

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN

#### ***1. What is meant by high school redesign?***

The Dallas ISD is committed to educate and graduate students ready for college and the workforce. In high school, students should master a rigorous curriculum, develop strong and meaningful relationships, and engage in relevant learning experiences, which connect to real-life experiences. High school redesign refers to the transformation of a comprehensive high school into smaller learning communities, which have a focus on these components. Students will choose among various aligned courses of study related to college and career interests.

#### ***2. Why redesign Dallas ISD high schools?***

The nature and organization of the comprehensive high school model can create barriers to providing all students with equal access to and support for learning at high levels. Therefore, the Dallas ISD began looking at ways to add rigor, relevance and relationships in its comprehensive high schools.

To that end, all Dallas ISD high schools are undergoing a reform initiative to improve the academic rigor of their high school experience, keep more students in high school, and prepare graduates for college and the workforce.

#### ***3. What is the redesign based on?***

High school redesign is based on the idea of preparing students to go to college or join the workforce and to succeed once they are there. This is done by increasing the rigor of the curriculum so that students graduate with a level of knowledge and skills that will allow them to make a smooth transition into college and the workforce—ideally, already having accrued college credits while in high school.

Making every class relevant not only to what professions the students are interested in pursuing after graduation, but also to what the job market's needs are is another component of the high school redesign.

Giving students the opportunity to build relationships with their peers, their teachers and the community is another crucial component of the high school redesign. The relationships they forge during their high school years give students the skills and confidence necessary to face the challenges that await them in college and the workforce.

**4. Which high schools will be redesigned?**

All comprehensive high schools will be redesigned, but not all will undergo the process at the same time.

Six high schools will be redesigned for the 2008-2009 school year: Bryan Adams, W.H. Adamson, David W. Carter, L.G. Pinkston, H. Grady Spruce, and W.W. Samuell.

**5. How many high schools will be redesigned per year?**

While the idea was to begin with two high schools, there was so much interest that six schools have been included in the initial phase. Between four and five high schools are expected to go through the redesign process each year until the process is completed in 2013.

**2008-2009:** Six high schools

**2009-2010:** Four high schools will submit redesign applications (three comprehensive and one-alternative-pathway-to-graduation school)

**2010-2011:** Four high school redesign applications will be approved

**2011-2012:** Five high school redesign applications will be approved

**2012-2013:** Remaining comprehensive high school will submit applications

**6. When will the process begin?**

The high schools scheduled for redesign each year will have to go through an application process to submit the programs or pathways they want to offer and the structure they will use to offer them.

Changes will begin in the 2008-2009 school year and will be phased in. Most schools will begin with ninth grade or ninth and 10th grade and phase in the changes every year to the higher grades until the whole school operates under the same model.

**7. How were the initial schools chosen?**

Federal requirement for these six high schools to undergo significant restructuring to improve student achievement created an opportunity for the district to provide a redesigned high school concept for the 2008-2009 school year. These six high schools were chosen as the first to change the way teaching and learning takes place in the classrooms.

**8. How will the community and parents/guardians be involved?**

Parents and guardians were notified in November 2007 that the schools would be redesigned. During the fall and spring, the schools conducted surveys of parents and students to determine what careers they were interested in. Groups made up of parents, community members, representatives of higher education institutions and businesses, and the schools' Site-Based Decision Management committees met to decide what pathways the school would offer.

**9. Will the school be given additional funding for teachers and materials?**

It is the responsibility of the school principal and planning team to identify, reallocate, and/or obtain the funding necessary to maintain the transformed high school. However, realizing that transformation can be cost intensive in the early stages, the district will provide one-time start up funding of up to \$50,000 and will assist the school in seeking additional external funds. Within the budget parameters defined in the application process, the school should outline a three-year funding plan for the transformation, including the use of start-up funds related to the proposed transformation.

**10. When will the changes take place?**

Changes will begin in the 2008-2009 school year and will be phased in. Most schools will begin with ninth grade or ninth and 10th grade and phase in the changes every year to the higher grades until the whole school operates under the same model.

**11. Will the schools still follow state recommended curriculum so students can be successful in the TAKS?**

Yes, the schools will follow the rigorous curriculum established by the state and the Dallas ISD but with some modifications for specialized instruction within the context of the career pathways offered at each of the schools. For example, algebra classes will be taught within the context of architecture in the schools where that pathway is offered.

**12. How will a school decide what programs or pathways to offer?**

The new/redesigned school(s) must select one or more areas of academic focus based upon the *Achieve Texas* framework—a new education initiative from the Texas Education Agency designed to prepare students for a lifetime of success—and in response to the Workforce Commission data on high-skill, high-wage careers. Surveys of parents, students and the community also were used to determine which pathways to offer. College/career pathways and coherent programs of study for all students will be required and will be based upon the Recommended/Distinguished High School Plan and include access to at least 12 college credit hours prior to graduation that articulate to a two- or four-year college program of study.

Pathways that schools can choose include administration and sales; hospitality, tourism, and marketing; architecture and construction; business and finance; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; arts, communications, and humanities; information technology; agriculture, food, and natural resources; health and human services; education and training; and government, law, and public safety.

***13. Will the whole high school be dedicated to the program or will there be separate areas for students who want to participate?***

Redesign teams at the schools have several models from which to choose as they redesign their high schools. The models will have to be outlined in the application process and approved before implementation. The models include:

- School within a school:** one school in one building with academic pods
- Small learning communities:** one school with career-themed academies
- Shared educational complex:** one building with several small schools
- Small autonomous high school:** one building with one small school
- Alternative pathways to graduation:** one flexible-schedule school in a separate or shared facility
- Digital and virtual high schools:** no buildings and/or site/lab for the schools

***14. Will there be an application process or can any student in the attendance zone of the high school attend the redesigned school?***

It is important to note that eventually all students will have access to all Dallas ISD high schools and special services programs that will be offered. Only two schools will be schools of choice in the fall of 2008: H. Grady Spruce (engineering program of study only) and Emmett J. Conrad high schools.

For the 2008-2009 school year, only students from the attendance zones of the other redesigned schools will have access to those programs.

No high school, other than existing district magnets, may apply exclusionary or restrictive application processes or programs.

***15. If my child lives outside the attendance zone for a high school he or she wants to attend, how do they transfer?***

Eventually, every high school must be open to all students; there may not be selective criteria (e.g. a certain grade average or attendance rate). Although it is expected that most students will live in the attendance zone of the school, consideration for neighborhood students will be determined at a later date in collaboration with Central Services. School choice and application processes will be supported and outlined at the district level to ensure equity in access to programs for all students.

***16. Will transportation be provided?***

Transportation will not be provided until the 2009-2010 school year—when the first six redesigned high schools join the Parental Public School Choice program—for students who attend these schools and live more than two miles from their school of choice.

**17. What if a student wants to attend a regular high school without participating in a specific career pathway?**

Every high school will have a general studies pathway that will have the same rigorous curriculum, Advance Placement courses, and other programs but without the specialization of the career pathways.

**18. Will the redesign affect the magnet program?**

The magnet program will continue to be offered in the Dallas ISD in addition to the career pathways available in what are now comprehensive high schools.

**19. Will the redesigned schools have different schedules or follow a different calendar?**

High schools will be able to set the daily schedule for students and faculty, as long as the total student and faculty time is within the provisions of the approved instructional calendar and the schools meets the requirements of the Recommended High School Plan. Schools are encouraged to create schedules that maximize learning time for students in such a way that it does not adversely affect student transportation, particularly that of special education students. Schools are required to provide collaborative planning time daily for core academic teachers and to maintain their class load.

**20. Will there be new teachers and new principals in the redesigned schools?**

Teachers with different expertise may be needed to teach within the different career pathways.

**21. What additional benefits will students have if they attend a redesigned high school? College credit? Internships? Advanced Placement?**

All schools will be required to provide access to a full complement of Pre-AP and Advanced Placement courses, along with dual credit courses aligned to the school's area of focus. Additionally, students will benefit from having an early introduction to their choice of career through the pathways.

**22. What will happen to students in Special Education or English-as-a second-language programs in the redesigned schools?**

Implementation of all programs/courses for English language learners is required in all high schools in adherence to laws and policies related to Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language.

Implementation of all programs/courses for Special Education students is required in all high schools in adherence to laws related to the Individuals with Disabilities Act.