



THE DALLAS ACHIEVES TRANSFORMATION PLAN AND THE ROAD TO BROAD Q & A

Q. What is the Dallas Achieves Transformation Plan?

A. The Dallas Achieves Transformation Plan is a holistic plan to transform Dallas ISD into a top-performing urban school district that consistently graduates students who are college and workforce ready.

The Transformation Plan does not represent incremental change, i.e. "one-off programs" or a new "flavor of the month" approach to education. It is a plan rooted in best practices and data-driven results, and it is tailored to Dallas.

In November of 2005, the Board of Trustees set the vision for Dallas ISD to be the premier urban district by 2010. Since that time, the District has engaged in a systemic redesign of the teaching and learning systems. Based upon the best practices of the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA), the district has implemented the 17 recommendations of an NCEA conducted curriculum audit. The District has also joined an urban district educational collaborative, The Institute for Learning, at the University of Pittsburgh, and is focused on implementing the research-based Principles of Learning as our educational theory of action.

The Dallas Achieves Transformation plan builds upon this work over the past two years. It re-enforces our efforts towards goal alignment (establishing clear performance targets) and strategic alignment (ensuring that our efforts and resources are focused on progress towards our goals). The plan represents the future for the students of Dallas ISD.

Q. Why was the Transformation Plan developed?

A. Despite the hard work of many dedicated educators and the pockets of excellence that exist within the district, the current system is falling well short of our aspirations.

Consider the following facts:

- Across all grades, only 20% of Dallas ISD students are scoring at college-ready levels on TAKS
- Only 2% of students are graduating college-ready in both math and reading
- Only 58% of Dallas ISD freshmen graduate from high school ... and Dallas has the 14th-lowest graduation rate of the 15 largest districts in Texas
- By their mid-20s, only 5% of Dallas ISD students earn a college degree from a two-year or four-year institute

The General Superintendent, the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees recognized that incremental change was no longer sufficient; a holistic transformation plan for the system was required.

Q. Who developed the Transformation Plan?

A. As part of the district's efforts to align Dallas ISD's strategy with its aspirations for high student achievement, General Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa convened the 60-member Dallas Achieves Commission to assist in the development of a transformation plan to redesign the Districts systems and processes in alignment with the Board's goals of college and workforce readiness for all students.

The Commission and the Executive Leadership Team of the district worked together in developing the plan and solicited input from all key stakeholders including students, teachers, principals, central office staff and parents.

The plan has successfully united the broader Dallas community, the Executive Leadership of the District and the Board of Trustees around a common platform and approach to ensuring that we educate and graduate all students college and workforce ready.

The Commission includes a cross-section of the community --- leaders from the business sector and faith-based communities; philanthropy and media; representation from key Dallas-ISD related groups such as parents, principals, teachers and students; and political leaders and elected officials.

The Commission's Co-Chairs are Arcilia Acosta, Pettis Norman and J. McDonald Williams.

Q. How was the Transformation Plan developed?

A. The Dallas Achieves Commission partnered with some of the nation's leading strategic consultants to research best practices nationwide and develop a data-driven approach to promote real, transformative change. The Commission's analysis also included engaging Dallas ISD stakeholders (e.g. teachers, principals and students) in a number of focus groups and interviews to help identify existing best practices within Dallas ISD and opportunities for improvement. District leadership was very active in helping to review and shape the plan and ensure it would meet the needs of the students of Dallas ISD. As a result, the plan builds upon and supports a number of the efforts already underway including implementing an education plan to create instructional alignment within the district, as well as working to aggressively implement the NCEA audit recommendations.

The consultants on the team were The Boston Consulting Group (lead partner), The RobinsonEdwards Group, Foundation for Community Empowerment, Carol Reed Associates and Public Strategies Group.

The completed plan was formally presented by the Commission to Dr. Hinojosa and the Executive Leadership Team for endorsement prior to being presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Q. What does the plan mean to students, parents, teachers, principals and the broader Dallas community?

A. The plan was developed with the following mission in mind: *Transform Dallas ISD so that every student graduates from high school college and workforce ready*

Key recommendations of the transformation plan include:

- Students will be held to higher standards while receiving greater support from schools and the community to ensure they are engaged and high achieving
- Teachers will receive more tailored professional development, coaching, fair and honest assessments, and recognition for outstanding performance
- Principals will obtain greater decision-making rights and accountability based on their performance. They will receive coaching to become effective, empowered campus and instructional leaders.
- Central administration will become a more efficient, service-driven culture, restructured to support campuses in their efforts to provide instruction to children.
- Parents will have more input into their children's education, greater choice of schools and campus and district staff dedicated to addressing their concerns and teaching them how to engage in their children's academic development
- Community members will receive regular updates on critical Dallas ISD issues, greater opportunities for collaboration with Dallas ISD and the ability to provide regular feedback on Dallas ISD's performance

Q. What makes this plan different from other plans?

A. This plan was developed by first researching and establishing a strong set of facts regarding the current situation and key initiatives in Dallas ISD. Second, the Commission researched best practices from high performing school districts across the country and around the world with a focus on data-driven proven strategies and techniques. Third, the plan reflects input from all key stakeholders (students, principals, teachers, etc.) resulting in a plan that is tailored to Dallas ISD.

Furthermore there is strong alignment among critical groups within Dallas; the plan has the support of the administration, the school board, elected officials, and the civic and business community.

The plan represents a holistic approach to transforming Dallas ISD. It serves as the vehicle to integrate all our recent efforts, from establishing performance targets, to implementing NCEA recommendations to developing an education plan and implementing an aligned curriculum.

Q. What does the plan mean to the city of Dallas?

A. Improving Dallas ISD and improving Dallas go hand in hand. The plan will ultimately result in students who are better educated and positive contributors to the economic development of Dallas. A robust education system will strengthen our workforce, fuel economic growth in Dallas for years to come, and transform Dallas into a more vibrant and thriving community.

Q. How will the plan be funded?

A. The transformation plan has a set of recommendations that will cost money, another set that will save money, and others that have no incremental cost. For the recommendations that do have incremental costs, some can be funded with savings realized from the other recommendations. Others can be funded by reallocating spending within Central Office. Still, others will require additional internal and external funding.

The funds required to develop the plan were provided through in-kind donations and private funds (including donors, local foundations, local corporations and national foundations). Similarly, funding for implementation support will come from external sources.

Q. When can we expect to see results?

A. You will see some results immediately, other changes will take some time to implement and realize.

The Transformation Plan is a roadmap Dallas ISD will use to create specific solutions to transform Dallas ISD into a top performing urban school district. Moving forward, implementation will require dedicated teams to identify budgets and funding sources, shift resources to implement changes, and solicit feedback/input from the Dallas community.

Q. What is the Broad Prize?

A. The Broad Prize for Urban Education is a highly coveted annual award created to honor urban school districts making the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while at the same time reducing achievement gaps across income and ethnic groups. School districts that are awarded this prize do not receive it by focusing on lots of individual programs. They achieve it by addressing systemic change that leads to total transformation.

Dr. Hinojosa and the Board of Trustees have set a goal for Dallas ISD to win the Broad (rhymes with Road) Prize for Urban Education by 2010.

Q. How does the plan impact current initiatives already underway in the district?

A. The plan was designed to build upon much of the work that is already underway. For instance, while the plan does not call for any changes to the recently developed education plan, it does call for additional supports for teachers and principals so that the education plan may be implemented successfully. However, while the Dallas Achieves Commission has worked closely with the district to develop coherence between the proposed transformation plan and current initiatives in the district, there is recognition by all parties that some initiatives may need to be redirected and others may be stopped so that the district can focus on a core set of priorities. The plan was purposefully designed to be specific enough so that the district can take action, while allowing enough flexibility so that the district can adapt the recommendations to the unique needs of Dallas ISD.

Q. Who will lead the transformation effort within Dallas ISD?

A The General Superintendent will have ultimate leadership responsibility for the Transformation Plan. To maintain the appropriate amount of focus on this effort and ensure that the plan is executed, the Superintendent will form a Transformation Management Office (TMO). The TMO will consist of several working teams, each responsible for implementing a subset of the recommendations. The TMO will also be responsible for communicating, on a regular basis, the district's progress towards implementing the plan. The Transformation Management Office will report directly to the General Superintendent.