

Apollo 20 Schools
Mid-Year Network Education Report
2010-2011

January 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Apollo 20 Program is an initiative within the Houston Independent School District (HISD or the “District”) designed to accelerate the District’s efforts to improve student performance, close the achievement gap in HISD, and fundamentally change public education in Houston and in districts across the United States.

The following Mid-Year Apollo 20 Schools Network Education Report for 2010-2011 presents an introduction to The Apollo 20 Program and provides details on implementation, student achievement and program strengths and opportunities for growth.

The Five Tenets

There are five school turnaround principles that make Apollo 20 Schools unique to other programs in HISD. These strategies are drawn from research by Dr. Roland Fryer and the Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University. They include:

1. **Human Capital**: Apollo 20 schools recruit top leadership talent, reward teachers and staff for their performance, and hold teachers and principals individually accountable for increasing student achievement.
2. **More Time on Task**: During the 2010-11 academic year, Apollo 20 students receive 5 additional days of school and a longer school day (7:45 AM-4:15 PM Monday-Thursday and 7:45 AM-3:15 PM on Fridays) than other students in the district. For students in grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 who are below grade level, double dosing of math or ELA supplements their current curriculum.
3. **Data-Driven Instruction**: Apollo 20 students are assessed often and results are broken down into discrete skill mastery for accelerating and weaknesses for re-teaching.
4. **High-Dosage Tutoring**: For all students in 6th and 9th grades, Apollo 20 classroom instruction in mathematics is supplemented with 2-on-1 tutoring during the regular school day.
5. **Culture of High Expectations for All**: In Apollo 20 schools, adults must buy into the school’s mission and into the importance of their students’ education. This feature must permeate all other facets of Apollo 20. The Apollo 20 goals are as follows:
 - 100% of students performing on or above grade level
 - 100% graduation rate
 - 95% attendance rate for students and staff

Participating Schools

Currently, nine schools are participating in the Apollo 20 project. These nine schools are:

High Schools (4)

Jones High School
Kashmere High School
Lee High School
Sharpstown High School

Middle Schools (5)

Attucks Middle School
Dowling Middle School
Fondren Middle School
Key Middle School
Ryan Middle School

Data Collection Overview: One distinguishing characteristic of Apollo 20 schools is the volume of school and classroom information that is provided to administrators and teachers. *Quantitative data* is collected from several sources. HISD interim assessments, READ 180 reports, and a mid-year assessment using released TAKS questions provide schools with student-specific information broken out by TEKS standards. HISD student information databases provide longitudinal information regarding demographics, attendance and discipline infractions, such as suspension rates.

Monthly site visits conducted by The Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University (EdLabs) provide a consistent source of *qualitative data*. EdLabs sends two-person teams to spend a full instructional day (8-9 hours) at every Apollo 20 school each month. The EdLabs' site visit agenda includes:

- Review of school data and current goals/priorities
- Observations of 15-20 classrooms
- Observations of four tutorial rooms (12-24 tutors)
- Completed observation rubric for each classroom and tutor room that notes instructional strategies, student engagement, classroom environment, and student-teacher interactions
- 30-45 minute focus group with 4-8 randomly selected students
- 30-45 minute focus group with 4-8 teachers
- 30-45 minute focus group with 4-8 tutors
- 30-60 minute debrief with the administrative leadership team

Data and information gathered at these monthly visits are shared with the Apollo 20 principals and the School Improvement Officer for his use in supporting the school leadership teams and tutor coordinators in improvement efforts. In addition, members from the Apollo 20 central administration team conduct periodic site visits at each school throughout the year to monitor progress and conduct planning sessions with the school leadership team.

All of this data is used to draw conclusions about relative strengths and areas of opportunity for individual Apollo 20 schools and the Network as a whole. A few highlights are listed below for the first semester of the 2010-11 academic year.

- **There have been dramatic changes in the school culture** at all nine Apollo 20 schools. Expectations for student behavior and attendance have increased, resulting in safer, more welcoming learning environments.

- **The tutoring program is consistently cited as a highlight of the school experience.** The tutoring selection process yielded a group of high-quality tutors that are driving student achievement in the first year of the program.
- **Teachers need additional support and training to increase instructional quality, academic rigor, and student engagement.** Although students report that the quality of teaching at Apollo 20 schools has improved this year, in many classrooms, students are often asked to complete assignments and activities that are below grade level expectations.
- **The quality of leadership teams is a strength of the Apollo 20 schools.** Although school leadership teams joined the Apollo 20 team at different points during summer 2010, school leaders have created and implemented innovative systems to support the Apollo 20 reform strategies, and led the dramatic change in culture and climate of the school.

HISD Apollo 20 History and Overview

In August 2010, the Houston Independent School District launched the Apollo 20 Program, a major school turnaround reform initiative that is designed to dramatically improve student performance and close the achievement gap. Four high schools and five middle schools were selected to participate.

High Schools (4)

Jones High School
Kashmere High School
Lee High School
Sharpstown High School

Middle Schools (5)

Attucks Middle School
Dowling Middle School
Fondren Middle School
Key Middle School
Ryan Middle School

Apollo 20 is an initiative made possible by a partnership between HISD and The Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University (EdLabs), a leading education research and development lab. EdLabs is a collection of researchers, education practitioners, and operational strategists with expertise in the creation, implementation and evaluation of education programs.

In May, 2010, Dr. Terry B. Grier, Superintendent, and his HISD leadership team met with Dr. Roland Fryer, Faculty Director of EdLabs, to discuss his research and analysis regarding high performing charter schools. Dr. Fryer's research identified five elements that are found in successful charter schools to be the strongest drivers for increasing student performance. These **five tenets** are:

1. **Human Capital:** Successful schools reward teachers and principals for performance and hold them accountable if they are not adding value.
2. **More Time on Task:** Extended day, week, and school years are all integral components of successful school models. In the case of Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy, students have nearly doubled the amount of time on task compared to students in NYC public schools.
3. **Data-Driven Instruction:** In the top schools, students are assessed often and results are broken down into discrete skill strengths and weaknesses for re-teaching.
4. **High-Dosage Tutoring:** In top-performing schools, students are assessed frequently, and then, in small groups, re-taught the skills they have not yet mastered.
5. **Culture of High Expectations for All:** In successful schools, students buy into the school's mission and into the importance of their education in improving their lives.

With fewer than five months before the opening of the 2010-2011 school year, HISD created a strategic plan to implement these five tenets in HISD. EdLabs joined as an implementation partner and agreed to conduct a five year evaluation of the program. Specific HISD implementation details regarding the five tenets are described later on in this report.

HISD Goals and Evaluation

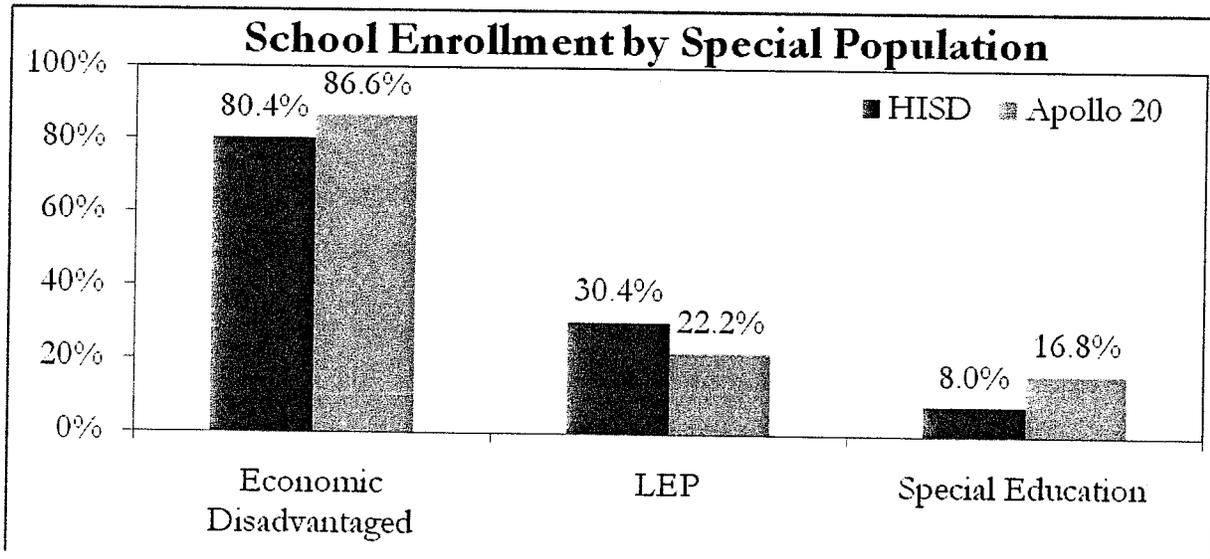
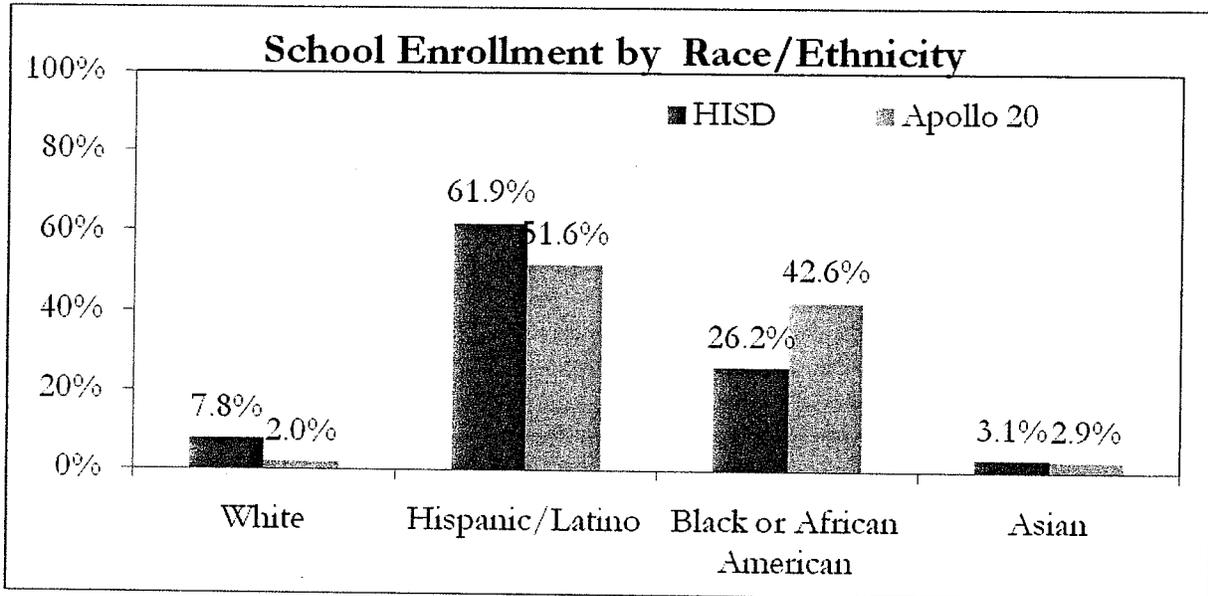
HISD has established rigorous goals which will be used to measure Apollo 20's success:

- o 100% of students performing on or above grade level

- 100% graduation rate
- 95% attendance rate for students and staff

Apollo 20 Program Demographics

The Apollo 20 program serves 4,156 high school students and 3,229 middle school students. The percentages of special education students and families eligible for the free and reduced lunch program in Apollo 20 schools are higher than the district averages.



Figures 1A-B: 2010-11 Apollo 20 Student Demographics

Mid-year Update on the Apollo 20 Five Tenets

The following section describes the implementation status and accompanying data points for each of the five tenets.

1. Investment in Human Capital

Implementation Overview:

- HISD assigned new principals to all nine Apollo 20 schools.
- 196 new teachers were assigned to Apollo 20 schools. This represents 39 percent of the entire Apollo 20 teacher corps.
- Teachers completed a four-phase HISD application process that included:
 1. Online application and essay
 2. In-person or videotaped teaching demonstration lesson
 3. Formal in-person or via two-way interactive video (SKYPE) interview
 4. Performance, reference and credential review
- 76 first year Teach for America corps members were hired by principals in Apollo 20 schools.
- HISD hired an internal Apollo 20 Team that includes: School Improvement Officer, two Academic Program Managers, Data Analyst, and Secretary
- HISD designed a series of four professional development sessions on classroom management for first year and selected Apollo 20 teachers.
- Apollo 20 teachers were also provided Saturday professional development sessions on topics selected by principals. These topics included: student engagement and motivation, differentiation for all students (by content area), use of daily assessments and checking for understanding and planning for effective learning.

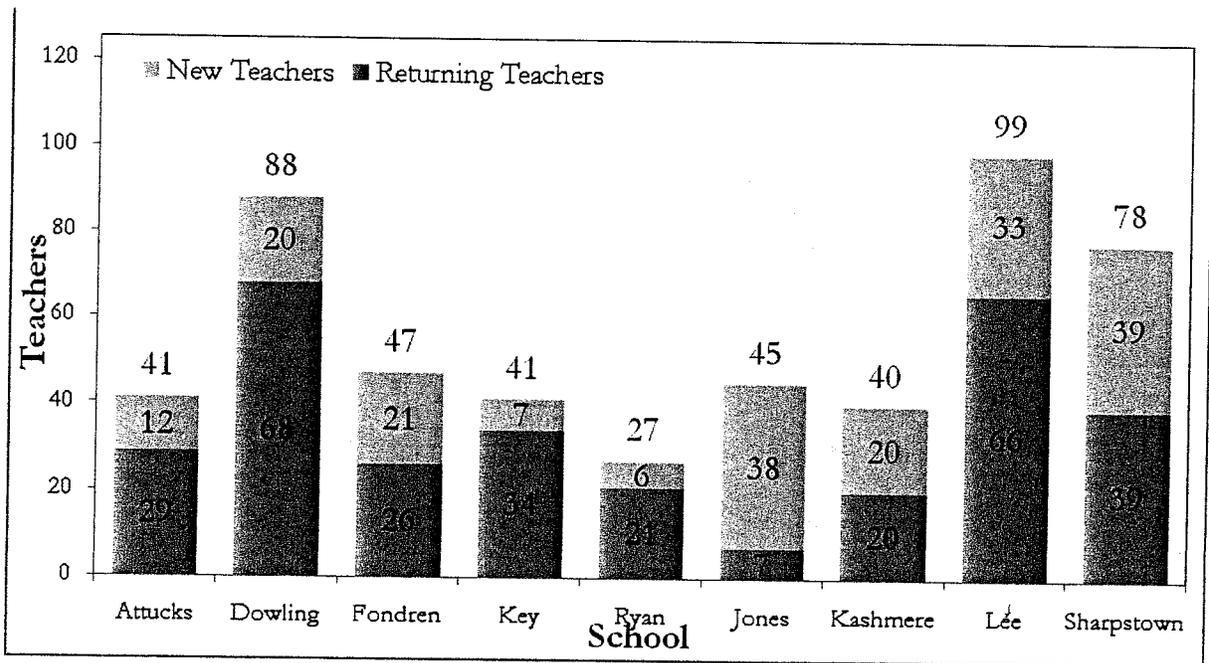


Figure 2: New and Returning Teachers, 2010-11

Site Visit Observations and Focus Group Feedback

- Students report improvement in teacher quality and higher expectations for their performance. Students at several schools report increased workload, both in terms of class work and homework.
- Several schools have a high percentage of first- and second-year teachers which presents a specific demand for professional development in the area of classroom management. Some school leadership teams report a lack of experienced teachers on-site who can act as mentors for new or struggling teachers.
- In the majority of classrooms there is a lack of instructional rigor, limited use of varied instructional strategies and limited student engagement.
- Teachers report that HISD professional development opportunities are of good quality.
- Leadership teams that had more planning and preparation time during summer 2010 have had smoother transitions into this school year than schools in which the leadership team came together very close to the start of school.

2. More Instructional Time

Implementation Overview:

- The academic year was extended by five days (185 instructional days)
- The school day was lengthened by one hour on average (7:45 AM - 4:15 PM Monday-Thursday and 7:45 AM-3:15 PM on Fridays)
- All schools offer Saturday School and after school tutoring
- Students in 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades who are below grade level receive an additional period (double dose) of English Language Arts or Math instruction each day

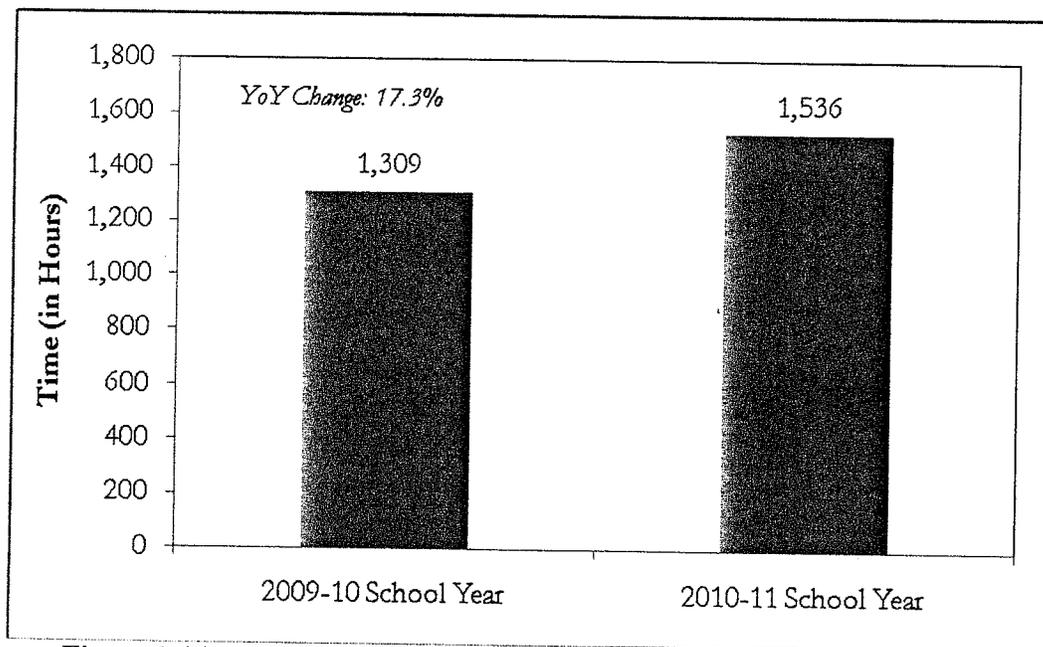


Figure 3: Total Student Time on Task, 2009-10 and 2010-11 School Years

1,407 students who began the year below grade level in reading were assigned to the **Read 180 program**. Many students are showing significant growth in their reading skills through the first semester of 2010-11.

- 263 students (19%) had greater than 2.0 years of typical reading growth
- 327 students (23%) had between 1.0 and 2.0 years of typical reading growth
- 204 students (14%) had between 0.5 and 1.0 years of typical reading growth

Site Visit Observations and Focus Group Feedback

- Students and teachers have expressed some weariness because of the extended school day. However, these complaints have decreased over the course of the year. Sixth and ninth grade students, as well as students who are new to the school, did not express concerns about the length of the school day.
- Schools have leveraged the longer school day and year to increase direct instruction in English and math.

3. Use of Data to Drive Instruction

Implementation Overview:

- All Apollo 20 schools are expected to use HISD Interim Assessments¹
- All Apollo 20 schools implemented a mid-year assessment using released TAKS questions (developed by the HISD Apollo 20 team) to identify areas of strength and weakness in math, ELA and science.²
- Individual schools may also assess and progress monitor student achievement using other assessments. This report does not include data from individual school-based diagnostics.

Site Visit Observations and Focus Group Feedback

- School leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school based on interim assessments and TAKS release testing.
- System-wide there is a high degree of variance in the use of data to drive student instruction. Teachers have varying levels of comfort in applying student data to instructional planning.
- Some teachers have expressed concerns about the balance between instructional time and time allocated for testing.

4. High Dosage In-School Tutoring

Implementation Overview:

¹ Interim assessments are formative assessments that are given every three weeks in English Language Arts/Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. They are short assessments – usually around ten questions in length – that are intended for teacher use in determining which students have mastered particular objectives, which students need specific interventions, and which instructional areas require whole-class re-teach. The interim assessments do not provide external observers with information regarding summative student achievement.

² All Apollo 20 schools administered a multi-day, mid-year assessment that used released TAKS questions. Because the test items were pulled from different release tests, and schools administered different sections and versions of the exam, we are not able to present school comparative data. However, school leaders have used the information to help guide the Saturday and after school instruction program and student placement in these interventions.

- Recruited 1217 Math Fellow (tutors) applicants from 33 states
- Hired 254 Math Fellows from 14 states using a rigorous screening process:
 - All applicants had to pass through a review of credentials, including:
 - an earned Bachelor's Degree
 - strong math skills
 - ability to connect with and engage students and
 - skilled at supporting the acquisition of math knowledge and skills with secondary students
 - Locally-based applicants who passed the initial screen were invited to participate in one of 8 HISD hiring events through the months of July and August.
 - Approximately 30% of those who applied for the program were interviewed onsite following a very structured process that included:
 - Screening by HISD Human Resources
 - 1-hour math assessment (based on the TAKS 6th and 9th Grade 2009 test)
 - Sample tutorial (10-15 minute observation of 1-on-1 tutoring with student volunteers)
 - Final interview with school representative

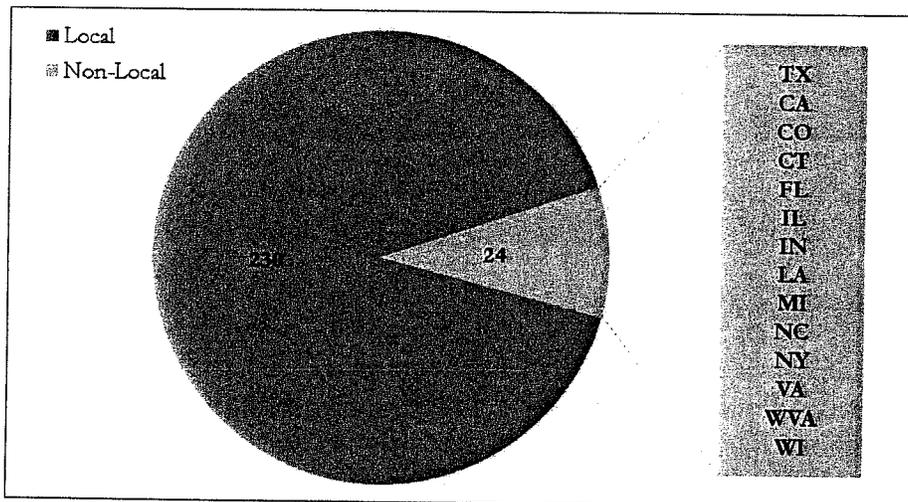


Figure 4: Apollo 20 Local and Non-Local Fellows, 2010-11

Prior to the start of school, tutors who were selected for the Math Fellows (i.e. tutors) program completed 10 days of training that HISD and MATCH Schools, Inc., a successful Charter Management Organization in Boston, Massachusetts, designed to ensure a smooth transition to campus life. Several days were spent together as a cohort, understanding HISD culture and reviewing the expectations for the Math Fellows program. The remaining days were spent on-campus, where tutors were integrated with their school teams and participated in school-specific professional development courses, such as school policies & procedures, curriculum planning and instruction, and parent engagement/communications. MATCH created a curriculum program, based on the Texas state testing standard (TAKS), to complement the instructional resources purchased by HISD, provided other materials to support instruction in the classroom. As a result of this on-boarding and early training, Math Fellows were adequately prepared to begin work with their students on the First Day of school.

Additionally, HISD established a set of evaluation processes to ensure the continuous development of our Fellows throughout the year. HISD specifically designed policies and procedures around:

- Conducting Observations & Walkthroughs
- Evaluating Student Progress through Data
- Collecting Feedback from Fellows and Students
- Conducting PD Courses: Skills Focus (ELL/Special Ed), Learning Objectives (aligned with TAKS)

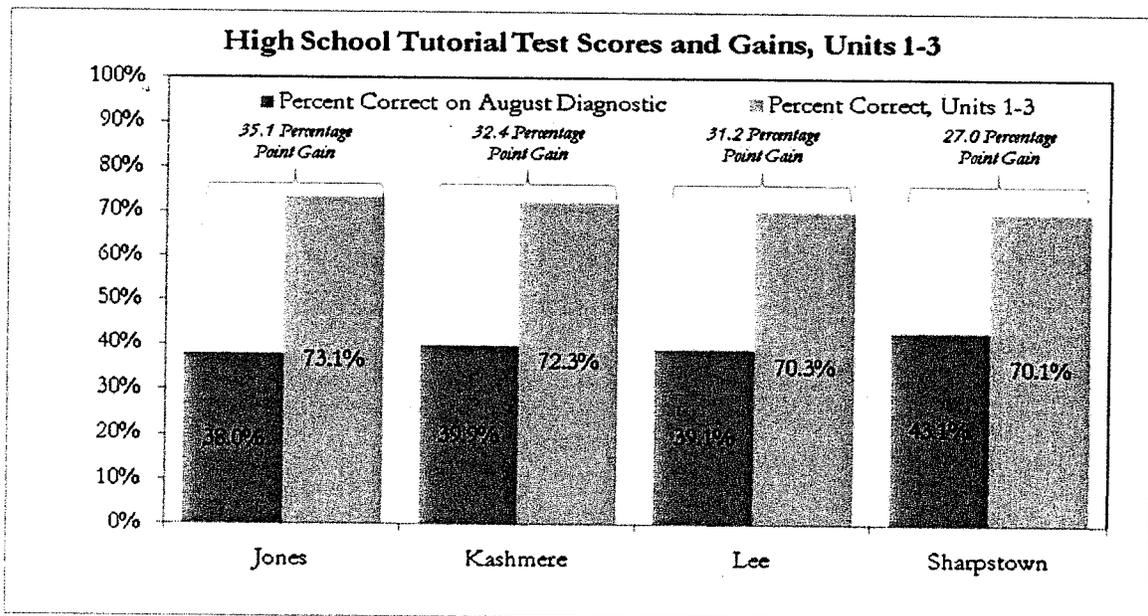
Each school has a Fellows Coordinator who is responsible for the execution of these processes. The MATCH team and HISD Apollo 20 leadership team have worked closely with coordinators to create an environment of high expectations and clear accountability for the achievement of our students in math.

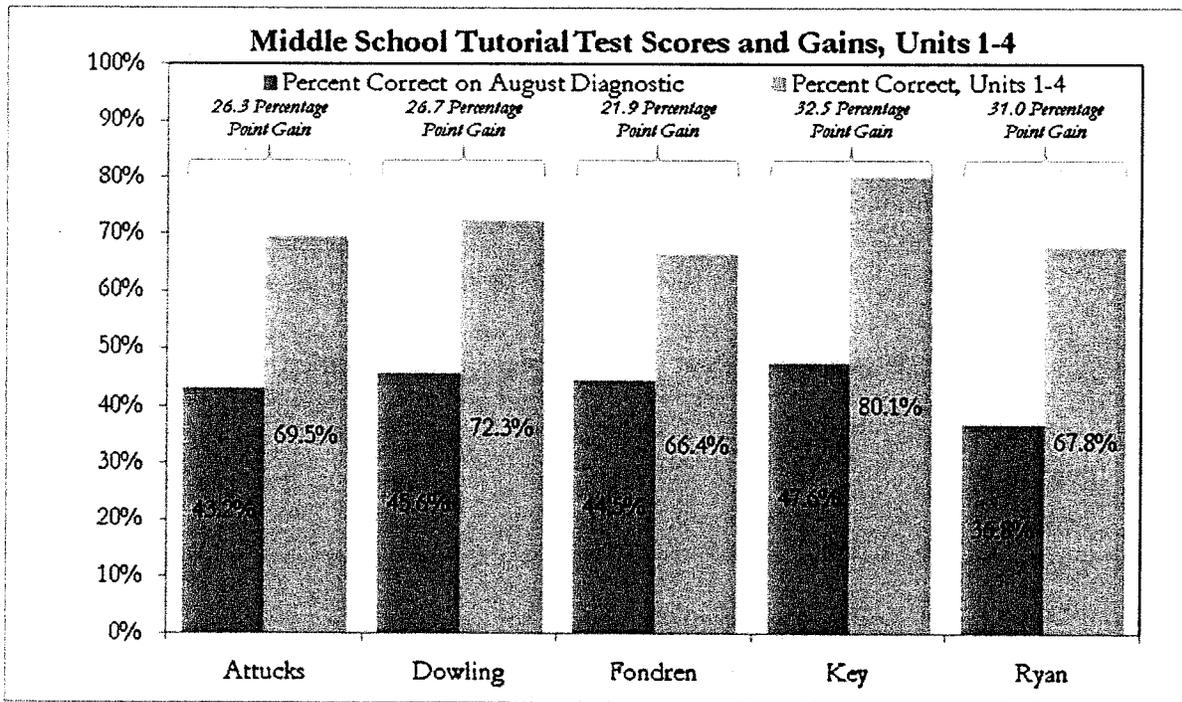
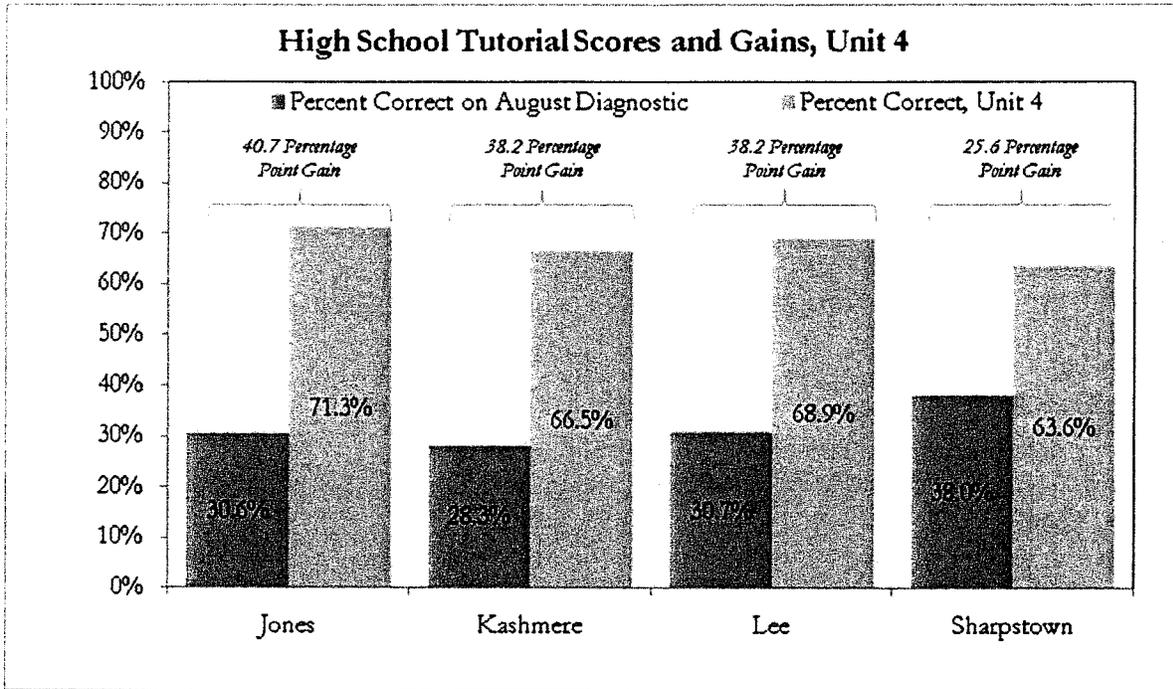
- All 6th and 9th grade students receive 60-80 minutes of 2-on-1 individualized math tutoring during each school day
- Students complete a tutorial unit approximately every three weeks and take a test at the end of each unit.

What do the math tutorial unit tests tell us?

The math tutorial unit tests each examine student performance on a subset of the TEKS that are covered on the TAKS end-of-year assessment. At the beginning of the school year all sixth and ninth grade students took a diagnostic assessment that covered the full year's math material. The figures below track student performance and growth on tutorial assessments to date.

Student achievement growth is measured by the change in a student's performance on a common set of TEKS tested on both the diagnostic and on the unit assessment. For example, ninth grade students at Jones High School (who also took the beginning of the year diagnostic assessment), on average, correctly answered 73.1 percent of the questions on the Units 1-3 exam. In August, the same students, on average, correctly answered 38 percent of the questions that covered the same TEKS that were tested on the Units 1-3 exam. Thus, this cohort of students achieved a 35.1 percentile point gain.





Figures 5A-C: Tutorial Test Scores and Gains for High Schools (5A-B) and Middle Schools (5C)

Site Visit Observations and Focus Group Feedback

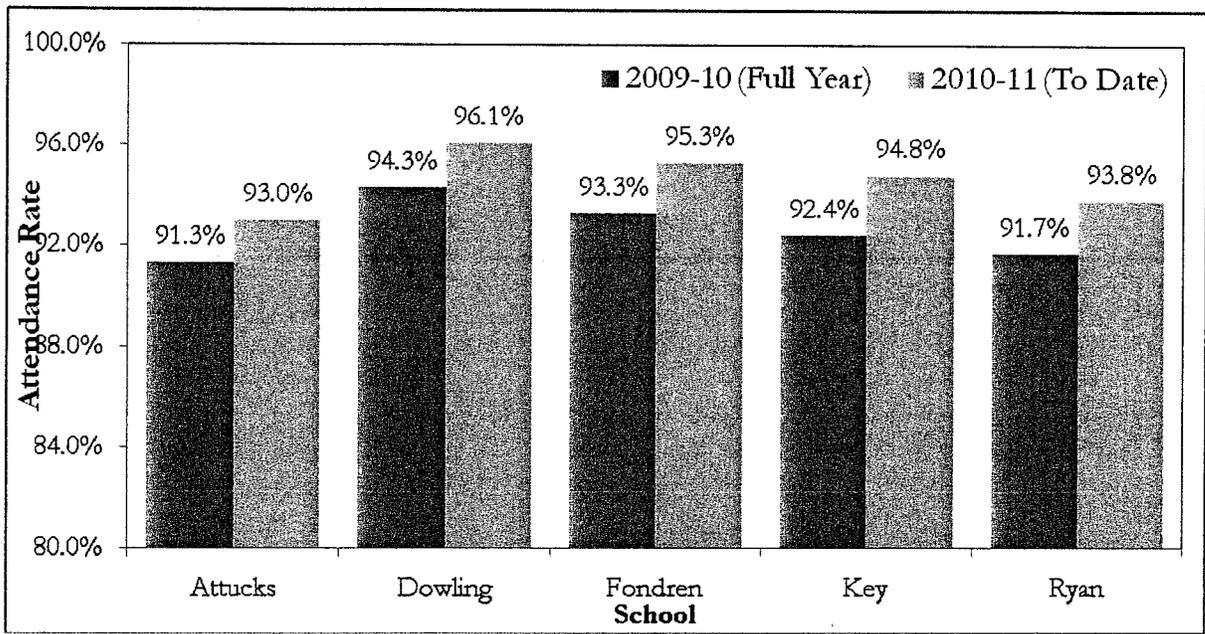
- Students at all schools are extremely pleased with the tutorial program. They report strong interpersonal connections with their tutors as well as academic growth.
- The majority of tutors demonstrate strong instructional practices.

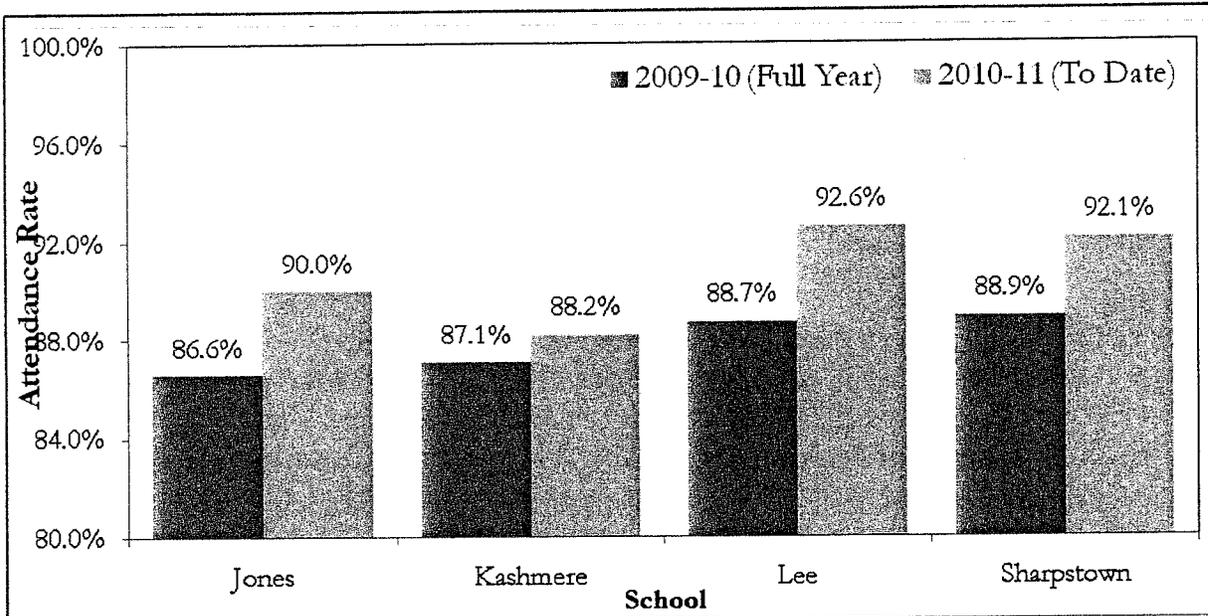
- Innovative best practices developed by tutors are being shared within the tutorial program across campuses.
- Integration of tutors into school culture at-large varies from campus to campus.
- All Apollo 20 middle and high schools demonstrate growth on tutorial unit assessments

5. School Culture

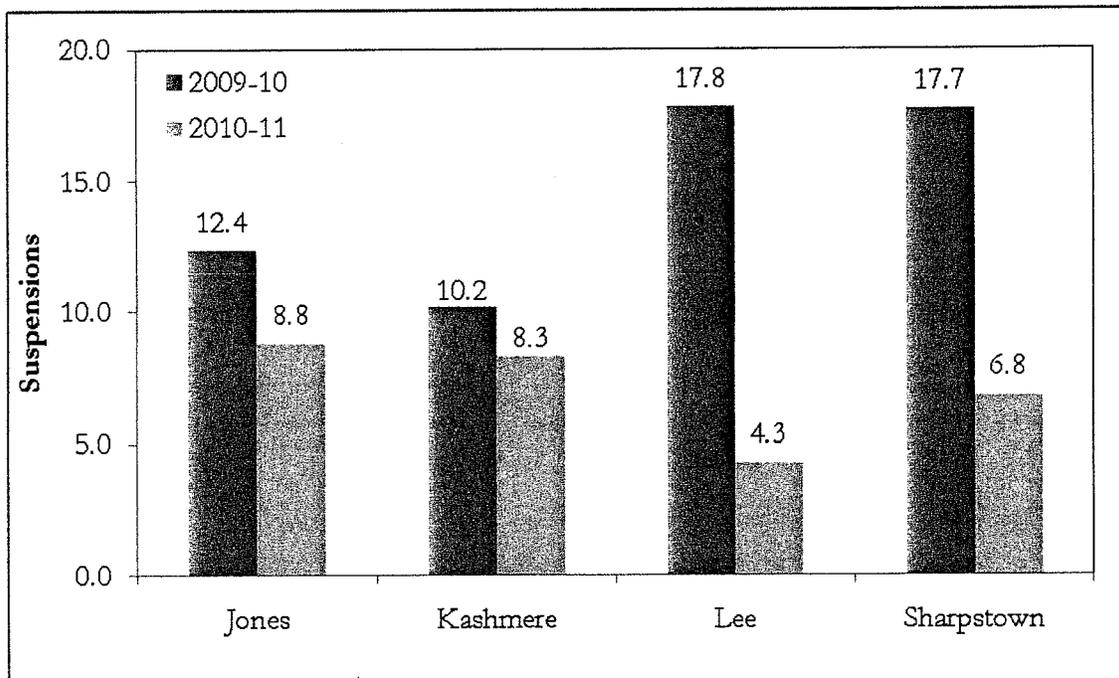
Implementation Overview:

- Emphasis on a “no excuses” culture for attendance and behavior
- New attendance and behavior systems implemented at each school
- Emphasis on establishing a college going culture for each campus
- Emphasis on consistent expectations across all Apollo 20 classrooms regarding posting of learning objectives, agendas, exit tickets, teacher dress and positive adult-student interactions





Figures 6A-B: Year over Year Attendance Rates for High Schools (6A) and Middle Schools (6B), 2009-10 vs. 2010-11



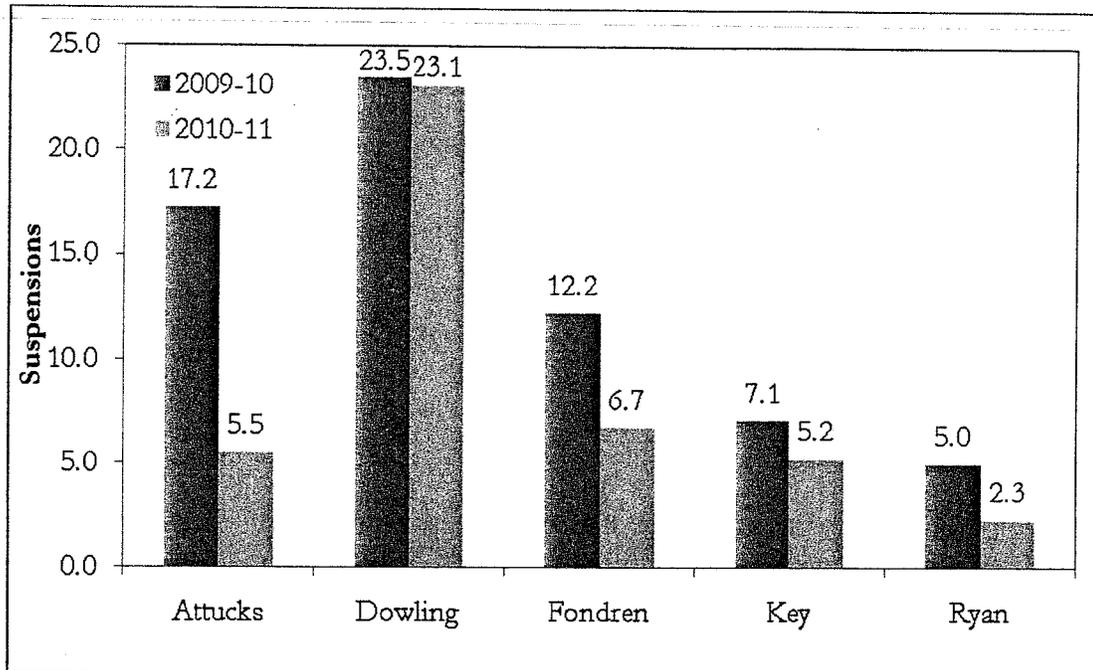


Figure 7A-B: Year over Year Suspensions Rates for High Schools (7A) and Middle Schools (7B)

Site Visit Observations and Focus Group Feedback

- At all schools, students report that there is a safer school climate that is more conducive to learning.
- A strong, college-going culture is visible on all campuses.
- Teachers are having conversations with their students about long-term goal-setting but this has generally not yet translated into short-term academic goal-setting.
- Students know that they attend Apollo 20 schools, but there are varying degrees of understanding regarding the rationale and purpose for implementing the five tenets that constitute the Apollo 20 program.
- Students and teachers report a higher level of accountability for performance from school leadership.

Areas of Relative Strength

The achievement data and evaluation from EdLabs and HISD Administrators indicate that there are three areas of strength developing in the Apollo 20 Network:

- **Tutoring:** The tutoring program is consistently cited by all school stakeholders as a highlight of the school experience. The implementation of the tutoring program is consistent across the Apollo 20 system. The tutoring selection process yielded a group of high-quality tutors that are driving student achievement in the first year of the program. Tutors are well supported both within their schools and by the central Apollo 20 team.
- **School Culture:** There have been dramatic changes in the school culture at all nine Apollo 20 schools. Expectations for student behavior and attendance have increased, resulting in safer,

more welcoming learning environments. Schools display visual evidence of a strong college-going culture and consistently emphasize student performance and school goals.

- **Leadership:** Although school leadership teams joined the Apollo 20 team at different points during summer 2010, the quality of school leadership teams is a consistent strength across the Apollo 20 schools. The central Apollo 20 team coordinates the collaboration of school leadership teams to allow for the sharing of best practices and the brainstorming of solutions to common problems.

Opportunities for Growth and Action

Based on a review of the overall data the Network is focused on three areas:

- **Focus on Instructional Quality and Student Engagement:** Teachers need additional support and training to increase instructional quality, academic rigor, and student engagement. In many classrooms, students are either engaged in low-level worksheets and activities or sit listening to teacher-centered instruction.
- **Data Driven Instruction:** Teacher lesson planning, preparation and classroom instruction do not consistently incorporate information on student skill-based strengths and weaknesses. Student data can be used more effectively for re-teaching and to group students for differentiated learning.
- **Apollo 20 Communication:** Students and teachers struggle to articulate the tenets, purpose and rationale behind the Apollo 20 program. Although they cite a strong initial push to introduce the mission of Apollo 20 to the community, the effects of this effort seem to have faded. There is a need for renewed communication regarding the Apollo 20 program, purpose and results within the schools and across the district.

CONCLUSION

Given the scope and scale of the Apollo 20 program reforms and the speed with which they were implemented, network schools have done a solid job to create supporting conditions for sustained improvement. The more challenging work, as all leaders associated with Apollo 20 have acknowledged, is to change the daily experiences for students in Apollo 20 classrooms. Relentless attention to and investment in teaching practice, instructional rigor and student engagement will be required in the months and years ahead to realize Apollo 20's ambitious goals. It is worth noting that other school districts across the country are now looking at HISD's Apollo 20 program for answers, strategies and lessons learned as a pathway to address their own chronically failing schools. Thus, the ongoing investment in Apollo 20 schools has the potential to change mindsets about what is possible for students, families and schools both within and far beyond Houston's boundaries.



APOLLO 20 PROJECT: *Progress Update*

Houston Independent School District

(February 2011)

Apollo 20 Tenets

1. Effective Principal and Teachers in Every School
2. More Instructional Time
3. Use of Data to Drive Instruction
4. High-dosage Tutoring
5. A Culture of High Expectations for All

Goals

- 100% graduation rate in three years
- 100% of students on grade level in three years
- 95% student attendance rate in three years



Impact of Apollo 20 Math Fellows Tutoring

Middle School	% Growth*
Attucks	41.08
Dowling	43.97
Fondren	33.28
Key	41.16
Ryan	38.64

High School	% Growth*
Jones	30.7
Kashmere	19.73
Lee	28.01
Sharpstown	30.71

*Growth is based on comparison of student performance from the August 2010 diagnostic assessment and the performance average on Units 1-4 (middle school) and Units 1-3 (high school).

Attendance Rates

Middle School	2009-10	2010-11*
Attucks	93.3%	92.4%
Dowling	95.4%	95.7%
Fondren	93.9%	94.7%
Key	93.7%	94.8%
Ryan	93.4%	93.9%

High School	2009-10	2010-11*
Jones	89.1%	89.0%
Kashmere	90.1%	87.1%
Lee	91.4%	91.9%
Sharpstown	90.8%	91.7%

*Cumulative as of March 4, 2011

Middle School Dropout Rate

Middle School	2008-09	2010*
Attucks	1.3%	0.8%
Dowling	0.2%	0.2%
Fondren	1.0%	0.3%
Key	1.0%	0.6%
Ryan	0.3%	0.9%

High School Completion Rates

High School	2008-09	2010**
Jones	75.0%	76.0%
Kashmere	84.4%	86.3%
Lee	61.2%	76.0%
Sharpstown	68.2%	80.0%

*2009-2010 data has not been released. 2010 rate as of December 10, 2010. **Projected completion rate for the Class of 2010 could increase after locating students and changing the coding in January.



APOLLO 20 PROJECT: College Readiness

Houston Independent School District

(February 2011)

Apollo 20 Tenets

1. Effective Principal and Teachers in Every School
2. More Instructional Time
3. Use of Data to Drive Instruction
4. High-dosage Tutoring
5. A Culture of High Expectations for All

Goals

- 100% graduation rate in three years
- 100% of students on grade level in three years
- 95% student attendance rate in three years

Jones HS

	Class of 2010 Enrolled	Class of 2011 Accepted
4-year College	21%	31%
2-year College	18%	78%
Class of 2011 Applied to 2-year or 4-year College	93%*	

Kashmere HS

	Class of 2010 Enrolled	Class of 2011 Accepted
4-year College	29%	19%
2-year College	3%	67%
Class of 2011 Applied to 2-year or 4-year College	85%*	

Lee HS

	Class of 2010 Enrolled	Class of 2011 Accepted
4-year College	19%	45%
2-year College	11%	95%
Class of 2011 Applied to 2-year or 4-year College	95%*	

Sharpstown HS

	Class of 2010 Enrolled	Class of 2011 Accepted
4-year College	25%	32%
2-year College	14%	91%
Class of 2011 Applied to 2-year or 4-year College	97%*	

* Percentage calculated from senior class, all life skills and mainstream students included.

Roland Fryer, Jr.

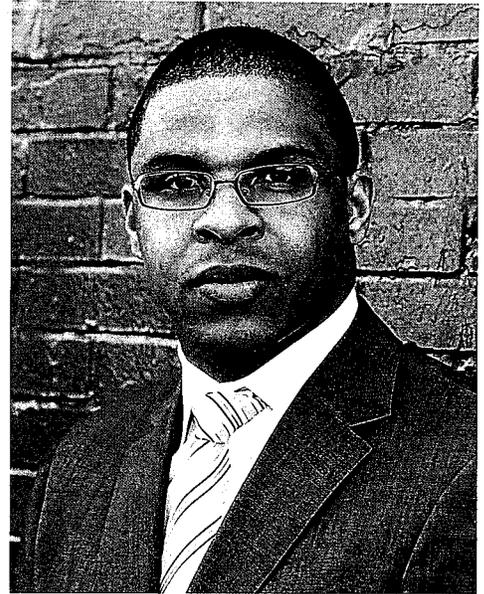
Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics at Harvard University

Roland Fryer, Jr. is the Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics at Harvard University, a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a former junior fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows—one of academia’s most prestigious research posts. In January 2008, at the age of 30, he became the youngest African-American to receive tenure from Harvard. He has been awarded a Sloan Research Fellowship, a Faculty Early Career Development Award from the National Science Foundation, and the inaugural Alphonse Fletcher Award (“Guggenheims for race issues”).

In addition to his teaching and research responsibilities, Fryer served as the chief equality officer at the New York City Department of Education during the 2007–2008 school year. In this role, he developed and implemented several innovative ideas on student motivation and teacher pay-for-performance concepts. He won a Titanium Lion at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival (Breakthrough Idea of the Year in 2008) for the Million Motivation Campaign.

Fryer has published papers on topics such as the racial achievement gap, the causes and consequences of distinctively black names, affirmative action, the impact of the crack cocaine epidemic, historically black colleges and universities, and “acting white.” He is an unapologetic analyst of American inequality who uses theoretical, empirical and experimental tools to squeeze truths from data—wherever that may lead.

Fryer is a 2009 recipient of a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the highest award bestowed by the government on scientists beginning their independent careers. He is also part of the “2009 TIME 100,” TIME magazine’s annual list of the world’s most influential people. Fryer’s work has been profiled in almost every major US newspaper, TIME magazine, and CNN’s breakthrough documentary, “Black in America.”





APOLLO 20 PROJECT: *FACT SHEET*

Houston Independent School District

The Apollo 20 project is an initiative designed to accelerate HISD's efforts to improve student performance in every school and close the achievement gap districtwide. This is a partnership between HISD and EdLabs at Harvard University. During the 2010–2011 school year, HISD will implement strategies that EdLabs' research shows can take schools to higher levels. The Apollo 20 schools will incorporate best practices from successful public and charter schools across the nation and will serve as models for the entire district.

FIVE TENETS FOR TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS

1. Human capital

Effective principal and teachers in every school
Performance bonuses and merit pay

2. More instructional time

Longer school year—5 additional days in 2010–2011; 10 additional days in 2011–2012
Longer school day—7:45 a.m.–4:15 p.m. Monday–Thursday; 7:45 a.m.–3:15 p.m. Friday

3. Use of data to drive instruction

New system to give teachers and parents complete information about a child's progress
Standards-based curriculum and assessments
New appraisal systems for teachers and principals

4. High-dosage tutoring

In-school math tutoring for all sixth- and ninth-graders, to help both struggling students and those who are ready to move ahead

For students in grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 who are below grade level, a double dose of math OR reading based on the subject in which they are most behind

5. Culture of high expectations for all

100% of students performing on or above grade level
100% of students taking at least one college-level course
100% graduation rate
95% attendance rate for students and staff
100% of students accepted to a four-year college or university
School–parent contract

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

A total of nine secondary schools will participate in the Apollo 20 project in the 2010–2011 school year.

Four high schools:

- Jones High School
- Kashmere High School
- Lee High School
- Sharpstown High School

Five middle schools:

- Attucks Middle School
- Dowling Middle School
- Fondren Middle School
- Key Middle School
- Ryan Middle School

An additional **11 elementary schools** will be identified to participate in the 2011–2012 school year.



PROYECTO “APOLLO 20”: HOJA INFORMATIVA

Distrito Escolar Independiente de Houston

El proyecto *Apollo 20* es una iniciativa cuyo propósito es acelerar los esfuerzos de HISD para mejorar el desempeño en todas las escuelas y reducir la brecha de rendimiento entre los diversos grupos de alumnos en todo el Distrito. Este proyecto es una colaboración entre HISD y *EdLabs* de la Universidad de Harvard. Durante el año escolar 2010–2011, el Distrito implementará estrategias de *EdLabs* que las investigaciones han demostrado pueden ayudar a que los colegios alcancen mejores niveles de rendimiento. Las escuelas *Apollo 20* incorporarán las mejores prácticas utilizadas en las escuelas públicas y *charter* más exitosas a través del país y servirán de modelo para el Distrito entero.

CINCO PRINCIPIOS PARA TRANSFORMAR LAS ESCUELAS

1. Capital Humano

Directores y maestros eficaces en cada escuela
Bonos por rendimiento y pagos por mérito

2. Más tiempo de instrucción

Año escolar extendido—5 días adicionales en 2010–2011; 10 días adicionales en 2011–2012
Día escolar extendido—7:45 a.m. a 4:15 p.m. de lunes a jueves; 7:45 a.m. a 3:15 p.m. los viernes

3. Uso de datos para elegir la instrucción apropiada

Nuevo sistema para brindar información completa sobre el progreso de un alumno a los maestros y padres
Currículo y evaluaciones basados en normas y requisitos
Nuevo sistema para evaluar a los maestros y directores

4. Gran cantidad de sesiones con tutores

Sesiones de Matemáticas en la escuela para todos los alumnos de sexto y noveno grado para ayudar a los que tengan dificultades y a quienes quieran adelantar sus estudios

Los alumnos de séptimo, octavo, décimo, onceavo y doceavo grado con rendimiento por debajo del grado que cursan tendrán doble cantidad de sesiones de Matemática o Lectura, basándose en la materia en que necesiten mejorar

5. Cultura de altas expectativas para todos

100% de los alumnos con rendimiento suficiente o superior al nivel del grado que cursan
100% de los estudiantes tomarán al menos un curso de nivel universitario
100% de índice de graduación
95% de índice de asistencia estudiantil y personal docente
100% de los alumnos serán aceptados a un instituto universitario de cuatro años de duración
Acuerdo entre los padres y la escuela

ESCUELAS PARTICIPANTES

Un total de nueve escuelas medias y secundarias participarán en este proyecto en el año escolar 2010–2011.

Cuatro escuelas secundarias:

- Escuela Secundaria Jones
- Escuela Secundaria Kashmere
- Escuela Secundaria Lee
- Escuela Secundaria Sharpstown

Cinco escuelas medias:

- Escuela Media Attucks
- Escuela Media Dowling
- Escuela Media Fondren
- Escuela Media Key
- Escuela Media Ryan

Además, **once escuelas primarias** serán identificadas para participar durante el año escolar 2011–2012.

EDITORIAL

SHOOTING FOR THE MOON

HISD's Apollo program lifts off, to boldly go where we hope many follow.

When Terry Grier, the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, began planning to turn around the city's most troubled schools, he struggled to find the right name for the program—one that conveyed its astounding ambition, the depth of the problem it addresses and the zeal it requires. Being in Houston, he naturally thought of the mission that sent Americans to the moon.

Apollo 20, he called HISD's program, which will eventually include 20 schools. And on Aug. 16, it lifted off with its first nine campuses: Sharpstown, Lee, Jones and Kashmere high schools; and Attucks, Dowling, Fondren, Ryan and Key middle schools.

They're urban schools with urban issues, full of kids from low-income families, minority kids, kids from broken homes, kids with broken English, kids with messy lives and knotty problems. Up until now, those schools' test scores have been wretched.

Can public schools propel kids like that into college? And if so, how? Those are important questions not just for HISD, but for the nation. Though the latest round of education reform has unleashed plenty of ideas and idealists,

when it comes to educating poor and minority students, proven results are limited mostly to a handful of charter schools—and those high-flying chains, including Houston's KIPP and YES schools, can't possibly meet the demand. For the sake of America's future, we have to fix our public schools.

How can we do that? Apollo 20 draws on the research of Harvard economist Roland Fryer, whose analysis of high-performing charter schools turned up five elements that he believes guarantee success:

- More time in the classroom.
- An obsession with human capital, with heavy emphasis on the quality of principals, teachers and other school employees.
- Tutoring in small groups.
- Constant attention to data that charts kids' attendance and academic progress.
- And a "no-excuses" school culture.

HISD is betting hard that the plan will work. This year, Apollo 20 will cost \$20.3 million—around \$2,400 for each child enrolled in the schools.

It's a lot of money. But if \$2,400 will turn a kid's life around, it's a bargain.

Last week, the Apollo 20 schools opened their freshly painted doors for the first week of classes—a full week before other HISD schools. Hundreds of new tutors sat behind moon-shaped desks, assessing kids' math skills. New principals reminded boys to walk, not run, and to pull up their sagging pants.

Can those schools overcome all the problems their kids face? Only time and data will tell. But at this hopeful point, it seems appropriate to quote the speech in which John F. Kennedy announced America's goal to put a man on the moon: "To do all this, and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out, we must be bold."

We salute Apollo 20's boldness.

Let's take HISD to the next level

New initiative can help make district the best in the nation

By Terry Grier

Why does a student who graduates from an HISD exemplary school have to take remedial classes in college? Why do so many of our students who enter college never earn a degree? How do you explain that to a parent or a student?

That's something that I struggle with as superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. Our schools have made progress, and some have even moved up to the Texas Education Agency's highest ranking of exemplary. However, far too many students in those same schools are not succeeding and will not be prepared for the rigors of college or today's competitive job market.

The results of the national Stanford 10 tests taken by our students show that far too many of them are not on grade level in reading, math and science. At one exemplary school, for example, only 32 percent of the students are reading on grade level. Districtwide there are nearly 70,000 students who are below grade level in reading. And our data indicate that only 52 percent of HISD 9th graders will go on to college, and only 15 percent of those students will earn any college certificate or two- or four-year degree. The odds that a Hispanic student or a special education student who is a 9th grader in HISD will go on to earn any kind of college certificate or degree are just 7 percent. For African-American students, the figure is 11 percent.

These are gut-wrenching statistics. We cannot afford to be complacent when the future of our children and our great city hang in the balance. We must act swiftly and decisively to transform our district now. Every adult in a student's life must have the highest expectations for that child. Every HISD educator must ensure that students have access to the

most rigorous educational opportunities. And every student must put forth his or her best effort. Every student means students from the lowest to the highest performing in HISD.

Last school year, we were notified that four of our high schools had been identified by the state and federal government as "failing schools" and five middle schools were labeled "unsatisfactory." Failing schools face state takeover. We are launching a groundbreaking initiative to jump-start our efforts to improve student achievement—the Apollo 20 Project. Beginning in the fall with our nine lowest performing secondary schools, we will provide intensive supports to make sure all students are on grade level and provide the acceleration for those students who are ready to fly higher. We are hiring teachers and principals with a passion for education and the drive to inspire excellence in each and every student. We also are embarking on an unprecedented campaign to hire 260 math fellows to provide intensive tutoring during the school day.

The Apollo 20 schools will incorporate best practices from successful public and charter schools across the nation and will serve as models for the entire district. And we are going to build on the great work already being done right here at home.

And, we will not forget about our other HISD schools. We'll continue to encourage our students to take rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes. I am extremely proud that 15 of our schools were named among the top in the nation by *Newsweek* magazine for their efforts to challenge students with college-level classes. The Grad Lab initiative, begun in February, has helped nearly 700 students recover enough high school credits to allow them to graduate this year. And our graduating seniors, a number of whom are heading to Ivy League and top-tier colleges in the fall, earned a record \$93 million in scholarships this year.

Nothing we can do for students matters more than giving them great teachers. This requires a comprehensive strategy focused on recruiting talented new teachers; rewarding the best teachers and putting them in front of the kids who need them most; helping all teachers improve; and removing teachers who consistently fail to help their student learn. We are going to do the right thing for students and for teachers, who deserve to be treated like the professionals they are and deserve to be recognized for their results in the classroom. Our ASPIRE program does just that by rewarding teachers and other school-based employees on the basis of student academic gains.

Under the leadership of the district's Board of Education, the strategic direction we are developing will provide the blueprint we need to help us increase achievement for all students. We're drawing a road map for our children's future with meaningful input from parents, students, employees, business partners and community members throughout the district. We've received more than 1,000 survey responses, and upwards of 1,600 people have attended strategic planning forums. We recently held two call-in television shows and we received more than 300 calls in one night from our Spanish-speaking parents and community members. I have never seen this level of community engagement and enthusiasm in all my years as a school superintendent.

Together we are going to transform the Houston Independent School District into the best school district in the nation. Only then can we truly call our schools "exemplary."

Grier is superintendent of the Houston Independent School District.



Meet the Principals of the Apollo 20 Schools

To lead the first Apollo 20 schools, HISD spent months recruiting outstanding principals both within the district and throughout the nation. More than 200 candidates were considered, and nine were chosen. They bring impressive credentials and records of success to their new positions, and their work with their teachers, students, and parents will help HISD inspire excellence, create schools where all children succeed and thrive, and transform itself into the best school district in the country.

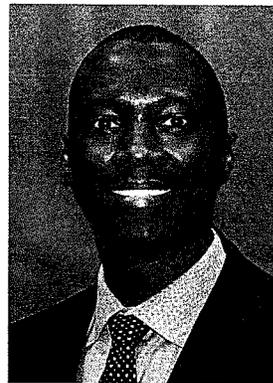


Patricia Brown

Principal—Attucks Middle School

Attucks Middle School Principal Patricia Brown joined Team HISD after working in the Alief Independent School District as the principal of Holub Middle School. In the 2008–2009 school year, Holub had the greatest academic gains of any school in Alief ISD. She also served as a middle-school principal in the Lamar

Consolidated Independent School District. Brown, who began her teaching career at HISD's Hobby Elementary School, received a bachelor's degree from Texas Woman's University and a master's degree from the University of Houston.



Kenneth Davis

Principal—Dowling Middle School

Dowling Middle School Principal Kenneth Davis comes to HISD from the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District in Rosenberg, where he was the principal at McNeill Elementary School. He has also served as an assistant principal, math specialist, and teacher in the Alief Independent School District. Davis was Texas' National Distinguished

Principal in 2009, and the Region 4 Elementary Principal of the Year for 2008–2009. Davis received a bachelor's degree from Rockford College in Illinois and a master's degree from the University of St. Thomas, and he is currently pursuing a doctorate at Lamar University.



Charles Foust

Principal—Fondren Middle School

Fondren Middle School Principal Charles Foust comes to HISD from Greensboro, North Carolina. For the past four years, he was the principal of the Brooks Global Studies School, which has a curriculum similar to the International Baccalaureate program that will be implemented at Fondren this year. Prior to becoming a principal, Foust was an assistant middle-school

principal and a high-school curriculum facilitator in the Guilford County School System. He began his career in education as a teacher of at-risk students in Virginia's Danville Public School System. He received master's degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina A&T State University, where he also earned a bachelor's degree, and he is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of North Carolina.



Nicole Moore

Principal—Key Middle School

Key Middle School Principal Nicole Moore has been a member of the HISD family for more than 17 years. She has served as the principal at R. P. Harris Elementary School and an assistant principal and Title I coordinator at Hogg Middle School, where she also taught English as a Second Language, math, and science. Moore also has teaching experience

in Mississippi's Philadelphia City and Neshoba County School Systems. She received a bachelor's degree from Rust College in Mississippi and a master's degree from Mississippi State University.



Michael McKenzie
Principal—Ryan Middle School

Ryan Middle School Principal Michael McKenzie was the principal at the WALIPP (William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity) TSU (Texas Southern University) Preparatory Academy. He began his career in education as a teacher and Special Education chairperson at HISD's Long Middle School and Sanderson Elementary School, and

he was a founding teacher at KIPP: Liberation College Prep. McKenzie received a bachelor's degree from Millsaps College in Mississippi and a master's degree from Texas Southern University, where he is currently pursuing a doctorate.



Tracey Lewis
Principal—Jones High School

Jones High School Principal Tracey Lewis has worked for HISD since 2000, most recently as an associate principal and principal intern at Yates High School. While at Yates, she served as the school's "Reach Out to Dropouts" coordinator and supervised and coordinated the Magnet School of Communications. Lewis also worked at Davis High School

as an assistant principal and at Reagan High School as a school improvement facilitator and math teacher. She received a bachelor's degree from the College of Charleston in South Carolina and a master's degree from the University of St. Thomas.



Paul Hardin
Principal—Kashmere High School

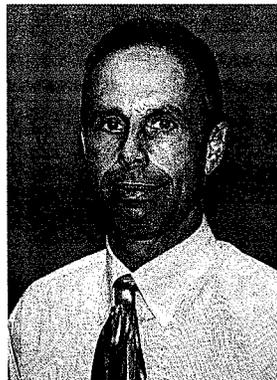
Kashmere High School Principal Paul Hardin joins Team HISD from the West Orange-Cove Consolidated Independent School District in Orange, Texas. Most recently, he served as the principal of West Orange-Stark High School. Hardin received a bachelor's degree from American University and a master's degree from Lamar University, and he is currently pursuing a doctorate.



Xochitl Rodríguez-Dávila
Principal—Lee High School

Lee High School Principal Xochitl Rodríguez-Dávila has been a member of Team HISD since 2007, most recently serving as the principal of Jackson Middle School. Before that, she was the principal at Gallegos Elementary School. Rodríguez-Dávila has also worked in the Pasadena Independent School District as an assistant middle-school principal and elementary-school counselor. She received a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University and a master's degree from the University of Houston, and she is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of Texas.

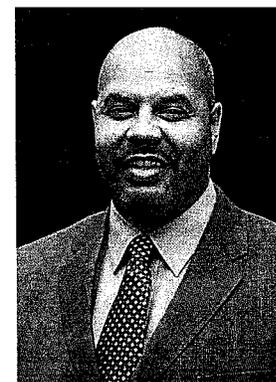
She received a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University and a master's degree from the University of Houston, and she is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of Texas.



Robert Gasparello
Principal—Sharpstown High School

Sharpstown High School Principal Robert Gasparello joins Team HISD after working in public education for more than 30 years in North Carolina. He has classroom experience as a teacher at the elementary-, middle-, and high-school levels and has served as a principal and assistant principal in Greensboro's Guilford County Schools system. While Gasparello

was the principal at Hunter Elementary School, it was named a North Carolina Lighthouse School as well as a Distinguished National Title I School by the U.S. Department of Education. During his tenure as the principal of Grimsley High School, it was included in *Newsweek's* list of America's top high schools for three years in a row. He received a bachelor's degree from Elon College and a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



Jeremy Beard—School Improvement Officer for Apollo 20 Schools

As a school improvement officer for the Apollo 20 schools, Jeremy Beard is responsible for coaching and mentoring the principals of the schools taking part in the Apollo 20 project: Jones, Kashmere, Lee, and Sharpstown High Schools; Attucks, Dowling, Fondren, Key, and Ryan Middle Schools; and 11 elementary schools to be added for the 2011–2012 school year.

Beard received bachelor's degrees in English and African-American studies at the University of Maryland and a master's degree in organizational leadership at Columbia University's Teachers College. He has served as the principal of IDEA College Preparatory School in Donna, Texas; a program director for Teach for America; and a fifth-grade teacher in California's Long Beach Unified School District. Beard received the Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership for his work at IDEA College Prep, a 6–12 charter school. The Jennings award is presented annually to Teach for America graduates whose work has led to far-reaching systemic change and measurable impact in closing the achievement gap.