

Advisory Committee on Education Holds Final 2018-19 Meeting

Chief of Staff Dr. Julie Hill opened the May 22 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Education, welcoming the committee members and thanking them for their continued efforts and support during the 2018-19 school year. As the group's last gathering for the current academic year, the meeting offered an opportunity for a brief update on the district's Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP), including a chance for committee members to view initial Quarter 4 results. In addition, Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson spoke about the 2019-20 [goals] set by the Spring ISD Board of Trustees, then – along with Dr. Hill – took open questions from the committee on a variety of topics.

District Targeted Improvement Plan Quarter 4 Update

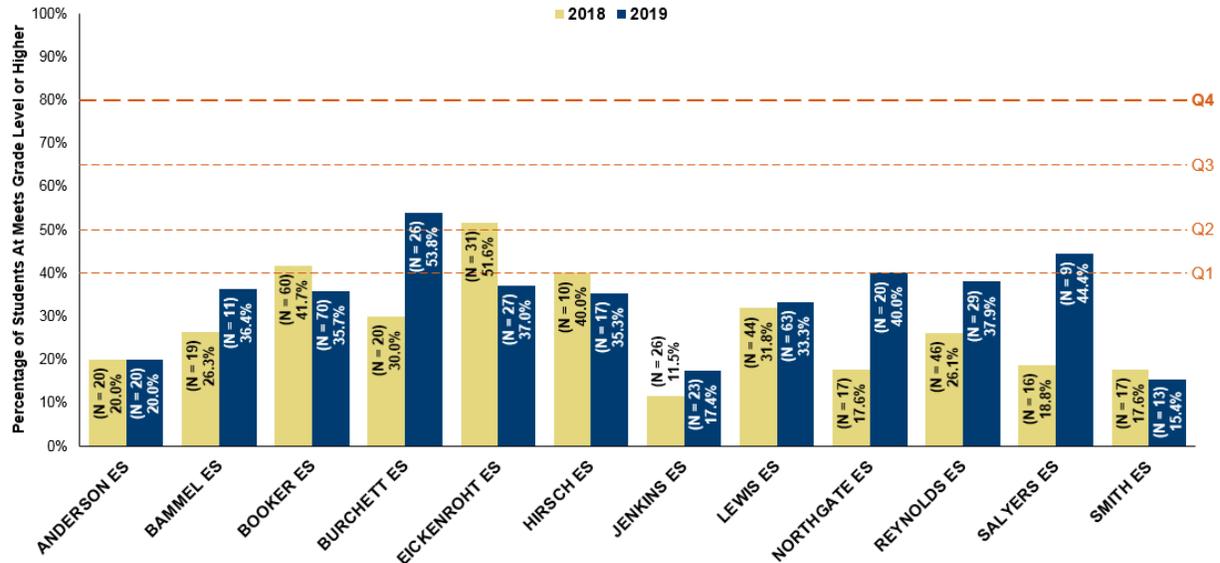
The Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) is used by the state to monitor performance of student populations in four programs:

- Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Career and Technology (CTE)
- Special Education (SPED)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Each program is measured by a set of Performance Levels (PL), which are individually scored 0-4. The higher the PL, the lower the district's performance.

Some of the results are still being calculated, but the committee was able to review a selection of the relevant STAAR testing results from April for 5th-graders and 8th-graders. The data covered only the initial STAAR administration, and Dr. Hill noted that some students will have taken the STAAR test again in early May for a chance to improve their scores. Those results (from the second test administration) will also impact the district's overall results for the purposes of the Targeted Improvement Plan.

LEP (English), Meets Grade Level: Zone 1



Although the nature of the results is still preliminary, Dr. Hill emphasized the year-over-year growth.

“We are making progress,” she said. “These bars are higher than they were last year.”

She also pointed out that some of the district’s LEP (Spanish) test takers had actually surpassed the Q4 targets.

“We’ve been making bigger gains in LEP than in SPED,” she noted, “but we’ve been working with our SPED scholars, and we hope to continue that progress next year.”

One of the committee members asked about the establishment of the “cut scores” that distinguish between STAAR performance levels (e.g., “Meets Grade Level”), and specifically whether the annual setting of those standards would be a major contributing factor in the district’s results. Since the STAAR Raw Score Conversion Tables are produced each year following the test administration, Dr. Hill explained that annual variations could have an impact. She also noted that the small sample sizes represented in some of the measured results (such as when the test results of just a handful of students on a campus were being measured), individual students’ results could have an outsized impact on the data.

“When your population is really small, the impact of their results is magnified,” she said, going on to say that the district will be looking into how campuses can better serve the needs of these relatively small cohorts of students to improve their results.

“When we’re looking at a population of two students,” Dr. Hill said regarding one data point, “why aren’t we seeing more gains? And what can we do differently?”

She said that administrators would be looking at the issue further, as well as discussing it with principals during this year’s Summer Leadership Institute.

Summer Professional Development Opportunities

Dr. Watson presented a brief overview of changes to the summer professional development calendar. Although the schedule will vary depending on staff members' individual assignments, he stressed that the district had made changes in response to teachers' requests for more dedicated time on their campus in early August preparing for the new school year.

"We heard you as far as the trainings over the summer go," he said, noting that, as long as teachers fulfill their requirements over the summer months, they will be assured of having those days in August –



specifically August 5 and 6 – to use as prep days. He encouraged teachers to carefully review the end-of-year document listing available professional development dates and courses, including a large number of trainings that will be offered in June and July.

"Sometimes when you're tired, at the end of the year, you want to put it off," he said. "But later on, you might wish that you had done it sooner."

2019-20 Board of Trustees Goals and Theory of Action

Dr. Watson next went through an overview of some of the priorities set by the Board of Trustees for the upcoming school year, including requirements for student growth, staff and student attendance, and overall accountability.

"We're asking for one year's growth," Dr. Watson said. "Wherever they come in at, we're asking for one year's growth."

He also briefly touched on the district's Theory of Action, which states:

"An aligned curriculum with corresponding progress measures supported by differentiated professional development and implemented with fidelity results in increased student achievement."

Dr. Watson said the Theory of Action would be one of the main overarching elements guiding district programs and initiatives in the upcoming year, and that committee members would be talking about it more in the fall.

He also told committee members about some of the "Superintendent Constraints" placed on him by the board – directives to the superintendent that in turn will have an impact on how the administration prioritizes certain resources and decisions. A few of these for 2019-20 include:

- The Superintendent shall not allow incomplete report cards and transcripts.
- The Superintendent shall not purchase supplemental instructional resources that do not provide a return on investment as measured by increased student achievement.
- The Superintendent shall not eliminate or decrease performing and visual arts programs without the board's permission.
- The Superintendent shall not allow employees to fail to implement "Springway" Systems and Routines.

Discussing these areas with the committee, Dr. Watson noted, in particular, that the district would be especially cautious about allowing teachers and campuses to purchase additional software resources for instruction, test prep, etc., especially when existing resources already paid for by the district were going unused or underutilized. He said that the focus would be on taking stock of the resources already on-hand – and maximizing their benefit for everyone – before purchasing additional resources.

He also noted that additional steps would be taken to make sure students had ongoing and regular access to fine arts programs. In particular, he said the administration would be looking closely into whether practices like double-blocking were limiting secondary students' access to Performing and Visual Arts (PVA) electives, or whether targeted interventions were being timed in such a way that they took elementary students out of scheduled arts-related activities.

"You all know how important PVA is to our kids and to our district," Dr. Watson told committee members. "We will not kill these programs. Students need to have the ability to participate in them. Sometimes, that's what's keeping them engaged and interested in coming to school every day."

Dr. Hill seconded the sentiment, adding, "Our kids want to go to PE, and they want to go to music, and they want to go to art." She added that the district was looking for ways to structure intervention work that would be more equitable and not limit students' opportunity to participate fully in other activities.

Question and Answer Session

Dr. Watson and Dr. Hill ended the meeting with a general Q&A session, in which some committee members asked follow-up questions about topics discussed earlier, while others introduced new topics related either to the current school year or to changes in store for the year to come.

A few of the topics that were touched on included:

- The availability of funding and the approval process for new technology programs.
- Special education offerings and how the district can better manage those offerings to promote student growth (e.g., co-teach and specially designed instruction).
- The pros and cons of campus-based Newcomer Centers and how they can be staffed.
- The implementation of standards-based grade cards (broken down by TEKS elements) that will tell parents whether students are mastering the specific skills they are expected to learn to be successful at the next grade level.
- The 2019 Texas Legislature Session and the proposals regarding teacher salary raises.

Dr. Watson completed the meeting by again thanking the ACE members for their commitment to their students, to their campuses, and to the district.

"Thank you all so much," he said. "Get some rest over the summer, and thanks again for all that you do."