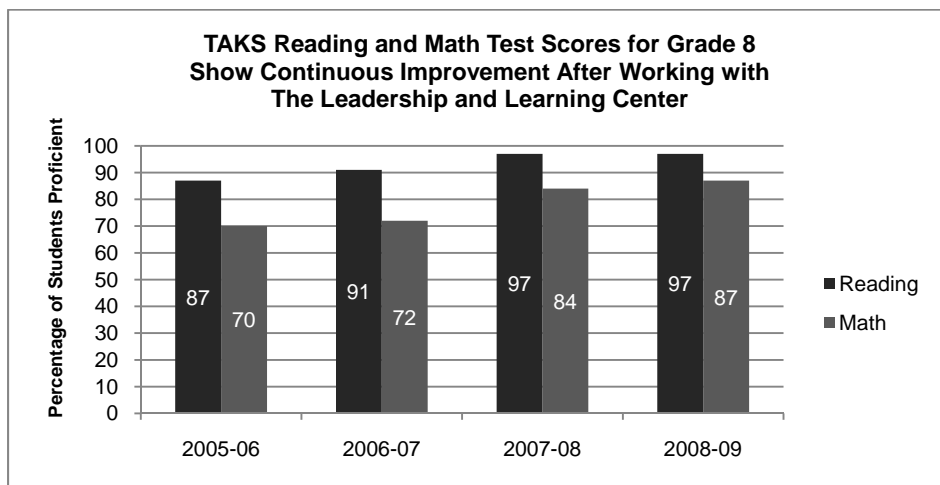


# White Paper Series

Fort Bend Independent School District  
Fort Bend, Texas

The  
Leadership  
and Learning  
Center™

**Fort Bend Independent School District meets or outperforms the state average at every grade level on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).**



## Issues

- With a growing student population and increased diversity within that population, Fort Bend Independent School District faced an ever-widening achievement gap.
- Analyses of student achievement data revealed teachers required more in-depth training to meet their professional development needs.
- While the district had a number of schools making tremendous gains, other sites were not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

## Solutions Provided by the Leadership and Learning Center

- District leaders identified new research-based strategies in their leadership and teaching plans that were developed specifically to meet the needs of Fort Bend's increasingly diverse population.
- The district's holistic accountability plan, developed with The Leadership and Learning Center, included school-level goals focusing solely on adult actions, student achievement, student development, and staff development with special emphasis on the collection, analysis, and application of data.
- Fort Bend leaders and Center associates created a rubric that was used to identify schools in need and to build on the model of successful Fort Bend schools.

## Contents

Executive Summary	2
The Needs of Fort Bend Independent School District	3
The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center	5
Fort Bend Independent School District Results	7
Lessons Learned in Fort Bend Independent School District	9
Appendix One	10
Appendix Two	12
References	14

## 1.0 Executive Summary

Fort Bend Independent School District is one of the most diverse districts in the state of Texas. Fort Bend's minority population has grown by 25 percent since 1992, and the district now serves students who speak more than 80 different languages and dialects. Consequently, Fort Bend Independent School District faces unforeseen challenges as its educators strive to meet the needs of this new wave of learners.

In the 2006-2007 school year, Fort Bend Independent School District and The Leadership and Learning Center (The Center) collaborated to create and implement a holistic accountability plan (identified in Fort Bend as the District Comprehensive Accountability Framework<sup>1</sup>) with the long-term goal of preparing educators and school leaders alike to meet the unique needs of all Fort Bend students. Today the district meets or outperforms the state average at *every grade level* for every subject tested on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

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<sup>1</sup> District Comprehensive Accountability Framework: Also known as a holistic accountability plan. A system where student achievement data is associated with its antecedents: professional teaching practices, educational standards, curriculum, sorting strategies, leadership techniques, and resource allocation.

## 2.0 The Needs of Fort Bend Independent School District

The mission of Fort Bend Independent School District states: “By teaching every child and learning every day, Fort Bend Independent School District will provide the best educational opportunities to ensure that all students are successful.” The most recently released 2008-2009 state test scores reveal that test scores are up compared to 2007-2008 scores. The district also exceeded the state averages on most tests. However, with a growing student population and increased diversity within that population, Fort Bend Independent School District faced an ever-widening achievement gap. District leaders recognized it was necessary to change their leadership and teaching strategies in order to meet the needs of all learners.

An extensive qualitative assessment, conducted early in the partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center in the 2006-2007 school year, revealed a need for a comprehensive, long-term professional development plan as well as strategies to bring the teaching community together as a whole. Fort Bend’s new superintendent, Dr. Timothy Jenney, chose to collaborate with The Center with hopes to replicate the success experienced in his previous district, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, where he was an active participant in a partnership with The Center. Dr. Jenney’s goals were to implement data teams, grow internal professional development capacity in identified areas of need, and build on the model of those Fort Bend schools that were regarded as successful. However, in Fort Bend, Dr. Jenney was facing recent turnover of a large number of staff, an explosion in the diversity and size of the student population, and the need to align the system as a whole in terms of instructional vision, resources, and personnel.

The Leadership and Learning Center and Fort Bend Independent School District leaders first collaborated to create a District Comprehensive Accountability Framework, or holistic accountability plan. This framework aligns directly with the district’s mission to ensure that all students are successful *and* that all district stakeholders, including district and school leaders, teachers, community members, and parents are involved in the process. The District Comprehensive Accountability Framework encompasses Tier One Indicators<sup>2</sup> that connect to district-wide student achievement, graduation rates, staff development, and community partnerships. The district sets this element in place to ensure that all leaders are held accountable for their goals. Continuing that strategy, the District Comprehensive Accountability Framework also includes Tier Two Indicators<sup>3</sup> that directly relate to school-level goals. These goals,

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<sup>2</sup> Tier One Indicators: Measure performance and progress toward achieving district-level goals. In the Fort Bend plan, these were known as District Performance Indicators.

<sup>3</sup> Tier Two Indicators: School and district strategies that are directly aligned with Tier One Indicators. In the Fort Bend plan, these were known as Campus/Administrative Performance Indicators.

focusing solely on adult actions, include student achievement, student development, and staff development with special emphasis on collection, analysis, and application of data. As with the Tier One Indicators, the Tier Two Indicators provide an accountability element to ensure that all school-level personnel take responsibility for achieving their benchmark goals. With this in mind, The Center and Fort Bend Independent School District applied the holistic accountability plan as the foundation for all work within the district.

A majority of Fort Bend Independent School District schools were achieving adequate yearly progress. However, district leaders made the intentional decision to move away from “lucky” results and work toward moving all schools to the “leading” category—where schools would have high student achievement and a comprehensive understanding of the teaching, learning, and leadership strategies behind each success.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this process, Fort Bend leadership took logical steps to examine what was happening within the district. The district strived to apply early intervention for struggling schools, and to replicate the elements that led to success in schools making AYP and other achievement goals. Analyses of student achievement data revealed some schools were in need of more in-depth training to meet the professional development needs of educators. With these strategies in mind, district leaders used a rubric to identify 25 of the lowest-performing schools in the district for targeted intervention. Of that cohort, the district identified “Fort Bend Focus Schools.” These ten focus schools were not making AYP, and eight others teetered on the cusp of the same fate.

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<sup>4</sup> The Leadership Framework (*The Learning Leader*, 2006) displays four quadrants that indicate both the results paradox and limitations of understanding student achievement:

Lucky	High results, low understanding of antecedents; replication of results unlikely
Leading	High results, high understanding of antecedents; replication of results likely
Losing	Low results, low understanding of antecedents; replication of failure likely
Learning	Low results, high understanding of antecedents; replication of success likely

### 3.0 The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center

Using the District Comprehensive Accountability Framework as the starting point, the district collaborated with The Leadership and Learning Center’s professional development associates to create a professional development plan. District leaders were careful to include teachers and instructional leaders from all schools in the construction of the K–12 plan. By planning for such unavoidable issues as teacher and leader turnover, The Center’s professional development associates also helped Fort Bend address the important question of sustainability.

The Fort Bend Independent School District professional development plan included the following strategies beginning in the 2006-2007 school year:

**On-Site Professional Development:** Each seminar fulfilled a distinct need for teachers at schools throughout Fort Bend.

- *Making Standards Work* (recently updated, now titled *Engaging Classroom Assessments*) provided Fort Bend teachers with the strategies to create standards-based performance assessments that directly aligned with their district’s curriculum and priority standards.
- Teachers, instructional coaches, principals, and campus administrators from each school also participated in *Data-Driven Decision Making* (recently updated, now titled *Decision Making for Results*) and *Data Teams*. These seminars gave Fort Bend educators the tools to create measurable indicators, the expertise to analyze the data, and the means to track progress.
- *Common Formative Assessments* provided educators with training to create interim assessments, collaboratively designed by grade-level or course teams. Assessments were administered to all students in a grade level or course several times during the quarter, semester, trimester, or entire school year. These common formative assessments are similar in design and format to district and state assessments.

All seminars directly supported the school-level accountability system.

**Implementation Visits:** Collaborating with The Center, district and school leaders designed professional development implementation support specifically for the 25 targeted schools and arranged for customized support, coaching, and modeling at each focus school site. The Center and the district designed the curricula to directly align with each school’s individualized needs, and each of the focus schools had four implementation visits. During the implementation days, The Center’s professional development associates worked closely with school educators to concentrate on specific stated goals and needs, all of which connected with Fort Bend’s District

Comprehensive Accountability Framework. Each of these schools worked one-on-one with a professional development associate to develop grade-level data teams and implement school-specific professional development strategies.

**On-Site Certification Training:** Fort Bend leaders invested in professional development sustainability by certifying teacher-leaders to guide professional development and teach The Center’s seminars within their own district. On-site certification also enabled Fort Bend to build internal capacity and save money on future professional development efforts. The district carried out certification training in *Making Standards Work* (now titled *Engaging Classroom Assessments*), *Data-Driven Decision Making* (now titled *Decision Making for Results*), *Data Teams*, and *Common Formative Assessments*. Certified teachers gained a deeper understanding of the seminar content and learned new tools to support other educators who were applying the content in their classrooms. All professional development goals remained directly aligned with Fort Bend’s District Comprehensive Accountability Framework.

**Keynote Presentation:** Fort Bend leaders commissioned a “kick-off” keynote presentation to gain the support of community members as well as a wide variety of district-wide stakeholders. School board members, school administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom educators all attended this keynote. Attendance by such a diverse audience provided a united show of support for Fort Bend’s focus on holistic accountability.

## 4.0 Fort Bend Independent School District Results

Test results provide just one indicator of whether students are progressing toward mastery of state content standards. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is a statewide, standards-based assessment that measures specific skills defined for each grade by the state of Texas. Students must pass TAKS tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 in order to advance to the next grade, and also pass the grade 11 exit-level TAKS in order to graduate from high school. (In earlier grades, students have three opportunities to pass each test before being retained.) TAKS results show the level of proficiency a student demonstrates in each of the subject areas tested. Students receive one of three ratings: *did not meet standard*, *met standard*, or *commended performance*.<sup>5</sup> Fort Bend's goal was for all students to meet standard or reach commended performance.

Fort Bend has made significant achievement gains on TAKS:

- The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills results indicate that over each of the last four years, more Fort Bend students met or exceeded state standards than in the previous year.
- From school year 2006-2007—when The Center began working with the district—to school year 2007-2009, the percentage of students who scored proficient in math did not drop in any grade level.
- The percentage of students who scored proficient in reading and math has risen or stayed the same in every subject area for every grade tested since 2005-2006.

Results are not measured by standardized tests alone. As Dr. Jenney learned in Virginia Beach City Public Schools, actual implementation and application of proven professional development strategies can dramatically impact teaching and learning at the classroom level.

Currently, at Fort Bend's Focus Schools, training in The Center's *Data Teams* seminar continues to make a tremendous impact on the way educators plan lessons and teach. At one school, 35 percent of teachers say they now use common formative assessments to determine weaknesses and target instruction to students, and 31 percent of the responses report increased team communication and collaboration. Another focus school, Blue Ridge Elementary, saw a 10 percent increase in proficiency in grade 3 TAKS reading scores after just one year of *Data*

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<sup>5</sup> TAKS Commended Performance—the highest performance level set by the State Board of Education. Students who achieve Commended Performance perform at a level that is considerably above the state's passing standard and show a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills.

*Teams* training and implementation visits. In the previous year (2005-2006), the school showed an increase in grade 3 reading scores by just one percentage point. Similarly, in grade 4 reading, the number of students scoring proficient increased by 15 percent, after an eight-percent drop the previous year.

The goal in Fort Bend Independent School District is to have all schools use data teams consistently to review and analyze data and to use the results to drive instruction. As additional educators participate in *Data Teams* certification training and more educators are trained in the *Data Teams* process, schools will gain more tools and a better understanding of the in-depth data they can use to effectively drive instruction and increase student understanding. With continued monitoring, more Fort Bend schools will implement effective data teams as they continue their partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center.

## 5.0 Lessons Learned in Fort Bend Independent School District

Fort Bend Independent School District continues to work with The Leadership and Learning Center in an active and ongoing partnership. In the 2009-2010 school year, the district will continue with implementation visits and certified trainers will continue training educators throughout the district. Fort Bend leaders and The Center recognize the following specific lessons as integral to the district's continued success:

- The development of the District Comprehensive Accountability Framework guides a community of stakeholders: leaders, educators, and community members. By providing classroom educators with an up-front voice in this initial project, Fort Bend continues to lay the foundation for long-term success.
- District leaders continue to use the Fort Bend District Comprehensive Accountability Framework as the foundation for all professional development work. This is a living document that district educators enhance and improve on an ongoing basis.
- The Tier One (district) and Tier Two (school) Indicators remain as constant reminders of accountability, as district stakeholders move forward toward future educational plans.
- The district ensures the plan will maintain a lasting impact by scheduling implementation visits at district schools. This process allows classroom educators to have direct access to The Center's professional development associates in order to address specific challenges and receive direct feedback at the classroom level. This modeling and customized, individual support is a significant factor in meeting overall achievement goals at the Fort Bend Focus Schools.
- Fort Bend leaders planned exceptionally well for the future by investing in resources to support educators. The district continues to invest in books and other materials for classroom teachers and school leaders.

These concepts—sustainability and accountability—provide Fort Bend Independent School District the foundation needed for continued professional development growth and student achievement success.

## Appendix One

### Percentage of Students Who Met Standard on TAKS

Grade 3				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	95%	95%	95%	95%
Math	81%	82%	85%	87%

The state average for reading was 89% in 2009.

The state average for math was 84% in 2009.

Grade 4				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	86%	86%	86%	86%
Math	87%	87%	88%	89%
Writing	94%	93%	94%	94%

The state average for reading was 84% in 2009.

The state average for math was 86% in 2009.

The state average for writing was 91% in 2009.

Grade 5				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	90%	91%	92%	93%
Math	90%	91%	91%	90%
Science	77%	77%	81%	84%

The state average for reading was 83% in 2009.

The state average for math was 84% in 2009.

The state average for science was 84% in 2009.

Grade 6				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	91%	92%	93%	94%
Math	77%	77%	80%	84%

The state average for reading was 91% in 2009.

The state average for math was 80% in 2009.

Grade 7				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	82%	87%	89%	89%
Math	72%	74%	79%	80%
Writing	92%	93%	92%	94%

The state average for reading was 84% in 2009.

The state average for math was 79% in 2009.

The state average for writing was 93% in 2009.

Grade 8				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	87%	91%	97%	97%
Math	70%	72%	84%	87%
Science	73%	69%	71%	75%
Social Studies	NA	87%	91%	93%

The state average for reading was 87% in 2009.

The state average for math was 67% in 2009.

The state average for science was 72% in 2009.

## Appendix One (Continued)

Grade 9				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Reading	90%	90%	90%	92%
Math	64%	67%	71%	76%

The state average for social studies was 92% in 2009.

The state average for reading was 93% in 2009.

The state average for math was 79% in 2009.

Grade 11				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
ELA	93%	94%	96%	96%
Math	84%	85%	87%	90%
Science	82%	84%	86%	91%
Social Studies	NA	96%	97%	98%

The state average for ELA was 92% in 2009.

The state average for math was 81% in 2009.

The state average for science was 91% in 2009.

The state average for social studies was 97% in 2009.

Grade 10				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
ELA	91%	91%	93%	93%
Math	68%	69%	72%	75%
Science	67%	67%	72%	75%
Social Studies	NA	88%	92%	89%

The state average for ELA was 88% in 2009.

The state average for math was 65% in 2009.

The state average for science was 66% in 2009.

The state average for social studies was 90% in 2009.

## Appendix Two

### TAKS Results by Subgroup

**2008-2009 Percentage of Students in a Designated Group Scoring Proficient or Above in Comparison to Students in the General Population**

Subgroup	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 3 Math	Grade 4 Reading	Grade 4 Math	Grade 4 Writing
All Students	95%	87%	88%	89%	93%
Females	96%	86%	90%	90%	96%
Males	94%	88%	86%	89%	91%
African American	91%	76%	81%	79%	90%
Asian	98%	98%	94%	98%	98%
Native American	100%	100%	88%	88%	88%
Hispanic or Latino	94%	83%	83%	87%	90%
Economically Disadvantaged	91%	78%	79%	81%	89%
Limited English Proficient	95%	87%	80%	88%	90%
Special Education	84%	69%	73%	71%	73%

Subgroup	Grade 5 Reading	Grade 5 Math	Grade 5 Science	Grade 6 Reading	Grade 6 Math
All Students	93%	92%	84%	94%	84%
Females	93%	91%	92%	94%	85%
Males	92%	91%	86%	93%	84%
African American	88%	84%	74%	92%	76%
Asian	99%	99%	95%	98%	96%
Native American	90%	90%	90%	100%	71%
Hispanic or Latino	87%	88%	76%	88%	76%
Economically Disadvantaged	85%	84%	71%	89%	76%
Limited English Proficient	74%	82%	57%	69%	59%
Special Education	75%	65%	56%	72%	44%

**Appendix Two (Continued)**

Subgroup	Grade 7 Reading	Grade 7 Math	Grade 7 Writing	Grade 8 Reading	Grade 8 Math	Grade 8 Social Studies	Grade 8 Science
All Students	89%	80%	94%	97%	87%	93%	75%
Females	92%	80%	92%	98%	87%	93%	73%
Males	87%	80%	86%	97%	87%	93%	77%
African American	85%	66%	74%	97%	77%	90%	61%
Asian	98%	97%	95%	99%	97%	99%	91%
Native American	100%	92%	90%	100%	100%	100%	75%
Hispanic or Latino	80%	70%	76%	95%	81%	88%	63%
Economically Disadvantaged	81%	67%	71%	95%	77%	87%	59%
Limited English Proficient	49%	47%	57%	80%	61%	71%	33%
Special Education	57%	42%	56%	82%	52%	66%	34%

Subgroup	Grade 9 Reading	Grade 9 Math	Grade 10 ELA	Grade 10 Math	Grade 10 Science	Grade 10 Social Studies
All Students	92%	76%	93%	75%	75%	92%
Females	94%	76%	94%	76%	73%	92%
Males	91%	75%	92%	74%	76%	92%
African American	89%	60%	90%	59%	60%	87%
Asian	98%	95%	97%	93%	92%	98%
Native American	N/A	N/A	100%	88%	80%	90%
Hispanic or Latino	89%	67%	89%	64%	61%	89%
Economically Disadvantaged	89%	63%	89%	60%	60%	88%
Limited English Proficient	56%	45%	48%	39%	31%	66%
Special Education	68%	43%	57%	29%	30%	61%

## Appendix Two (Continued)

Subgroup	Grade 11 ELA	Grade 11 Math	Grade 11 Science	Grade 11 Social Studies
All Students	93%	75%	75%	98%
Females	94%	76%	73%	99%
Males	92%	74%	76%	98%
African American	90%	59%	60%	98%
Asian	97%	93%	92%	99%
Native American	100%	88%	80%	N/A
Hispanic or Latino	89%	64%	61%	97%
Economically Disadvantaged	89%	60%	60%	97%
Limited English Proficient	48%	39%	31%	82%
Special Education	57%	29%	30%	87%

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