD has developed a project management process for ensuring that each initiative is implemented with fidelity.

*Tools for Teaching Excellence:* In collaboration with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, AISD is constructing a data warehouse that will provide "on-time" data from the Boardroom to the Classroom.

*Redesign Steering Committee:* Every other week, central office representatives from each of the major departments convene to learn from one another, focus on areas for opportunity, and drive improvements across the district.

*Redesign Executive Committee:* Every week, the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Chief of Staff, the Associate Superintendents, and the Office of Redesign

convenes to learn from one another, focus on areas for opportunity, receive regular updates on initiative implementation, and drive policy change.

AISD looks forward to building relationships with those beyond Austin City Limits© who are also committed to serving every child-- the whole child.

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