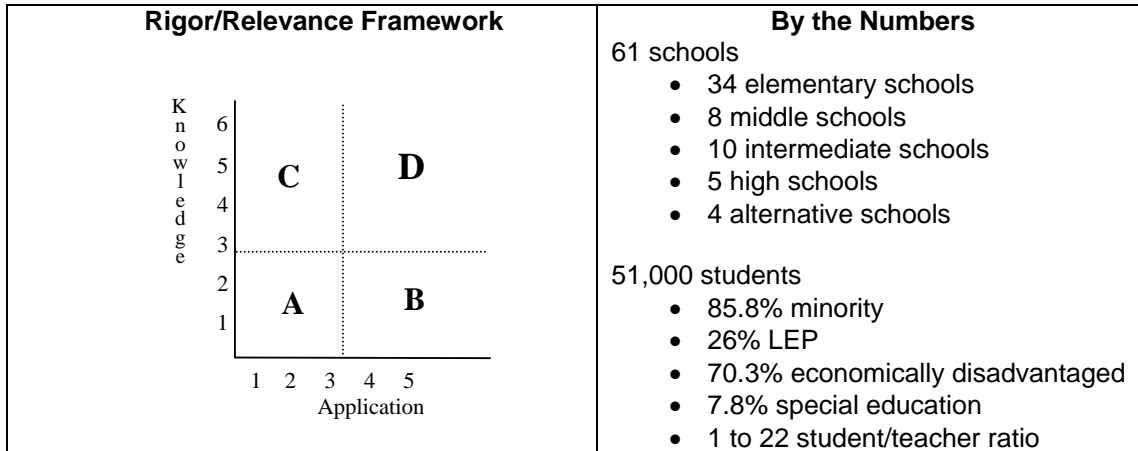




**Setting High Expectations for ALL Students —
 The Process of Whole District Reform**
 Pasadena Independent School District
 Pasadena, Texas



Introduction

The Pasadena Independent School District located in Pasadena, Texas, is a suburban school district offering programs for prekindergarten through grade 12. The boundaries of the district encompass 86 square miles with approximately 200,000 residents. The district serves four municipalities and unincorporated portions of Harris County. The economy of the area is primarily linked to the petrochemical industry with few heavily commercial areas.

The mission of the Pasadena Independent School District is to guarantee that all students will acquire knowledge, master skills, and maximize their potential as responsible citizens in the ever-changing world of the 21st century.

For the past ten years, the community and school district have experienced a large demographic shift. The district has become a high-poverty, culturally diverse setting. Recognizing that these factors could not be excuses for low expectations or poor performance, the district set out to break the cycle of poverty and ensure that every child experiences success. In response, they embarked on a journey to establish a culture of high expectations that ensures each student is equipped with the tools that he or she will need to be successful, both academically and socially.

The district began by looking to reinvent its high schools to meet the needs of 21st century learners. The first stages of data analysis quickly revealed that they needed to broaden their reform efforts to the entire district.

The following describes the actions taken by the district to build a culture of high expectations and ensure all students receive an academically rigorous and real-world relevant education

The Process of Reform

Pasadena began a multi-year reform project, in partnership with the International Center for Leadership in Education, beginning with a thorough needs assessment, strategic planning, clarification of issues and expectations, and desired scope of work. A comprehensive and integrated implementation plan was developed to support and guide the process of reform. Sustained improvement efforts and focused professional development eventually led to a comprehensive overhaul of PreK-12 based on the guidance of the International Center and its highly effective coaching and processes for change.

2004-05: A Year of Analysis

- The district spent one year studying the "why" of the need for change.
- Input was gathered from focus groups to establish a district-wide Expectation Graduation Team composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups.
- The Expectation Graduation Team analyzed survey results, focus group feedback, research on dropout initiatives, and the International Center's characteristics of successful high schools.
- High schools created their own Expectation Graduation Task Forces, which included the feeder middle school principals and had International Center consultant support.

2005-06: A Year of Development

- Dr. Willard R. Daggett's keynote presentations to all district teachers and administrators reinforced the need for change and set the stage for the creation of a shared vision about the competencies students will need to be successful after graduation.
- District leadership teams developed a multi-year improvement plan with recommended processes for sustained improvement.
- Staff development was provided on the Rigor/Relevance Framework™, academic teaming for the implementation of data-driven instruction, and differentiated literacy strategies.
- Teachers designed lessons in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.
- All high schools became members of the Successful Practices Network. Within one year, failure rates dramatically decreased in core subjects.

2006-07: A Year of Empowerment

- PreK-12 administrators participated in staff development on instructional leadership. International Center consultants met with campus teams on a monthly basis to design, monitor, and evaluate progress.
- Dr. Daggett addressed all 9th grade students on preparing for their future.
- Academic teaming and advisory periods were initiated in grade 9.
- An early start date was implemented for all freshmen at the larger high schools. Spring visitation opportunities to the high school prior to enrollment were created for both students and parents.
- Based on a review of achievement data, each campus developed three research-based instructional practices, such as cooperative grouping, note-taking skills, and questioning skills.
- A system to monitor the Expectation Graduation plans on a monthly basis was implemented.
- PreK-12 professional development continued on the Rigor/Relevance Framework.
- The district organized study tours to International Center model schools.

2007-08: A Year of Expansion

- Laser-like focus was given to research-based practices and literacy improvement strategies based on the previous year's review of data.
- Administrators received walk-through classroom training.
- Academic teaming was expanded to grade 10. Data teams were established on each campus. Teams now regularly review and report on periodic student assessments, attendance, discipline, and stretch learning.
- Raymond J. McNulty addressed all district teachers and administrators on the impact of relationships.
- Teams of master teachers developed Quadrant D lessons.
- Planning began for the implementation of career academies in grades 11 and 12 for 2008-09.

Throughout the improvement process, more than 100 district administrators and teachers have attended the Model Schools Conference each year to draw inspiration from model schools.

"Our association with the International Center for Leadership in Education has been a true partnership focused on systemic improvement and innovation. The district is showing gains in academic achievement, a reduction in failure rates, improvement in student attendance, and a decrease in dropout rates as a direct result of the training, facilitation, and staff development that we have received from the International Center. The quality of their training and materials related to differentiation of instruction as well as to the design, development, and implementation of Quadrant D lessons has directly resulted in enhanced teaching and learning."

Vicki Thomas, Deputy Superintendent
Pasadena Independent School District

Results

A. Improvement in State Rankings and State Assessment Test Scores

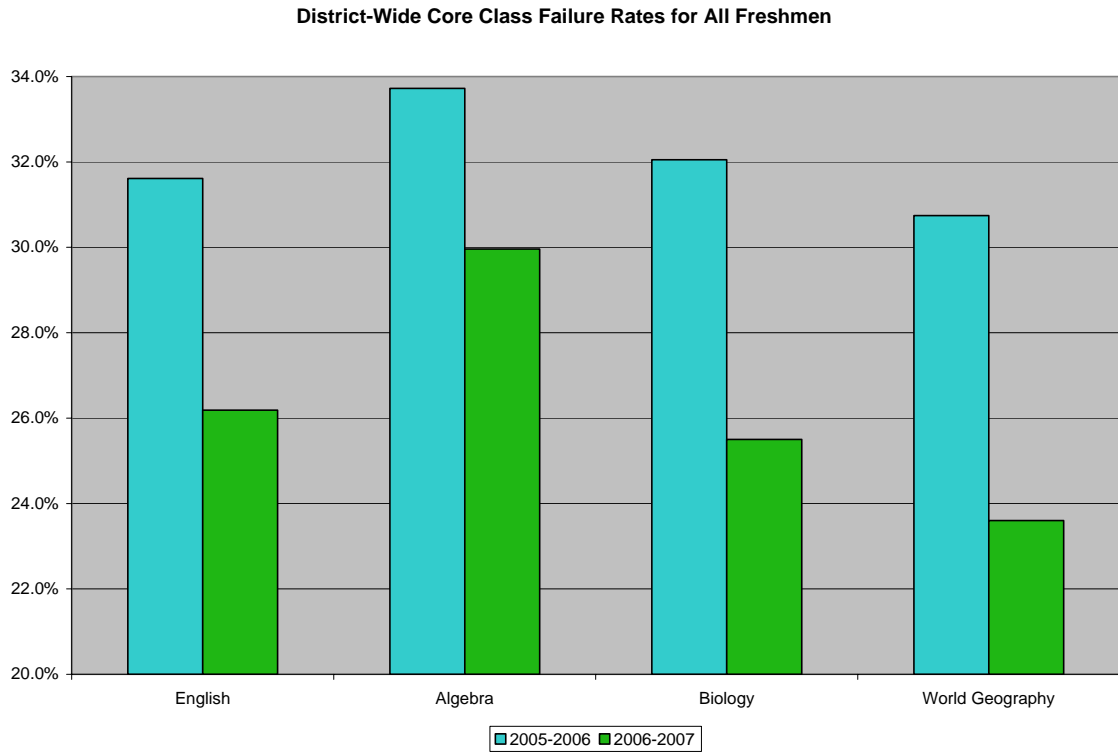
Significant Gains in **State Rankings** were made from 2006-07 to 2007-08:

- Exemplary Ranking: 9 schools were named – up from 2
- Recognized Ranking: 24 schools were named – up from 22

Between 2003 and 2007, performance on **state assessment tests** improved:

- 6% improvement in performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) English Language Arts
- 8% increase on the Mathematics portion of TAKS.

B. Within one year, failure rates dramatically decreased in core subjects



C. More students passed AP exams

