HISD Values Teachers

Research has shown that teachers matter most when it comes to student learning and achievement. Therefore, the HISD Board of Education, with input from thousands of Houston stakeholders, has prioritized placing an effective teacher in every classroom. The goal of this core initiative of the district’s Strategic Direction is simple: effective teaching in every classroom, in every school, every day. A key strategy of the Effective Teacher Initiative is implementing a new teacher appraisal and development system, which emphasizes professional development and individualized support to teachers. HISD is committed to supporting and developing its teachers. This new system is designed specifically to give all teachers the regular feedback they deserve as professionals and the individualized support they need to thrive in the classroom—because when our teachers succeed, our students succeed.
Overview

HISD is committed to helping each one of its teachers thrive in the classroom—because when our teachers succeed, our students succeed. First and foremost, that means ensuring that all teachers receive the individualized feedback and support they need to reach their full potential in the classroom.

This year, the HISD Board of Education took a giant step toward doing just that by approving a new teacher appraisal instrument and process, as well as an entirely new professional development structure that will support our teachers in their classrooms. Designed during the 2010–2011 school year with input from educators and community members across the district, the new appraisal and development system will give teachers a more complete and accurate picture of their performance and a clear roadmap for taking their knowledge and skills to the next level.

Under the new system, all teachers will:

■ receive regular, formative feedback throughout the year to help them identify successful teaching practices and address the specific challenges they are facing in their unique classrooms,

■ work with appraisers to create an individualized development plan that identifies specific areas for professional growth, and

■ have access to learning opportunities customized to help them meet their professional goals.

When it comes to student success, teachers matter most. High-quality professional development delivered at the campus and classroom level by educators with track records of success, along with an improved teacher appraisal system, will give teachers the supports they need and deserve.

Student Performance

Because a teacher’s primary responsibility is to help students learn, measuring student learning is an important component of the appraisal criteria. The Student Performance criteria reflect each teacher’s individual impact on student learning. To ensure fairness and appropriateness, the criteria include multiple measures of student learning that vary based on the grade level or subject taught by the teacher.

Measures will include students’ progress on statewide and districtwide assessments, progress on teacher–designed end–of–course assessments, as well as student work products and performance tasks. Although “value–added” scores will generally be part of a teacher’s appraisal when they are available, no teacher’s Student Performance rating will be based solely on value–added data. All teachers will have at least two measures of student learning included in this category.

For the full Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations rubrics as well as complete details about the measures of student learning included in the system, visit www.hisdeffectiveteachers.org.
Appraisal and Development Cycle

The new system is designed to provide teachers regular feedback and individualized support that help them grow professionally at every stage of their careers.

All teachers will participate in the appraisal process every year. The process is centered on three conferences between teachers and their appraisers—one Goal-Setting Conference in the fall, one Progress Conference in the winter, and one End-of-Year Conference in the spring. In these conferences, appraisers and teachers will discuss all aspects of the teacher's performance, the teacher’s progress toward his or her professional goals, and the teacher’s focus areas for the next several months. Appraisers will also share information about the teacher’s appraisal rating.

“It gives me, as a teacher, more voice… I get to communicate with [my appraiser] throughout the year.”

– Charlyn Henderson, HISD teacher

Appraisers will assess the Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations criteria throughout the year through various activities such as classroom observations and walkthroughs, ongoing interactions with the teacher, reviews of planning documents and resources, and reviews of items such as parent communication logs and teacher attendance records. Additionally, teachers may provide additional information on their performance for their appraiser to consider.

Every teacher will have one appraiser who is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the appraisal process, including providing feedback and access to development opportunities and assigning a summative appraisal rating. All appraisers will be school-based administrators who are trained and certified on the new system.

Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations

The Instructional Practice criteria reflect the skills and knowledge that help teachers boost student learning. They describe the standard of effective teaching practices that all HISD teachers should strive to meet.

### INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE CRITERIA

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<tr>
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The Professional Expectations criteria reflect a set of objective, measurable standards relating to a teacher’s professionalism. They describe the professional behaviors expected of every teacher in HISD.

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Teachers will have tools to reflect regularly on their practice so that they can drive their professional learning and growth with their appraiser.
Professional Development and Support

Four key features of the new system will ensure that teachers have access to development opportunities that help them do their best work in the classroom at every stage of their careers:

- **DEVELOPMENT PLANS:** All teachers will have individualized development plans to help guide their professional growth. Plans will identify specific areas for professional growth informed by results of the appraisal process as well as strategies for meeting these goals.

- **INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:** Teachers will have access to job–embedded and school–based learning opportunities customized to the specific areas of focus in their development plans. These activities could include peer coaching, workshops, and analysis of student data.

- **SELF-REFLECTION:** By reflecting on their practice throughout the year, teachers will take ownership of their professional growth and lead discussions with their appraiser about progress in the classroom.

- **TEACHER DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS:** These content–area experts will provide individualized and small–group support for teachers on campuses by coaching and mentoring them, giving them feedback, and connecting them with appropriate resources.

HISD is committed to giving all teachers the support they need to be successful. That means offering learning opportunities customized to fit each teacher’s individual professional goals.

Performance Criteria

No single measure can tell the full story of a teacher’s performance. The new system recognizes that every teacher and every classroom is unique, and it gives teachers multiple ways to demonstrate their success.

The new system evaluates teachers based on multiple measures in three major performance criteria: Instructional Practice, Professional Expectations, and Student Performance.

Every teacher will earn a rating on a four-point scale in each of these areas, and these ratings will be combined into a single summative appraisal rating of Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, or Ineffective. Student performance will be considered in combination with a teacher’s rating in Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations to determine a summative appraisal rating.

“I think this is going to not only make me a better teacher but it’s going to transform the work on our campuses.”

– Sarah Stafford, HISD teacher

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Through the conferences and post-observation feedback, teachers have regular opportunities to engage in dialogue with their appraiser about their practice and development. Between conferences, teachers will receive regular feedback. Appraisers will:

- Conduct at least two formal classroom observations and at least two walkthroughs throughout the year—each followed by in-person and/or written feedback.
- Provide informal feedback based on additional observations and reviews of student performance.
- Connect teachers with individualized development opportunities designed to address their individual focus areas.

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These specific criteria will guide appraisers for consistency and fairness, and they will give teachers a clear set of standards that they are expected to meet. Rubrics, designed on a four-point scale, will clearly articulate the performance levels for each Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations criterion.
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www.hisdeffectiveteachers.org

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
TEACHER APPRAISAL AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Houston Independent School District
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