

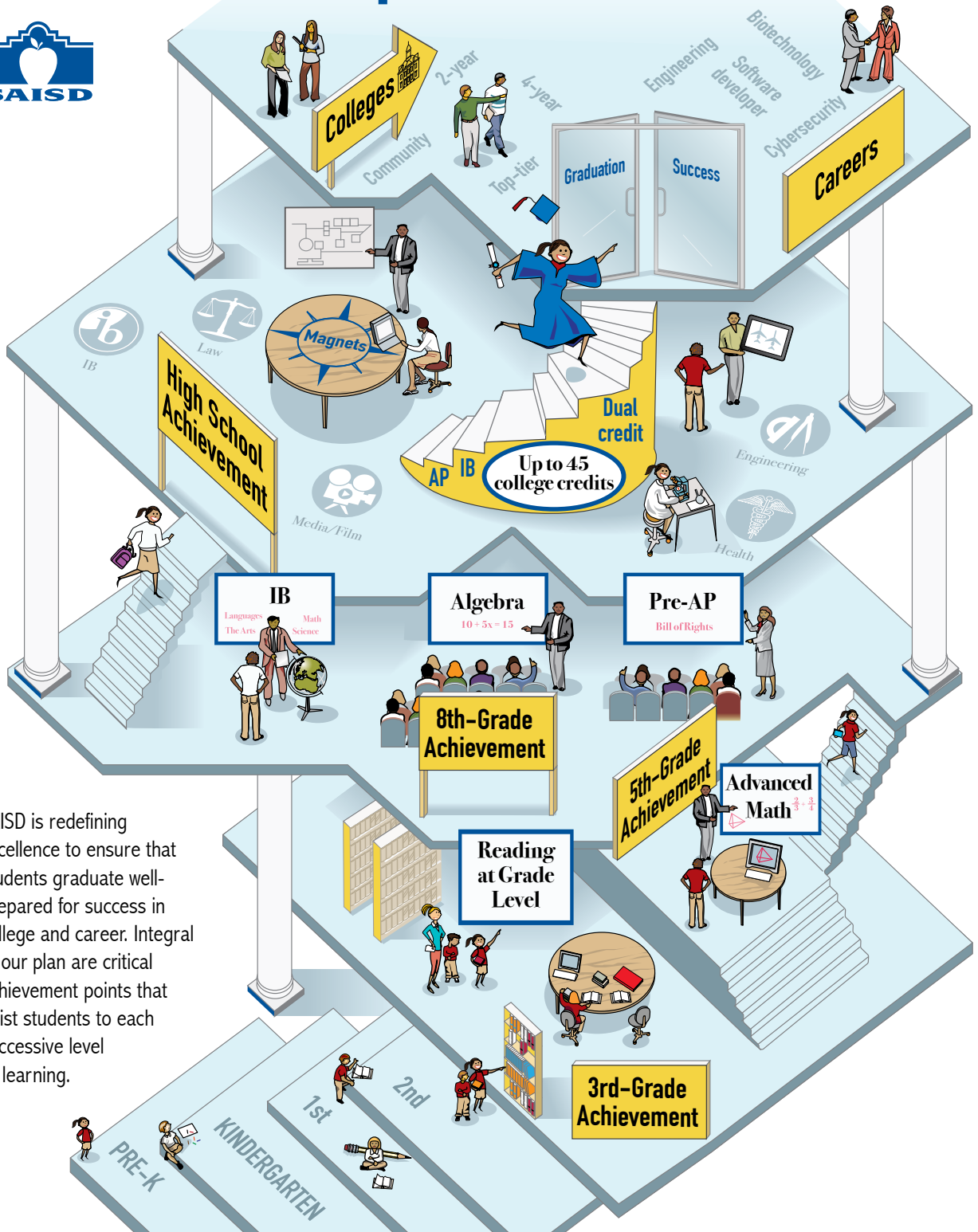
# SAISD BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE: TARGET 2020

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San Antonio Independent School District

# SAISD'S Blueprint for Excellence



SAISD is redefining excellence to ensure that students graduate well-prepared for success in college and career. Integral to our plan are critical achievement points that hoist students to each successive level of learning.

Supported by Pillars of Success: Academic Excellence. Talent Management. Culture Shift. Stakeholder Engagement. Fiscal Management.

# INTRODUCTION

When Superintendent Pedro Martinez joined the San Antonio Independent School District on June 1, 2015, he was tasked with transforming SAISD into a national model for other urban school districts. Under his leadership, the District is in the process of redefining excellence for all students, so that many more of our approximately 53,000 students achieve at higher levels and graduate well-prepared for success in college and career.

Our sights are set much higher than minimum performance on the state assessment – The SAISD Blueprint for Excellence: Target 2020 is about developing lifelong learners who graduate feeling empowered and equipped to pursue their dreams. We believe each student is on an individual path. Our job as a District is to ensure each is held to the highest of standards along the way, as we nurture and support them.

This blueprint serves as a cohesive educational plan designed to prepare students for success from the moment they enter our schools in pre-kindergarten all the way through to high school graduation. In fall 2015, we established 10 measurable academic goals to be achieved by 2020 (see *5-Year Goals on page 10*). This document outlines the strategies that we will launch beginning in 2016-17, and will phase in through the 2019-2020 school year, to achieve those goals.

We are drawing upon best practices to raise academic expectations for all students and elevate teaching in all classrooms. Built into the plan are critical achievement points designed to hoist students to the next phase of their learning, and in the long run, prepare them for a seamless transition from public education to higher education. The achievement points include: strong literacy in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grades, with students reading at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade; advanced math in 5th grade; algebra in 8th grade and advanced and college credit-bearing courses in the 11th and 12th grades.

Five pillars together will provide the support and resources needed to ensure our students meet each of the achievement points. They are: **Talent Management, Culture Shift, Academic Excellence, Stakeholder Engagement** and **Fiscal Management**.

“Among the changes is significantly enhancing Gifted & Talented services; expanding the college-preparatory International Baccalaureate program; building more pre-Advanced Placement courses into the middle school years and raising the bar at the high school level so students take more advanced courses....”

Academic Excellence likely will be the most visible strategy as students and parents take note of increased opportunities for advanced learning. Among the changes is significantly enhancing Gifted & Talented services; expanding the college-preparatory International Baccalaureate program; building more pre-Advanced Placement courses into the middle school years and

raising the bar at the high school level so students take more advanced courses, including more dual-credit courses, for which they can earn both high school and college credit. No matter a student's path, he or she will have the opportunity to graduate high school with up to 45 hours of college credit, starting with the class of 2020 – that's 1 ½ years of college – making for a smooth transition to higher education.

This blueprint is the result of six months of intense focus and represents the feedback and contributions of District staff, teachers, students, parents, community members, business leaders and elected officials. Over the next several years, we will continue to meet with and engage our stakeholders to provide updates and solicit feedback about what's working and what needs to be modified.

## MANAGING OUR TALENT

Before we can hope to achieve our goals as a district, we must ensure that employees' collective skills and talents – our human capital – align with our emerging, multiplex needs. In the area of recruitment, we are ratcheting up efforts to hire teachers earlier so we have a larger pool of candidates from which to choose, increasing our chances of securing top talent. Our goal is to hire, by end of April 2016, half of the teachers we anticipate we will need for the 2016-17 school year and to have all teaching positions staffed with highly qualified candidates by the first day of school in August.

Recruitment Strategy		
New teacher hiring	Hiring 2014-15	Hiring 2015-16
Thru April	58*	240**
June-Aug.	321	160

\*Represents cumulative hiring, October 2014 - April 2015.  
 \*\*Represents goal by April 2016. (116 hires made as of January 2016.)

We also are implementing and exploring a number of strategies to grow our existing talent. We envision an SAISD where employees continually are challenged and motivated to advance and are provided multiple avenues and on-going support for professional growth. Facilitating employee advancement will allow us to build leadership capacity, a critical factor in our success, throughout the District.

Broadly, we are implementing a three-year professional development plan that involves identifying areas of need for all of our educators and providing targeted training, some of which already has begun. We are emphasizing existing and creating new **leadership pathways** for employees, so that each feels motivated and empowered to grow through professional development. Some may strengthen their leadership skills by serving as lead teachers or department chairs at their schools, while others may choose to progress by pursuing an advanced degree in their content area or moving into an administrative role.

Some of our more targeted efforts include a **teaching residency program**, still in the exploratory stage, to grow our own educators, in addition to recruiting new teacher talent. The residency program would be for SAISD educators, such as paraprofessionals, who have earned degrees but are not certified to teach.

These candidates would participate in an extended internship at one of our schools, learning from a high-performing mentor teacher and receiving the support needed to make the successful transition into teaching.



A similar residency program is planned for **aspiring principals** who meet rigorous entry requirements. Starting in 2016-17, the principals program will tap a small cohort our most talented assistant principals for an intense yearlong paid residency, which would be in partnership with an external training group.

Separately, we envision a **laboratory school**, in partnership with a local university, where strong and motivated SAISD teachers work and learn side-by-side master's-level university students at a campus dedicated to Gifted & Talented education. These highly trained teacher specialists would go into SAISD classrooms upon completing the program, making room for another cohort of teachers.

Our efforts will be helped along by implementation of the state's new employee performance evaluation system, T-TESS. This tool includes critical measures of teacher effectiveness – observations, goal-setting and professional development and student growth – and promotes continued growth through on-going self-assessment, goal-setting and professional development.

Our ambitious plans for talent management, and all other components of this blueprint, hinge on our ability to build a systemic culture of high expectations and consistent accountability, for students and for staff. Shifting culture is an on-going process that will take years to achieve, but we are all in. Our rigorous 5-year goals for academic excellence throughout SAISD are a testament to our commitment.

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Our strategy around academic excellence touches on all grade levels, starting with the moment students join the SAISD family in Pre-kindergarten.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Literacy** is the building block for future success in all other subjects, across all other grades. That's why we are focusing our literacy efforts in Pre-kindergarten through 3rd grades, which is one of four critical achievement points spanning students' educational years in SAISD.



Our goal is for students to read at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade because research indicates students who do not are less likely to graduate from high school on time. Attention and resources are being dedicated to ensure that teachers receive the professional development and materials needed to deliver quality literacy instruction and that the curriculum is being taught consistently from school to school.

At the elementary level, another critical achievement point is in the 5th grade; we are ensuring that students are being exposed to **advanced math** concepts in this grade in preparation for algebra in the 8th grade.

A number of strategies are being employed to ensure that students reach these critical achievement points, including adopting a new framework for teaching, to be implemented across all grades. Our teachers will receive quality professional development in this new teaching model, as well as in other targeted areas.

## ADVANCED ACADEMICS

We are committed to enhancing and expanding Gifted & Talented services to ensure that even students performing at the highest levels experience continual progress and are in an environment where they can thrive. The gifted population is a diverse one with varying levels of need. Our efforts will focus on amplifying service offerings in Pre-kindergarten through 12th grades to meet those needs, building capacity through professional development and increasing the number of students receiving services.

Changes will be introduced over the next several years. Starting in 2016-17, we will hire credentialed **Gifted & Talented specialists** to deliver instruction at elementary schools, allowing designated librarians, counselors and teachers to return to their primary areas of focus. Each specialist will cover multiple elementary schools, providing services through a mix of out-of-class, small-group sessions and in-class instruction, in collaboration with the classroom teacher.

Also in 2016-17, we will launch our first **Gifted & Talented Academies** at the middle and high school levels. In addition to the academy for middle school students, we will move toward the clustering of gifted students at traditional middle schools,

meaning the students will take their core subject courses together. The courses would be taught by highly qualified Gifted & Talented teachers.

To help increase the number of teachers qualified to deliver gifted instruction, the academies will double as **laboratory schools**, launched in partnership with a local university, where strong and motivated SAISD teachers work and learn side-by-side master's-level university students at a campus dedicated to Gifted & Talented education. These highly trained teachers would go into SAISD classrooms upon completing the program, making room for another cohort of teachers.

Simultaneously, we will work to increase the number of students who receive services. In December 2015, the Board of Trustees approved a **universal screening** program in the 1st and 5th grades to determine whether students are eligible for the program. We will continue to take teacher referrals for all grades, but this screening system will allow us to reach more students.

In addition, we plan to expand the college-preparatory **International Baccalaureate** program, currently in place at Burbank High School and also at Woodlawn Academy, which is in Year 2 of candidacy. In spring 2016, we will seek candidacy for Jefferson High School for the 2016-17 school year, with plans to introduce the program at Jefferson and Burbank feeder schools in the coming years.

And just as we support our teachers with the training they need to instruct students at higher levels, we also are providing support for our learners. Our plan calls for ensuring that students in Special Education have the critical tools and resources they need to thrive. We are more closely monitoring our English Language Learners to identify those who are prepared to exit this program earlier than the 4th grade, which is the mandatory grade of exit. Some students are prepared to transition to the traditional educational program as early as the 2nd grade, and we should ensure their prompt exit so as to encourage a continuous progression.

For our most gifted students, we are overhauling services to ensure that we do a better job of identifying and nurturing their talents. Our goal is to increase the number of students receiving Gifted & Talented services by launching a universal screening program in the 1st and 5th grades, in addition to taking teacher referrals. (See Advanced Academics sidebar)

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

Benefiting from changes at the elementary level, students will reach middle school with strong reading and math skills needed to take on greater rigor than has been expected in the past. We expect students to take **Pre-Advanced Placement** or **International Baccalaureate-prep** (at middle schools that feed into IB high schools) courses and to engage in classroom activities focused on problem-solving, academic discourse and critical analysis. Through these courses, students also will improve writing skills, time management skills and study habits.

We believe that our middle school students will rise to meet a higher level of rigor and will be prepared to take **algebra** by the 8th grade, positioning them well for advanced math in high school. We plan to offer more sections of algebra in the 8th grade, as well as offering high school English in the 8th grade. And we will look to more project-based learning that helps students develop critical-thinking skills.

The goal at this level is to ensure our students are prepared for advanced courses by the 11th grade, such as Advanced Placement and dual-credit courses that result in both high school and college credit.

In addition, all 8th-graders will take the Texas Success Initiative exam in reading, and students taking algebra also will take the TSI in math. TSI is an exam that assesses how ready students are to take freshmen-level academic coursework work and is required by the state for all students entering college.

To support middle school students capable of excelling at the highest of levels, we will be launching a Gifted & Talented Academy for students in grades 6-8 in fall 2016. (See Advanced Academic sidebar)

## HIGH SCHOOL

The escalation of rigor continues in high school, where students reach the last critical achievement point: juniors and seniors will be expected to take advanced and college credit-bearing courses in the 11th and 12th grades. It's in this last stage that we are intensifying efforts to create a seamless transition to higher education – and to ensure that students are well-prepared to handle college-level work without having to take remedial courses. (Remedial courses don't count toward a student's major and increase the likelihood that a student will drop out of college.)

Whether a student's path leads to a 4-year university, a community college or an industry-training program, we know that it must lead to a post-secondary credential, if the student is to earn a living wage in today's economy.

Our changes are targeted to the class of 2020, which is the freshman class of 2016-17. Students enter high school on a selected career path and will follow a prescribed course sequence that can lead to as many as **45 hours of college credit** resulting from a mix of dual-credit and Advanced Placement courses.

High School: High-Quality Options		
Early College High Schools	Magnets	Career Pathways
<b>Earn up to 60 hrs college credit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travis</li> <li>• St. Philip's</li> <li>• Brackenridge</li> </ul>	<b>Earn up to 45 hrs college credit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IB</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Law</li> <li>• Media &amp; Film</li> </ul>	<b>Earn minimum of 30 hrs college credit</b> Pathways include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> <li>• Culinary</li> <li>• Fire Safety</li> <li>• IT</li> <li>• Marketing/Business</li> </ul>



The dual-credit courses, for which students simultaneously earn both high school and college credit, are tightly aligned to the Alamo Colleges' degree programs. Many of the career paths represent in-demand fields, such as computer science, engineering and health professions, and can be pursued through a "pathway" at a neighborhood school or by applying to and attending one of our magnet programs.



Each path will have advanced courses built into it: **Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate** program (at select high schools) or **dual-credit** courses that prepare students for the rigors of college work. To prepare students for these higher-level courses their last two years, we are adding more pre-Advanced Placement and IB-prep courses in the 9th and 10th grades.

Separately, our three **early college high schools**, where students can earn up to 60 hours of college credit and/or an associate degree by graduation, will continue to be an option.

There is no question that we would be unable to achieve our goals without the support of all SAISD stakeholders. It is only through partnership with our employees, parents, community members and business and education leaders that we will reach the academic goals we have set – and, thus, provide a better education to the students of SAISD.

Our commitment is that we will continue to engage our parents and encourage them to take an active part in their child's education, both at school and at home. We will continue to work with institutes of higher education to come up with creative and innovative ways to ensure that SAISD students are well-prepared for college. We will continue to listen and engage with business leaders who have a stake in SAISD's success as they look to a qualified workforce to operate their businesses. We will continue to work with the non-profit partners who provide invaluable resources that align with our goals.

We also will commit to continued good financial stewardship and sound fiscal management to ensure we are able to fund the programs, services and professional development that are critical to the plan outlined here.

# 5-YEAR GOALS

GOAL	CURRENT RESULTS	STATE AVERAGE	NATIONAL AVERAGE	5-YEAR GOALS
1. Increase the percent of campuses rated high performing (B or higher) under state accountability standards				70%
<b>ENSURE PROFICIENCY, GROWTH AND A PERSONALIZED GRADUATION PLAN</b>				
2. Increase performance/growth in reading (r) and math (m)	r=63% / 56% m=62% / 55%	r=76% / 61% m=78% / 60%		90% / 55% or state avg. / 80%
3. Increase the passing rate of prior year failers	r=33% m=32%	r=45% m=46%		60%
4. Increase the percent of HS students who complete an AP/IB/Dual Credit or CTE coherent sequence of courses*	80%	77%	67%	90%
5. Increase on-time 4-year graduation rates (gr) and decrease dropout rates (dr)	gr=81% dr=14%	gr=88% dr=7%	gr=80% dr=7%	gr=90% dr<10%
<b>CULTIVATE HIGH-PERFORMING STUDENTS</b>				
6. Increase performance at the highest level on state assessments (Advanced Level III)	r=7%, w=3%, m=9%, sc=5%, ss=6%	r=15%, w=8%, m=17%, sc=14%, ss=15%		30%
7. Increase AP/IB participation and performance	PARTICIPATION 25% SCORE 3+ 13%	PARTICIPATION 23% SCORE 3+ 51%	PARTICIPATION 22% SCORE 3+ 59%	PARTICIPATION 50% SCORE 3+ 59%
<b>IMPLEMENT TARGETED FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS</b>				
8. Increase SAT/ACT college-ready performance	5%	25%	43%	43%
9. Increase the percent of graduates who complete their first year of college without remediation	40%	69%	74%	74%
10. Increase the percent of graduates attending college, 4-year, and Tier-One universities	College .....52% 4-Year .....25% Tier One.....2%	College .....57% 4-Year .....27% Tier One.....?	College .....66% 4-Year .....42% Tier One.....10%	College ...80% 4-Year .....50% Tier One..10%

**Note: Goals must meet or exceed the National average with the State average as the performance floor.**

**\* Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Career and Technical Education**



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