



# New Horizons Program Review

Presentation to BISD School Board

January 19, 2016

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## Why Are We Here?

- ▶ In September 2015 BISD Board asked for a program review of New Horizons, as implemented at A. C. Jones High School.
- ▶ Mr. Rodriguez appointed a committee to perform the review.
- ▶ The committee met on several occasions, taking into consideration input from A.C. Jones HS staff and New Horizons staff.



## Past, Present & Future

- Originally designed in 1993, by Mr. Rodriguez as an innovative, alternative approach to meet the needs of highly at-risk students not meeting graduation requirements at A.C. Jones HS
- Based on a highly successful program at neighboring school district with similar demographics.
- Initial program located at the Connelly Building and was considered a separate campus; fully staffed with administration, counselor, and core teachers.



## Past, Present & Future

- ▶ Currently housed at A.C. Jones HS, in a standalone building located at the back of the campus.
- ▶ This new placement came into effect in 2011, per Dr. Thomas, BISD Superintendent.
- ▶ The structure of the program changed dramatically. Total computer-based instruction.
- ▶ 1 ½ teachers currently housed at New Horizons



# BISD Board Directed Points to Consider

- Criteria for admission
- Test score comparison
- Rigor of Curriculum
- Grade determination

- Early graduates
- Program evaluation
- What is working
- What is not working





# Criteria for Admission

- ▶ At-Risk Student
- ▶ Passed EOC's
- ▶ Potential Dropouts
- ▶ Grades, Attendance, & Discipline



## Test Score Comparison Before & After

- ▶ Not Applicable for the most part
- ▶ Rare instances where a student is accepted without having previously passed all EOC's



# Rigor of Curriculum

- ▶ Difficult to determine
- ▶ Rigor varies from teacher-to-teacher, subject-to-subject, and classroom-to-classroom
- ▶ Due to lack of direct teacher instruction, the computer programs that we use; APEX and PLATO, could be perceived as less rigorous; however, they are completely aligned with the TEKS, as are the programs utilized by teachers in the regular classroom.



## Grade Determination

- ▶ The grades are determined by the computer program, based on the responses of the students throughout the assigned lessons.
- ▶ Student grades are verified by the computer manager and forwarded to the counselors and registrar.





## Early Graduates

- ▶ Not generally
- ▶ Only in the event of a highly at-risk situation (i.e. homeless, pregnancy)
- ▶ The focus of the program is on remediation/credit recovery and not on acceleration.



# Program Evaluation

- ▶ Reviewed by administration and counselors
- ▶ Graduation rates
- ▶ Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)
- ▶ Number of academic hours recovered



# Core Teachers' Perceptions of Weaknesses

- ▶ Some students use it as an excuse to not complete or try in real courses because they use the program as a safety net.
- ▶ Students are not usually exposed to the connections between content presented and the real world.
- ▶ Students are admitted without appropriate criteria.
- ▶ Concepts and skills are not difficult enough and only a few assignments are required for each topic.
- ▶ Students use Google to find answers to questions.
- ▶ Students are not fully learning the material.
- ▶ No core teachers available in the New Horizons program.



# Core Teachers' Perceptions of Strengths

- ▶ Individualized and self-paced learning for students
- ▶ Motivates students who are lacking credits to graduate with their class.
- ▶ Student success for students that need a more structured, small setting
- ▶ Assist students with extenuating circumstances (i.e. pregnancy, severe illness, primary wage earner)
- ▶ Decreases class sizes in some areas that provides core teachers the opportunity to work with students more directly
- ▶ Gives students a sense of accomplishment and hope, where prior to being admitted in New Horizons, there was none.



## What is Working

- ▶ Preventing Dropouts
- ▶ On-time Graduations, as opposed to 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> year graduates
- ▶ Recovering credits and getting students back on successful graduation track
- ▶ The only alternative option for at-risk students.



## What is Not Working

- ▶ Budget allocations/restraints
- ▶ Do not have appropriate staff of core teachers at New Horizons
- ▶ Current limitations on students allowed to participate in New Horizons





## Past, Present & Future

- Move toward implementing the program as originally designed.
- Allocate appropriate funding resources



# EducationNext

Summer 2014

Vol. 14, No. 3

As online education grows in reach and sophistication, students who are behind in credits are being pushed toward online credit-recovery programs. In communities including New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Chicago, educators are creating alternative schools for struggling students that employ online credit-recovery programs as a core portion, or all, of their curriculum. The most recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 55 percent of school districts reported using distance learning, most of it online, during the 2009–10 school year; more than 60 percent of those classes were taken for credit recovery. Meanwhile, about 80 percent of urban schools cite credit recovery as an issue of importance, according to the International Association for K–12 Online Learning.



# Questions & Answers

