

# CVPE Factsheet 2014 (Draft)

## 1.) Support quality neighborhood schools; don't close them.

Closing even “underperforming” schools hurts student achievement and social adjustment, both for students whose schools have been closed and for students at the schools to which they are relocated.<sup>1</sup>

Closing schools damages local communities, and re-opening schools as charters or magnets does not repair the damage. After Ryan Middle School, a Third Ward school, was closed and re-opened as a magnet, only 11% of its students are from the original neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

HISD abruptly closed Dodson Elementary and Jones HS without giving parents adequate warning or explanation. Superintendent Terry Grier stated that these school buildings were needed to temporarily house students during construction projects. HISD policy does not authorize closures for this reason.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.) Limit class size.

Studies show that students in smaller classes tend to be 1-2 months ahead of peers, across all subjects.<sup>4</sup>

Students who are placed in small classes in elementary school retain an academic advantage even if they are later placed in large classes in upper elementary and middle school.<sup>5</sup>

Texas law limits elementary school classes to 22 students. Schools can apply for waivers to have larger classes. HISD continues to increase its number of waivers allowing for oversized elementary classes.

## 3.) Eliminate the use of STAAR as a promotion standard in non required grades.

STAAR tests have not been proven valid. 74% of HISD 3rd graders passed the 2013 STAAR reading test, but Stanford scores showed that only 29% of elementary students could read at or above grade level.<sup>6</sup>

While students prepared for the STAAR test, Stanford reading scores declined between 2011 and 2013.<sup>7</sup>

High stakes testing leads to a narrowing of the curriculum. Most instructional time is spent on tested subjects such as math and language arts, leading to the marginalization of social studies and science.<sup>8</sup>

Researchers have found that elementary school students show more testing anxiety, including cognitive and physiological symptoms, when given high stakes standardized tests as opposed to low stakes tests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kirshner, B., Gaertner, M., & Pozzoboni, K. (2010). Tracing Transitions The Effect of High School Closure on Displaced Students. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 32(3), 407-429.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/Fix-the-process-for-closing-schools-5304879.php>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.chron.com/news/education/article/Activists-mount-final-effort-to-prevent-school-5308577.php>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/why-class-size-matters>

<sup>5</sup> Bruhwiler & Blatchford, 2011; Chingos, 2013

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.houstonpress.com/2013-12-12/news/hisd-reading-problem/full/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.houstonpress.com/2013-12-12/news/hisd-reading-problem/full/>

<sup>8</sup> A National Perspective on the Effects of High-Stakes Testing and Standardization on Elementary Social Studies Marginalization  
Paul G. Fitchett, Tina L. Heafner *Theory & Research in Social Education* Vol. 38, Iss. 1, 2010

#### **4.) Keep strong teachers and principals in HISD.**

HISD teacher turnover increased abruptly, coinciding with the high stakes STAAR test. In 2010-2011, the turnover rate was 12.4%. In 2011-2012, it climbed sharply to 17.2%. By 2012-2013, it was 18.7%.<sup>10</sup>

Teacher turnover is expensive. A 2007 study found that hiring and training new teachers on account of teacher turnover cost Milwaukee \$15,325 and Chicago \$17,872 for every teacher who left.<sup>11</sup>

Researchers found that students in areas with high teacher turnover perform worse than their peers in more stable situations, in both English and math.<sup>12</sup>

HISD has gotten rid of extra pay for teachers with master's degrees. This disregard for teachers who have pursued higher education has been cited as a possible factor contributing to teacher turnover.<sup>13</sup>

#### **5.) Provide adequate nurses, librarians, counselors, and social workers in all schools.**

30% of cases that HISD school nurses handle involve children without primary health care. For many students, the HISD school health services are the only health services they can access.<sup>14</sup>

A Philadelphia survey on the effects of eliminating school nurses found that 70% of respondents stated that teachers or aids were administering student medications. 52% said that children were not receiving urgent medical care. 46% said schools asked parents to administer their children's meds at school.<sup>15</sup>

A 2010 study found that 100,000 juveniles in Houston have a mental illness. It also found that 70% of the more than 16,000 of these young people who need services are not getting them.<sup>16</sup>

School counselors can find mental health services for students. But HISD school counselors face a 700 (sometimes as high as 2000) to 1 student to counselor ratio. (The state average is 400 to 1).<sup>17</sup>

#### **6.) Support HISD's Pre-K for all initiative**

Attending high quality pre-K has been shown to correlate with greater academic and financial success later in life. It has also been associated with social and emotional gains for children.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Segool, N. K., Carlson, J. S., Goforth, A. N., von der Embse, N. and Barterian, J. A. (2013), Heightened Test Anxiety Among Young Children: Elementary School Students' Anxious Responses To High-Stakes Testing. *Psychol. Schs.*, 50: 489-499. doi: 10.1002/pits.21689

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.johnlocke.org/newsletters/research/2014-05-28-u9mbkucfl230k5dj328o2fna0-edu-update.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497176.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4-36.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/02/08/3600665\\_teachers-jobs-are-getting-harder.html?rh=1](http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/02/08/3600665_teachers-jobs-are-getting-harder.html?rh=1)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.chron.com/neighborhood/heights-news/article/Houston-isd-hires-school-nurses-as-other-1755909.php>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ELC\\_SchoolNurseReport\\_May2013.pdf](http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ELC_SchoolNurseReport_May2013.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Few-schools-can-afford-mental-health-care-that-1611473.php>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/In-need-of-guidance-5715814.php>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2005/06/15/why-all-children-benefit-from-prek>