



# The Need for Change

Today's high schools operate on the needs of yesterday's Industrial Society with an economy vastly different from the demands of the 21st Century. Our large, comprehensive high schools do not produce in quantity the students described in the HISD Graduate Profile. In addition:

- Only 17% of job applicants in Texas have the necessary basic education skills required in today's labor market.
- 85% of jobs require skilled or a professional education.
- A full-time minimum-wage job without a high school degree pays an average of \$10,000 a year as compared to the \$25,000 to \$45,000 average earned by high school graduates.
- Disparities in the education levels and income of Americans are increasingly drawn along the lines of ethnicity, race, and socio-economic status.
- 70% of the jobs for the new economy have not been invented yet.
- Higher levels of education are associated with better health, greater job satisfaction, and more participation in civic activities.
- Other social benefits of education include savings in public welfare and health programs, increased tax revenues, and decreased income inequalities between ethnic groups.

Thus, the goal of the Houston Schools for a New Society high school reform initiative is to provide the necessary support and structures to transform high schools into 21st Century learning centers whose graduates more readily possess the knowledge and skills that are reflected in the Graduate Profile.

Source: The RAND Corporation, Texas Scholars

## Components

Transforming high schools will require profound change at many differing levels. The high school reform initiative is designed to address these changes in:

### Professional and Organization Learning

Provide ongoing, sustained, and focused professional development to teachers, administrators, central office staff, parents, and community members.

### School Restructuring

Align all components of a school with the Vision and Guiding Principles.

### Community Engagement

Involve all stakeholders in activities developed to support the school and district restructuring.

### District Change and Support for Transforming High Schools

Create a climate that encourages risk-taking, innovation, and support. Schools will have autonomy to make choices based on individual needs.



# Vision and Guiding Principles

To support the necessary restructuring within each school, the HISD Board of Education adopted its **Vision and Guiding Principles** as a framework for the comprehensive high schools to follow during restructuring.



## 1 High Expectations

- Set clear, fair and high academic and conduct standards for all students.

## 2 Personalization

- Create small units with the ideal size being 300 students.
- Provide a personal adult advocate for each student throughout high school.

## 3 Coherency

- Utilize project-based learning, portfolios, and exhibitions as assessment tools.
- Connect student learning with real-world experiences.
- Use a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate individual learning styles.

## 4 Time and Resources

- Institute flexible allocation of available resources including people, time, facilities, and money.
- Allow common planning time for teachers with their colleagues.

## 5 Technology

- Integrate technology into the teaching and learning process.
- Create web-based systems at the district to display curriculum, student grades and attendance reports.
- Provide accessible, effective internal and external communication systems.

## 6 Professional Development

- Implement whole-school professional learning communities.
- Develop relationships with business and community organizations to build real-world experience for principals and teachers.
- Build relationships with higher education to enhance student performance.

## 7 Leadership

- Give community members, parents, teachers, and students input into decision making.
- Establish professional development for principals around leading and managing change.
- Ensure district administrators support school principals' restructuring plans.

## Working Together

Ensuring that all stakeholders are part of the activities that support and sustain school improvement is critical to the Initiative's success. Efforts to accomplish that include:

**Involving** school faculty in the development of whole-school reform strategies.

**Convening** an annual Youth Summit to ensure that student voices are heard.

**Facilitating** community activities to solicit involvement in school reform efforts.

**Partnering** with local community colleges and universities to support dual credit options, summer internships, and teacher preparation courses.

**Collaborating** with all members of the Houston community including business partners, parents and community organizations.

**Implementing** PIPE, a regional information management system to monitor student progress and exchange student educational records electronically (Performance Information for Public Education at <http://pipe.triand.com>).



## Help Make it a Reality!

Contact The Houston Annenberg Challenge today to learn how your organization or business can become involved.

The Houston Annenberg Challenge  
713-658-1881



## Accountability

Internal and external evaluations will focus on improved student achievement. The evaluation will include a review of progress by peers and community members. Funding to schools is contingent on progress. All HISD high schools will be held accountable for improvements on quantitative data\* including:

- Reduce ninth-grade retention rates
- Increase graduation rates
- Increase student attendance rates
- Increase number of Texas Scholars
- Increase numbers of students taking the SAT and other college entrance exams
- Increase numbers of graduates prepared to enter the workforce successfully
- Increase enrollment in Advanced Placement courses
- Increase literacy rates—with students reading at or above grade level
- Higher numbers of students attending college
- Lower numbers of students requiring remediation as college freshmen
- Increase numbers of students taking advanced curriculum courses with university and real world connections
- Increased scores on the SAT/ACT

\*Adopted by the Houston ISD Board of Trustees

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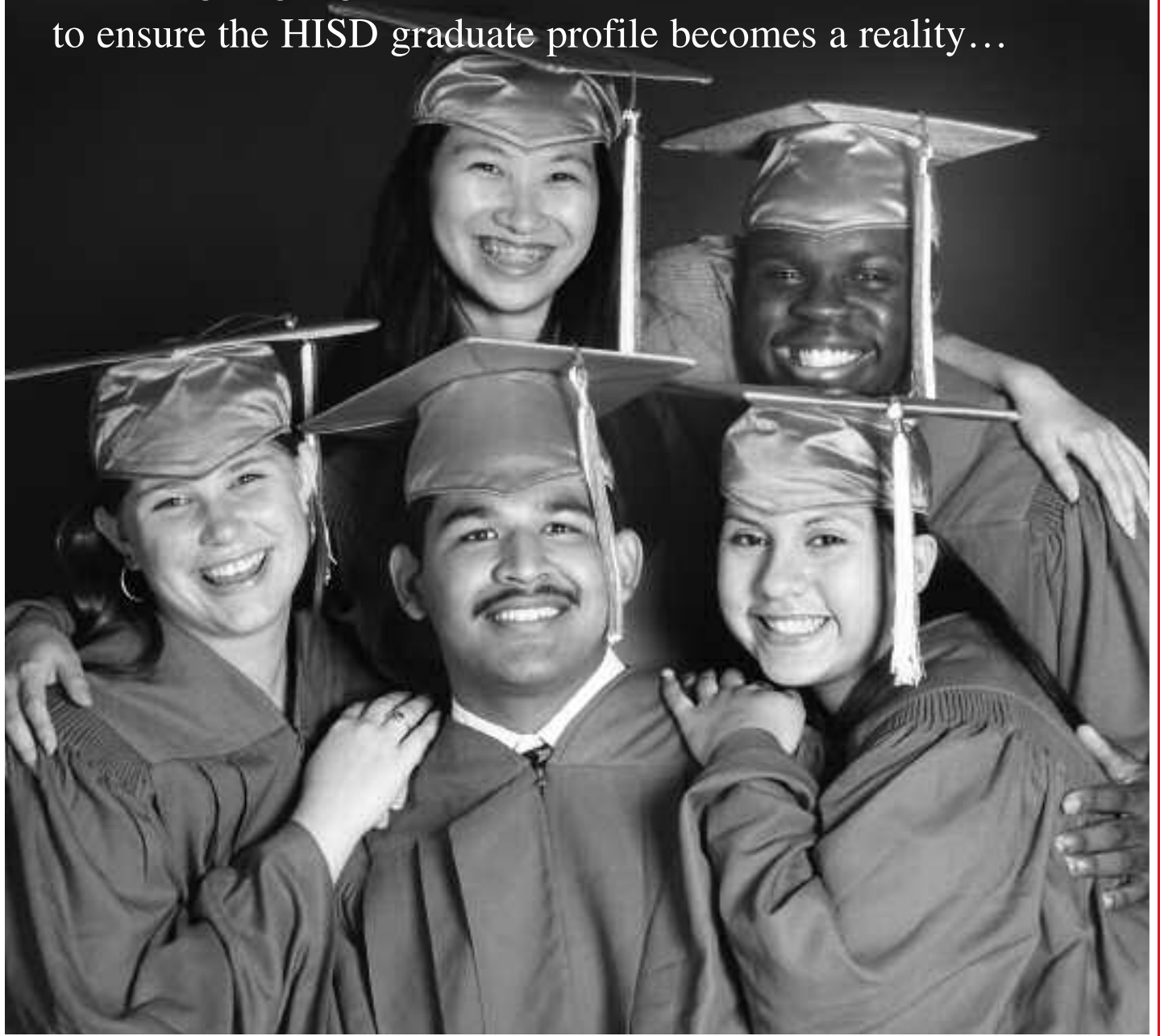
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...redesigning high schools into small, theme-based academies to ensure the HISD graduate profile becomes a reality...



In 2000, the Houston Independent School District and The Houston Annenberg Challenge brought together HISD's 24 large, comprehensive high schools and their stakeholders to determine what attributes Houston's 21st Century high school graduate should possess. That partnership, called Houston Schools for a New Society, is redesigning high schools into small, theme-based academies to ensure the HISD graduate profile becomes a reality for all Houston students. This guide sets out the path schools will take.