



4 For the Future

Eanes Community Dialogues

Final Report
May 2012



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4 for the Future Report on Eanes Community Dialogues



Executive Summary

I. Introduction

In April 2012, over 200 Eanes community members participated in a four-night series of meetings called “4 for the Future – Eanes Community Dialogues” (the Dialogues). Broadly, the initiative was an effort to provide community leaders, particularly those involved in education, with a series of priorities that could serve to inform future decision making.

Specifically, the initiative had four principal goals:

1. Identify what needs to be done to successfully prepare our area’s students for their future;
2. Prioritize those needs, review our resources, and provide guidance to our leaders;
3. Improve communication between the various elements of our community;
4. Further develop our infrastructure of volunteers.

The effort was organized by individuals in the Eanes community, facilitated by E3 Alliance (E3), and sponsored by the Eanes Independent School District (EISD).

II. Coordinating Roles Defined

In an effort to ensure that the wide spectrum of viewpoints were represented in the planning and coordinating of the Dialogues, a Steering Committee (the Committee) was formed. The membership of the Committee was designed to represent the range of personalities and perspectives that populate the area.

Thus, the Committee was composed of teachers and parents from each campus, high school students, EISD Trustees and administrators, parents with pre-school age children, parents with children who have graduated and moved away from home, special needs parents, private school parents, business leaders, and representatives of the faith community.

The Committee of 33 volunteers was divided into three sub-committees (logistics, outreach, and communications) and met five times as a group in the EISD Board Room. Subcommittees met more often. The Committee's charge was broad:

1. Discuss and make recommendations regarding the Dialogues format and agenda;
2. Develop messaging that clearly articulates the purpose of the Dialogue series;
3. Develop and manage the Dialogues community awareness campaign;
4. And make whatever logistical arrangements are necessary to ensure the series' success.

E3 Alliance, provided a professional, objective process within which the Dialogues could be structured and then adapted that to meet the specific needs of the Steering Committee. E3 also recruited and trained a team of 45 facilitators whose job it was to moderate and scribe the night's varied discussions.

E3's participation was crucial in that it provided a well-vetted process, as well an opportunity to have EISD Trustees, teachers and administrators sit side-by-side with students, parents, and community members, helping to ensure that each voice in the discussion was treated equally. E3 has led similarly successful initiatives throughout the region since 2006, convening over 1200 participants in 11 communities in deliberative dialogues focused on improving educational outcomes.

The District, recognizing the value of Dialogues held, agreed to sponsor the process and supported the costs and provided logistical help to the Committee. The District openly encouraged employees, parents and students to attend the Dialogues, hosted the Dialogue materials on its website, lent the Westlake High School Chap's Court as a venue, and provided innumerable other valuable logistical supports to the Committee.

III. Process

The dialogues process was a structured, moderated small-group forum process, based on the work of the respected Kettering foundation as well as processes designed by the National Issues Forums. The process was designed to enable participants to explore common values,

examine possible options, offer new ideas and foster a solution-based discussion on how to successfully prepare students for the future.

The dialogue process utilized a discussion guide prepared by E3 Alliance that provided a framework for participants to delve more deeply into the issue of how to prepare today's students for tomorrow's jobs. E3 Alliance conducted a six-hour training with 45 volunteers to prepare them to effectively moderate and record the four dialogue events and help ensure that everyone had an equal voice in the discussions and that the conversations were thoroughly documented.

E3's guide offered three different, potentially competing educational perspectives on pathways that could lead to educational and economic success for students. Rather than any one "approach" in the guide being selected as the best alternative, the purpose of the guide was to help participants explore a diversity of views, examine the costs and benefits of possible alternatives, discuss trade-offs and surface the underlying values that may offer common ground for action.

The first two evenings in the dialogue series convened participants in the same small groups of six to eight individuals, each with a team of a volunteer moderator and recorder. After a review of data on Eanes students' outcomes, these evenings were dedicated to an in-depth conversation about the discussion guide and an examination of benefits, costs and possible actions that participants felt were important related to each of the three approaches.

After the second night, E3 Alliance conducted a review process to look at the literally hundreds of thoughts and ideas shared by participants (see Appendix G and H). Input was categorized based on the essential elements of what had been discussed and then each of these groupings was framed into a core idea.

Nights three and four were intensely focused discussion, some large group, and some small, on implementation strategies, or action plans. Said another way, the eight themes were tested. Participants discussed the resources each would demand, assessed the degree to which students and the community would benefit, appraised obstacles and partnership opportunities, and crafted strategies.

These action planning discussions deepened the communities understanding of the impact an initiative may have and the trade-offs demanded should the district pursue such an initiative. And in so doing, the action planning discussions deepened the participant's commitment to the priorities outlined by the eight themes.

IV. Key Findings

In all, eight priority themes emerged from the dialogues. These will be discussed in greater detail later in this report. The eight, however, can be summarized with a brief discussion of three broad groupings which seemed to span all themes.

1. **The Whats:** This group is generally composed of themes that outlined ‘what’ the community wants for its students and from its schools. This included an emphasis on building “foundational skills,” “rigorous, yet a balanced, holistic education,” and curriculum that provides “opportunities for all students.”
2. **The Hows:** This group is generally composed of themes that outline ‘how’ the community proposed to implement the ‘whats.’ This group included an emphasis on “ensuring that classroom themes are relevant”, “involving the entire community in education”, “assessing and improving existing programs”, “providing greater resources and training for teachers” and “integrating hard and soft skills into common curriculum”.
3. **The Meta-Theme:** The community’s desire to maintain academic rigor while creating a more balanced, well-rounded educational experience for students was the single most pervasive topic of discussion. Participants clearly understand and support the importance of curriculum focused on the fields of science, technology, engineering and math to ensure that students are able to pursue higher education opportunities and to be well positioned for upwardly mobile careers in these fields. Nevertheless, they believed that an over emphasis may crowd out other dimensions of what students need for a complete education.

Participants expressed a desire to provide students the opportunity to be exposed to different academic subjects, skills, extracurricular activities, cultures, and other enriching experiences. Many of the skills participants cited as key to their success, as well as highly desirable by employers, were things like creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, communication, teamwork and responsibility.

There was a desire to emphasize these aspects more and to make them more integral to the coursework itself. Across the four Dialogues, numerous suggestions included ideas such as more project-based learning, where soft skills could be integrated and students could learn in a more hands-on fashion, directly applying new knowledge to real-world experiences. Many participants, including students, also indicated that extracurricular activities provided opportunities to grow these skills, but that because of limited time and pressure to perform academically they had to sacrifice these activities.

Parents and students expressed significant concern over the amount of pressure that students are under to perform academically and be in the top 10% of their class. Concerns included students burning out from stress, being unable to fully explore their interests or passions, and not learning to learn, but rather memorizing information so they can pass tests instead of gaining the essential skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Numerous suggestions were made on how to lessen the impact of the AP multiplier, such as exempting non-AP classes from counting toward GPA or reducing the difference between AP and non-AP credits.

Another important thread that emerged throughout the conversations was making sure that school was working for all students, not just those in the top ten or twenty percent. Participants were not comfortable with a “one-size-fits-all” approach that leaves out those students who are not interested in or do not excel in subject areas such as math and science.

Participants wanted to create equal opportunities and support for students with an array of college and career aspirations. There was also a desire to have more thorough assessment of student’s interests, beginning early and carrying throughout their education, which would help enable them to pursue areas that suited them. It was also viewed as important to have learning experiences that matched a range of learning styles and were relevant, engaging and diverse.

It became clear that people felt there were many resources that could be tapped within the community – parents, businesses, universities, community members and groups, even the students themselves, to make progress on the themes. For example, as participants worked through an action planning process to help validate the themes and explore how these concepts might be advanced, an idea emerged of having a robust database that helped the District connect the various resources and volunteers to teachers seeking support.

There was also interest in learning from best practices and examples from other communities, as well as building on existing programs within EISD, in order to leverage and advance these action ideas. There were numerous suggestions regarding mentorships, internships, guest speakers, and other programs to provide more real-world experience and help students explore what really interests them. It was clear that the barriers of time, money and the capacity and bandwidth of teachers and employers are very real, and that creative ways would need to be found if new actions were to be undertaken.

In wrapping up the dialogues on the fourth night, participants were asked what they enjoyed about the dialogue process and what they might do differently as a result. The most common comments about what they liked were the opportunities to get to know others in the community and to hear other people’s perspectives. Here are some quotes to highlight these points:

“Hearing different perspectives in an open minded and positive atmosphere.”

“Encountering so many other members of this community with such an interest in and diversity of opinions in our community.”

“Interacting with the students.”

“Thoughtful discussions about what's most important for my children's future from an Eanes education.”

When asked what they might do differently, many comments related to getting more involved, volunteering, learning about what is already happening, and continuing to talk together about these issues. Some sample comments are below:

“Sign up for future dialogues, attend more school-related things. Volunteer.”

“Hopefully talk with those who didn't attend about the opportunity they missed.”
“Listen to the kids and create more forums that encourage their participation”
“Be involved more and to help out the school district.”
“Try to involve parents more, explore other opportunities/programs that are already successful in other school districts.”
“Continue to communicate with each other and take action.”

As the Eanes Steering Committee and the District review and discuss the input from the sessions, it will be important to continue to communicate what is being done and how these ideas relate to efforts currently underway and those that emerge in the future. The Dialogues provided a valuable opportunity to begin a thoughtful and positive conversation about community priorities and it will be vital to continue to create meaningful ways for community members to be engaged, to advance ideas discussed and to continue to build that volunteer and civic infrastructure and the deliberative approach to identifying common ground and working through trade-offs and tough choices.

V. Eight Priority Themes

As previously noted, eight themes emerged during the dialogues. These were the focus of a great deal of discussion across the four nights, and a considerable amount of effort was invested in the exploration of each in both small and large group formats.

In plenary remarks one evening, Dr. Bill Bechtol offered that it seems that the priority themes which appear to be emerging are generally in alignment with current EISD planning and policy documents. Dr. Bechtol continued by reminding participants that while this may be the case there are always opportunities to refresh, refine, and redirect programming, and that the dialogues are essential to the district’s policy and curricular assessment.

Below are the eight themes which emerged as priority items. Each has been summarized with a brief heading and explanatory statement and the bullets provide additional context drawn from participant discussions:

- 1. Relevance is Key** - Make sure that the learning that takes place in the classroom is relevant to what students will be doing in real life and work, and show them the connection between coursework and future work.
 - Students must see that what they are learning applies in the real world
 - Ensure that education provides a foundation of both hard and soft skills
 - Create more connections to business community – internships/mentoring – gain experience
 - Help students find their passions, explore all of their options.

- 2. Foundational Skills for the Workplace** - Help students build character, a strong sense of ethics, and the social and teamwork skills that are important in any career

- Employers desire soft skills thus education should, to the extent that it can, be formatted to develop teamwork, communication, creativity, leadership, a strong work ethic
- Because today's students will likely have a variety of careers, the skills and lessons learned in school should be transferable skills and support success in any career
- Risk taking and self reliance are essential to entrepreneurship, and to the extent it can, education should offer courses and extracurricular activities that encourage the development of these skills
- Among the foundations of success are responsibility and civility, and schools should help students build and reinforce these traits

3. Community Connections – The entire community should be involved in educating and supporting the success of our youth.

- Schools should look for new, and build upon existing, partnerships within the community – businesses, parents, other districts, community groups
- Businesses can bring knowledge, funding, materials, training and new opportunities to the students, teachers and staff
- Stronger engagement with parents can help reinforce work/life balance lessons, encourage soft and hard skill development, create new venues for measuring the effectiveness of programs, and enhance their likelihood of success
- Eanes schools and students can benefit from exposure to students, schools and communities in other parts of the region, and in so doing develop broader perspectives and richer understandings

4. Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education – Education should continue to emphasize high academic achievement while ensuring a well-rounded education and preventing student burn out.

- A rigorous curriculum helps to ensure that students can compete globally
- A rigorous curriculum helps prepare students for the challenges of higher education and future jobs
- Critical thinking, problem solving skills, creativity, communication and extracurricular activities are equally essential components to education
- Balancing the rigors of the hard sciences with the holistic qualities of the soft sciences are fundamental to a well rounded education
- “Teaching to the test” increases pressure on students and detracts from their time to pursue other interests

5. Opportunities for All Students – The schools are filled with thousands of students with widely diverse levels of motivation, interests, abilities, learning styles and needs; thus, educational system should reflect this diversity and provide opportunities for all.

- Education is not “one size fits all.”
- Diverse opportunities like internships, vocational, and project-based learning, create a diverse range of practical and personalized experiences for students

- Curriculum needs to be flexible enough to support the ambitions of students who may not be attracted to, or excel within, the rigors of the STEM track
 - Foster diverse and personalized teaching strategies that encourage entrepreneurial skills, teaming and group projects, as well as hands on experiences
- 6. Assessing and Measuring** - Identify and build on Eanes' strengths, identify areas for improvement, measure the degree to which initiatives are successful and assess ways to make them better.
- It is important to clearly define on what things like “high academic achievement” and “soft skills” mean and how progress towards them is measured.
 - Testing should not just provide benchmarks of success or failure, but identify areas for improvement or change
- 7. Support and Resources** – The community and school system should provide teachers with the most contemporary and applicable resources and skill-building opportunities as a means of ensuring that they have what they need to help students succeed.
- People, time, money, and technical resources are thin and the community and school system should constantly look for ways to efficiently manage and creatively leverage opportunities
 - Look for partnerships within the business, community to “lighten the load” on teachers, staff, and school resources
- 8. Integration and Innovation** – Enhance learning experiences by integrating students interested in hard sciences with those more focused on soft skills to makes learning more inclusive, and to foster innovation by encouraging the students to bridge the gaps between their respective interests.
- Integrating academic rigor and soft skills into common curriculum initiatives can help students achieve in a variety of ways
 - Project-based, real-world, team-focused learning can help students develop the broad educational and experiential foundations they will need for success.
 - Project-based learning builds leadership, entrepreneurialism, and innovation
 - Project-based learning allows students with different learning styles and abilities to work together and can be introduced in early grades

VI. Making Progress on the Themes

The deliberative process emphasizes the costs and trade-offs that are inherent in any choice, as well as the possibilities for leverage and the creative thinking that surfaces when people search for ways to make progress. In order to validate the themes that emerged and explore ways in which they might be manifested into curriculum and other initiatives, participants worked through a process of brainstorming and refining action ideas.

Consideration was give to the kind of resources that would be required, who would need to be involved, and what a successful outcome would entail. Possible actions covered a range of

approaches for addressing the themes, but a common thread was the importance of the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the broader community.

Groups were also asked to reflect upon these action ideas and provide lists of the barriers to and enablers of forward progress. In general the barrier / enabler discussion provided an opportunity to view participant's optimism. While many obstacles were observed and catalogued, there seemed to be little doubt that the community believed that each had a remedy, and that nearly all of those remedies currently resided within the community.

What follows is a summary of the barriers and enablers identified. It should be noted that while the lists from which these summaries were drawn were specific to the action ideas and the eight priority themes, commonalities provided an opportunity to bundle responses.

Barriers: While the most commonly cited barriers to implementation were money, and time, a variety of lesser issues emerged as well. What follows is a summary of the barriers participants listed:

- Limited money;
- Limited time;
- Lack of broad-based community involvement;
- Potential lack of community support;
- The added burden on teachers;
- Additional staffing, training and other resource needs;
- Challenges to defining, planning and developing new initiatives;
- The difficulty associated with institutional change.

Enablers: This discussion proved to be much more focused. There seemed to be little doubt among participants that the Eanes community was the greatest enabler. What follows is a summary of the enablers participants listed:

- Parents;
- Empty nesters and retirees;
- Teachers;
- Students;
- Business community;
- Technology;
- Existing school resources and programs;
- Availability of best practices and examples from other places.

VII. Recommendations from E3 Alliance

In the dozen deliberative dialogues processes that E3 Alliance has hosted across communities in the Central Texas region, communities have taken a variety of approaches to take advantage of the momentum created by the dialogues process. These have ranged from simply letting individuals "own" actions they were interested in, to the district adopting a prioritization

process for possible activities, to the Steering Committee morphing to an ongoing implementation body, to launching a “top to bottom” strategic planning process for the community. No one answer is right for every community. Given the discussion and outcomes in Eanes in 2012, following are recommendations from E3 Alliance for possible follow up:

- Disseminate findings (this report, video clips, executive summary) broadly and deeply across the community. Let people know that their input was heard and captured.
- Appoint a subcommittee of the Steering Committee to cross reference the final report to the current Eanes ISD Strategic Plan. Identify areas of direct overlap, new ideas, and any conflicting input and summarize these for staff and board to review.
- Hold 1-2 follow up meetings to look specifically at the prioritized actions that came from the last two nights, together with identified enablers and barriers.
 - Sort actions into three possible “buckets”:
 1. Actions that are already underway or planned
 2. Actions that are out of reach, overly costly, or not doable in the near term
 3. Actions that are both doable and not being done currently
 - For any actions that fall into bucket 3, prioritize and identify if there are members of the Steering Committee who want to work with the community to bring these forward as a way of demonstrating tangible movement forward.
- Review the list of people who volunteered for specific activities in the last meeting and determine if there are matches to current needs that can be identified.



Appendix

Appendix A: Background

In the fall of 2011, several individuals from the Eanes Community approached the Eanes Independent School District and E3 Alliance about launching an effort through which community members could sit together and respectfully discuss how to create a promising future for students. The aim was to create an environment where people could listen to one another, share their values and identify those priorities that people believe are most important to help students succeed. These priorities would then provide guidance to leaders in the Eanes Community as they make decisions in the future. The goals for the project were as follows:

1. Identify what needs to be done to successfully prepare our students for their future
2. Prioritize those needs, compare our resources, and provide guidance to our leaders
3. Improve communication between the various elements of our community
4. Further develop our infrastructure of volunteers

A Steering Committee of 33 volunteers was formed to guide the community dialogue process. The Steering Committee was comprised of two representatives from each school, two members from the Westlake Chamber of Commerce, two students from Westlake High School, two Trustees, members from the faith community, parents, empty-nesters, and those with children in private school (see Appendix H).

This group met semi-monthly in the two months leading up to the dialogues and formed working groups focused on outreach, logistics and communications. The main emphasis of the Committee was to reach out to the community and encourage broad-based participation in the dialogues. They branded the event “4 for the Future” and utilized an array of engagement strategies including news media, emails, websites, printed fliers, presentations and one-on-one outreach. The Committee also secured food sponsors for the series such as Treaty Oak Bank, Chick-fil-A, and Hat Creek Burger Company, and coordinated childcare and other volunteer roles.

The Eanes Independent School District provided support for the costs and the various logistical needs of the effort. EISD engaged the services of E3 Alliance, a Central Texas education-based nonprofit, which designed and facilitated the process.

E3 Alliance has successfully lead similar initiatives in this region since 2006, convening over 1200 participants in 11 communities in deliberative dialogues focused on improving educational outcomes. The deliberative dialogue model is based on the work of a nationally recognized democracy research organization, the Kettering Foundation.

The dialogue process utilizes a discussion guide, which offers a framework of three different, potentially competing educational perspectives on how best to prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s jobs. This discussion guide helps participants explore a diversity of views, examine the costs and benefits of possible alternatives, discuss trade-offs and surface the underlying values that may offer common ground for action.

The dialogue process also utilizes trained volunteer moderators and recorders to help ensure that everyone has an equal voice in the discussions and that the conversations are thoroughly documented. On March 24, E3 Alliance conducted a six-hour training with 45 volunteers to teach them the skills of moderating a deliberative forum and to familiarize them with the Eanes discussion materials.

The benefit of a moderated discussion is that the moderator encourages participants to grapple with hard choices, to share ideas and opinions, to truly listen and to look for the common ground, which is the foundation of good community decision-making. Also, by utilizing E3 Alliance and this group of trained volunteers, EISD personnel were able to participate fully in the discussions, creating a unique opportunity for representatives of the administration, Trustees, and teachers to sit side-by-side with students, parents, and community members and have in-depth discussions about what needs to be done to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow.

Appendix B: Dialogues Process

At-A-Glance Overview

- E3 Alliance developed the discussion materials and event designs and conducted the volunteer moderator training, led by Diane Miller.
- A Steering Committee, made up of business, community, and education representatives from the Eanes Community and facilitated by Diane Miller, planned and managed the outreach and logistics.
- Community Dialogues were held at Chap Court at Westlake High School from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. on April 3, 10, 17 and 24.
- Food and childcare were provided to participants.
- Approximately 200 different individuals (students, parents, educators, and community members) attended the dialogues. Group size each evening ranged from approximately 80-150 individuals.
- Participants met in small groups of six to eight, moderated by two trained volunteers over four nights for 2 ½ hours per night.
- Nights one and two focused on in-depth discussion of the three approaches in the discussion guide.
- The outcomes from the discussions on the first two nights formed the priority “themes” which the group then used as the basis for an action planning process on night three.
- Night four asked participants to examine the top action plans that emerged from night three by discussing what would be barriers to implementing those ideas, and what would help enable success.

Dialogue Process - Detailed Recap

Session 1

Objectives:

- Provide participants with background information and data on student outcomes
- Create a collegial atmosphere
- Identify factors that contribute to being successful in the world of work
- Deliberate approach one of Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s Jobs

Process

The first night began with a welcome by Eanes Steering Committee Members John Havenstrite and Julia Weber. Next Dr. Bill Bechtol, EISD Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, reviewed the goals for the dialogues, which were as follows:

- Identify what needs to be done to successfully prepare our students for their future
- Prioritize those needs, compare our resources, and provide guidance to our leaders
- Improve communication between the various elements of our community
- Further develop our infrastructure of volunteers

Dr. Bechtol then shared the “[Westlake Chaps Student Vision](#)” video, which examines the different learning styles and use of technology of 21st century students. In the first small group session, the moderator welcomed the participants and everyone briefly introduced themselves. Then the moderator suggested guidelines for the conversations, which included:

- Respect differences and considering the value of all ideas
- Take time to listen, reflect and ask questions
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to talk.
- Speak with your mind and heart.
- Be concise and focus what matters

and added any additional guidelines suggested by participants. They advised the group that the moderator is neutral and objective, but will encourage participants to consider the impacts of their ideas. The dialogue began with an opportunity for each of the participants to tell a story about what prepared them for life and the world of work. Quotes from some participants included:

“My grandmother who inspired me to read had a great impact on me. She opened me to the world of literature. Who you are as a person is instilled at a very early age.”

“I grew up on a farm. Working hard there as a child helped me learn how to work hard as an adult.”

“One teacher in particular encouraged my dream to go to college, even when I thought that I couldn’t go”

Students were asked what their expectations were about their future in the world of work. Some students focused on what they felt was getting in the way of them being successful in the future, including:

- Focus on memorization, not true learning or critical thinking or problem solving
- Focus on testing takes away from education
- Grades having a negative effect on being prepared - just doing what has to be done to get the grade, but no interest or self-motivation
- Don’t have time to follow passions
- Choice between top 10% and courses of interest
- Can gain the softer skills by playing sports but playing sports takes away from weighted courses – there are only so many hours in the day

The purpose of this exercise was to help participants get to know each other so that they would feel comfortable discussing, deliberating, and sometimes even disagreeing with each other. See full documentation of comments from this conversation in Appendix D.

Next was an introduction to the economic impacts of education on Central Texas and an overview of the Blueprint for Educational Change by E3 Alliance Executive Director, Susan Dawson. Data highlights in this presentation included the cost of drop outs, educational attainment levels, comparison of Eanes ISD to the rest of the region, income levels and other demographic data, national college enrollment levels, etc. Diane Miller, representing E3 Alliance, provided an overview of the process of the four sessions. She explained the discussion guide, which offers three potentially competing options as possible pathways to education economic success for students, each emphasizing the positive aspects, but also the costs and trade-offs, of the approach.

Participants were asked to discuss the first approach in the issue guide, “High Academic Achievement: Provide a rigorous education emphasizing skills needed for global competitiveness.” which emphasizes the need for skills in science, technology, engineering and math in order to ensure students can compete globally. Moderators asked participants to consider the benefits or things they like about the approach and the drawbacks or concerns they have about doing what the approach suggests. This thorough analysis helped participants think through the possible pro’s and con’s of the approach and uncover any unintended consequences of potential actions. The groups spent about forty-five minutes discussing the approach. They also brainstormed possible actions that, based on their conversation, they might support. Below are some common concepts that emerged from the various table discussions:

Discussion on Approach One: High Academic Achievement	
Likes/Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares students for high quality, high paying, fast growing and in demand jobs in STEM fields • Helps keep us competitive in the world • Prepares students for rigors of college • Fosters skills like critical thinking and problem solving • Opportunities to stretch • Requires recognition of importance of subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone’s interest or aptitude • Limits career diversity and freedom of choice • Not interdisciplinary enough • Stifles innovation, creativity • Higher cost for labs, equipment, personnel • Requires more technically qualified teachers • Increase stress levels and burn out of students • Does not fully address skills needed in workforce

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May capture interest of students who haven't been exposed to this before 	
Possible Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project-based, hands-on learning • Connect & integrate curriculum and make more interdisciplinary • Partnerships with business to provide vocational, mentoring opportunities • Assess what is working and document progress • Improve science experiences at earlier grade levels • Offer on-going professional development for teachers • Cut down the difference between AP credit and non AP credit • Turn STEM into STEAM by incorporating the arts 	

The wrap up of this session included reflections in the small group and a reporting out from select tables as to one or two of the highlights from their table's conversation. Comments included a new awareness of the importance of STEM and surprise over the degree of focus on advanced placement courses and students achieving a high grade point average, and the pressure students feel to be in the top 10%. Some participants felt constrained by focusing only on this approach and wanted a more holistic discussion about what high academic achievement means and the other skills students need to be successful. Many felt that, while it was very important to emphasize academic rigor in science, math, etc., students need the opportunity to explore their passions and have a well-rounded educational experience. It was also important to understand how to effectively support those who are not interested in or don't excel in STEM and make the relevance of what is being learned clear to all students. Full documentation of night one is in Appendix D.

Session 2

Objectives:

- Deliberate the possible advantages and drawbacks of two approaches to preparing students for the world of work, and what these approaches might look like in our community:
 - Approach Two - A Firm Foundation Beyond Education: Focus on soft skills, work ethic and character traits
 - Approach Three - Preparing for the Real World: Prepare students for the needs of the local community and let the community define the educational goals.
 - Identify possible actions for each of these approaches

On night two, participant re-convened in their same small groups, with new attendees being incorporated into existing tables. Susan Dawson kicked off the evening by addressing a question raised on night one by providing some data regarding the ranking of U.S. students in the top industrialized nations for reading (U.S. 15 year olds rank 14 out of 34) and math (U.S. 15 year olds rank 25 out of 34); top 5% of all students U.S. ranks 23 out of 34).

Diane Miller reviewed the process, the purpose of the discussion guide, the role of the moderator and participants, and highlights from night one's discussion. She then reviewed the two approaches to be discussed – Approach 2: “A Firm Foundation Beyond Education”, which focuses on the soft skills, work ethic and character traits that employers are seeking and will serve employees well at any level in the workplace, and Approach 3: “Preparing for the Real World” which emphasizes the local economy and the importance of real-world skill that students can use in an immediate way for an array of job prospects, building greater local prosperity and stronger community ties.

Moderators asked participants to work through the two approaches in a similar process to night one, spending about forty-five minutes on each approach and examining benefits, concerns and possible actions. Below are some common concepts that emerged from the various table discussions on night two:

Discussion on Approach Two: A Firm Foundation Beyond Education	
Likes/Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing soft skills is essential because these skills are transferrable skills that may be used in any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging to define and measure; subjective • Technical skills needed to ensure competitiveness;

<p>job or career.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate and problem solving skills are essential • Having soft skills differentiates between candidates for jobs • Encourages initiative, promotes personal sense of ownership and responsibility • Fosters skills and attributes important beyond the workplace, like citizenship and civility • Incorporating soft skills makes learning more enjoyable 	<p>for jobs, college, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers need / expect students to come in with technical skills • Does not align with global success metrics • Poses significant time and resource challenges; still need to teach the basics • Blurs line between school and home; teaching morals; parents might be concerned about this. • This approach (adding extracurricular activities) might increase pressure rather than alleviate it.
Possible Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more extracurricular activities and purposefully integrate them with learning soft skills • Provide teacher training relevant to teaching these skills • Star Early! Integrate this into the curriculum throughout school and build upon it so that high school students can tackle “hard” issues/take risks. • Investigate project based learning and best practices by districts that are already taking this approach • Integrate the development of effective communication skills (verbal and written) into all classes and subjects • Create a culture where parents partner with schools to teach “soft skills” • Partner with businesses on mentor programs, internships, speakers to present to students • Have more private partnerships/community groups (e.g. lacrosse sports clinic) teach at middle schools as well as high schools • Smaller classes • School-wide integration of community service • District-wide participation of community service 	

Discussion on Approach Three: Preparing for the Real World	
Likes/Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business input to schools would give students more information about what local opportunities are available. • More partnerships with/ties to business community – mentorships, internships, financial support, communication • More real-world experience; resume building • Provides opportunity for less academic-oriented students, but also benefits ALL students • Show the real world applications of that knowledge in order to excite students • Helps students discover interests / passions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local business community is very important, but they should not be the drivers of educational curriculum. • Not that important to the Eanes community, since a very large percentage of students go on to college • Scheduling of classes for students doesn’t allow time for this • Requires a lot from local businesses to take more and more time from their actual work • Job training in school would not be accepted in this district; Goal 90% to college • Myopic: we have to be more global, we can’t ignore world economics; Want children to have an opportunity to be competitive globally.
Possible Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what jobs will be needed in the future • Job interests/strengths and weaknesses tests • Mentoring programs for both students that are interested in college and not interested in college • Expand the “Science Day” model to include business exposure • Class Fair – relate to job/biz • Have business professionals come in to speak; show the real world applications of the content being taught • Establishing internships; Use parent connections to create internships and shadowing opportunities. • Real-world, project-based, team focused curriculum • Relate class topic to business; fully integrate business into the class lesson 	

- Give students the opportunity to be entrepreneurs under EISD umbrella
- Summer School/Year Round
- Schools communicate/partner with Austin Community College

The groups ended their small group discussions with a reflection on what issues they heard emerge from the discussion over the two nights that they thought were very important for the community to address. Again, there was reporting out from some of the tables. Participants reflected on a broad array of issues, including the need for greater flexibility, balance, choices, and the integration of soft and hard skills into a more holistic educational experience. There was concern over the pressure placed on students, the weighting of AP courses and its impact on student choices. Practical application of coursework and exposure to the “real world” was viewed as important, as was creating opportunities for students to pursue their passions.

Participants felt that there were many resources that could be tapped within the community – parents, businesses, universities and other schools – and that it was important to provide more support to teachers. Some groups discussed the importance of “getting out of the Eanes bubble”, connecting in a meaningful way with other communities and enabling students to have contact with a diversity of people and experiences. Groups also discussed the importance of valuing and preparing students that are not four-year-college bound, while still preparing those that are. Ideas like reducing class size, year-round school, summer school and utilizing extracurricular activities to teach soft skills were discussed, as was the importance of starting in the early grades for teaching both soft and hard skills. Full documentation of night two is in Appendix E.

Session 3

Objectives:

- Review common themes from sessions 1 and 2.
- Develop possible action plans related to common themes.
- Identify what is needed to accomplish action plans
- Identify top action for each theme.

Process:

In the large group, Diane Miller reviewed the dialogues process and introduced the eight themes that emerged from nights one and two. The themes were developed through a review process of the literally hundreds of thoughts and ideas discussed during the first two sessions. Input was categorized based on the essential elements of what had been discussed and then each of these groupings was framed into a core idea. These eight themes were the issues that emerged as priority items for the community to address. Diane provided additional detail for each of the themes:

Relevance is Key

- Students need to see how what they are learning applies in the real world
- Ensure education provides foundation of hard and soft skills needed for success
- Create more connections to business community – internships/mentoring – gain experience; open doors
- Help students find their passions, explore all of their options

Foundational Skills for the Workplace

- Employers desire soft skills – teamwork, communication, creativity, leadership – and look for strong work ethic
- Transferable skills that help students succeed in any career
- Incorporating into courses – and extracurriculars - help kids grow, take risks, be self-reliant
- Help students become well-rounded citizens – responsibility, civility

Community Connection

- Strong partnerships with the community – businesses, parents, other districts, community groups – are important for success
- Businesses can bring resources, knowledge and opportunities into EISD

- Strengthening engagement with parents – work/life experience, soft skills, feedback
- Getting outside the “Eanes” bubble and connect with other communities

Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education

- Ensure students can compete globally
- Better prepare students for the rigors of higher education and future jobs
- Foster critical thinking, problem solving skills
- Concerns about “teaching to the test”, increased pressure and lack of time for other interests
- Need to balance this with arts, creativity, communication, extracurricular, etc. for well-rounded student

Opportunities for All Students

- Students have diverse needs, interests, styles – education is not “one size fits all”
- Expand opportunities, create range of experiences (internships/vocational/project-based learning)
- Support students who may not be attracted to / excel in STEM track
- Foster diverse teaching strategies - entrepreneurial skills, team projects, hands on experiences

Assessing and Measuring

- Important to be clear on how things like “high academic achievement” and “soft skills” are defined and measured
- How do we assess what is working well and measure success – tests, surveys, comparisons?
- Testing should not just benchmark success but identify areas for improvement
- Important to be sure we are measuring the right things

Support and Resources

- Resources are already stretched thin – people, time, money, technology. How can we best integrate all these priorities?
- Support teachers through - Training, development, mentoring; Providing tools, resources; Lessening bureaucracy
- Partner effectively with business, community – guest speakers, volunteers to “lighten load”

Integration and Innovation

- By integrating academic rigor and soft skill in curriculum, can achieve multiple outcomes
- Enhance learning experiences - project-based, real-world and team-focused
- Provide opportunities for leadership, entrepreneurialism, innovation
- Accommodate different learning styles; Start early!

After Diane reviewed the themes, Dr. Bill Bechtol gave a brief presentation about the some of the programs and initiatives underway at EISD and provided a handout of the EISD Strategic Plan, highlighting parallels from this group’s conversations to elements contained within the Strategic Plan. Diane reviewed the process for the evening and reminded participants about the role of the moderator and recorder.

Participants returned to their original small groups to reflect on how these themes related to their own conversations and to identify which group members would be working on the different themes according to their own interest. They were provided with a handout of the themes along with a question to consider as they did action planning (as well as sample action items that participants had suggested at the two previous sessions). See Appendix A. Then they moved to the Theme tables according to their interest.

In new groups, individuals shared action ideas they thought would address the question posed under each theme. Each Theme Team then selected the top two or three action ideas they would like to develop action plans around. The action planning process asked the group members to identify what it would take to make this action happen, who would need to be involved, what resources are needed and available and what success would look like. After fleshing out their action plans, the group members voted on the top action they would like to report out to the large group (some reported out two action plans). It was made clear to participants that all of the action ideas brainstormed and the action planning conducted would be included in the final report (see Appendix F).

Each table was asked to report out their top action plan. Some groups elected to present out two items. The action plans selected and reported out as their top actions are as follows:

THEME	ACTION
Relevance is Key	Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)
Foundational Skills for the Workplace	Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace
Community Connections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exposure to Cultural Diversity 2. Better use of community resources not currently being utilized
Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address AP classes (the group did not develop an action plan on this item but talked about concerns of extra grade weight applied to AP and implications for limiting choices of students) 2. Project-based Learning
Opportunities for All Students	Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5 th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.
Assessing and Measuring	Grading practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)
Support and Resources	Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents.
Integration and Innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem Based Learning 2. Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum

Session 4

Objectives:

- Understand the tough choices and tradeoffs that will need to be made since resources are limited
- Explore the barriers and enablers to making progress on action plans developed in night three
- Sign up individuals interested in pursuing specific current volunteer opportunities

Process:

Participants on night four were assigned to new small groups. From the front of the room, Diane Miller reviewed the process for the evening, reminding the group of the themes presented at the beginning of night three and the action plans developed by the theme teams on night three. She then asked four volunteers from the Steering Committee (a business community representative, teacher, parent and student) - Sheila Bostick, Jessica Brown, Mike McDonell, Keyur Mehta - to participate in a “demonstration” conversation to highlight the process that would be used by participants in their small groups. The conversation examined the enablers and barriers of a hypothetical action idea of requiring that Spanish be taught at the elementary level. Participants then engaged in a similar conversation in their small groups, examining barriers and enablers to making progress on the action plans developed in night three. Similar to the deliberative process on nights one and two, this purpose of this activity was to ensure that participants carefully examined the action plans to identify the constraints that were vital to understand when considering these

action plans moving forward. It was also meant as a way to generate creative thinking about what would help these actions be more successful.

Every group was assigned two of the action plans to discuss. Each action plan was discussed by at least two groups. After examining barriers and enablers, group members identified what they felt were the most important barriers and enablers to the action plans and select tables reported these out to the large group. Top barriers and enablers included:

Action Plan	Top Barriers	Top Enablers
Action Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of money • Loss of other instruction time (if part of school day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing existing models for best practices study and/or modify to implement • Existing resources; resurrect old classes and student-run on-site businesses (e.g., coffee shop) • Chamber of commerce, surrounding businesses • Require freshmen to take an elective class (e.g., business competition/business fair)
Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not deemed important by colleges and assessing is so subject • “Pushing this plan too much/too early via tracking” and “Putting kids into a box;” and sense of school district entitlement could impede progress by discouraging the need and/or importance of the program • Time: demands for academics, tradeoffs • Money and materials • How to differentiate from existing programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dansville Schools, Howard Gardner • Exchange program with Title 1 schools (MS and HS levels) via face-to-face and/or virtual interactions • Willing groups: students and businesses • Strong coordinator
Exposure to Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Cultural Diversity and curriculum • Training/getting teachers to implement • Finding way to integrate/add to curriculum • Perceived lack of diversity within Eanes • Not a current focus of district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive recruitment of teachers and training to assure skilled and culturally diverse/sensitive pool • Tapping into diverse EANES community • Technology • Explore and celebrate student’s ethnicity • Assessing the use of parents and community outreach
Better use of community resources not currently being utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Financial Support • Who to coordinate? • Motivate participation from community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a champion • Pilot program • Expand senior service day to increase student involvement in community • Coordinator – maybe a

		volunteer
Project-based Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to set initial expectations • Variations in the teachers ability has more of an impact on student success than with traditional curriculum. • Teachers don't currently have the flexibility in teaching styles that may be required. • AP multiplier • Difficult to develop; needs to be meaningful, worth effort. • Takes a lot of teacher time/planning, goes above and beyond expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A district wide database of individuals willing to come in and lecture on various topics/careers would really be beneficial in showing students the practicality of what they are learning in the classroom. They could also serve as mentors. • High School Honors Project. • Lack of multiplier at middle school level
Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unintended consequences • Students view current "career days" as a waste of time. Something like a mentor program that is more concentrated and regular would be better than a one time career day. • Lack of community involvement. • Lack of buy in • Sustainability of structural integrity • Must work with current system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altering AP system • Personality tests • PTO-like database that contains individuals that are willing to come lecture about a topic/career. This database should include a grade for each individual that represent how well he/she was received. • Use of existing assessment tools • Project based learning programs already exist
Grading practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student perceptions of just getting the highest grade possible at the expense of mastery • Extra time would be required for teachers to re-test, re-grade, etc. • Lack of consistent policies within departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consistent district wide model that promotes mastery based grading that is analogous to different departments • Student more responsible for ownership of their own learning (ex., rubrics, learning contracts, etc.) • Consistent policies in high school, middle school, elementary school (at least within departments)
Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to designate/hire a person or team to create, coordinate, and maintain the database. • Maintaining the database <u>keeping it relevant.</u> • Reaching others outside of parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use registration forms and other modes of existing communication with parents/families to gather information • Bring back the <u>Celebrity Sub</u> program and use it as a model • Volunteer Liaison • Survey teachers for needs

		assessment
Problem Based Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers would need significantly more time to plan and train to teach under this style, as well as coordination time with other teachers Planning Requirements Time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage middle school model of learning, rather than pushing students to take high school or AP credits which do not cater to this type of learning Add Destination Imagination (or a class like it) as a WHEEL class, perhaps in addition to or instead of other electives Materials already exist Tie it in to what already exists
Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more of a burden on the teacher more time & money mindset/cultural shift needed on behalf of teachers and students required teacher training and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn from Northwestern Universities “passion based learning” system and similar systems: Arts for All (in LA), D.I. planning time for teachers look for existing examples in the Eanes district and beyond

Steering Committee member Julia Webber then shared with participants a list of volunteer opportunities could get involved in in the near term, recognizing that many of the action plans and ideas developed in this dialogue series would take more time to fully review, flesh out and refine. Volunteer sheets were distributed at each table and included opportunities in the following areas:

Business Community Partnerships

Addresses: Relevance, Community Connections, Opportunities for all Students

- Recruiting/facilitating volunteers for internship programs
- Studying/developing entrepreneur courses at Westlake High School
- Increasing opportunities for community service

Character Education/Foundational Work Skills

Addresses: Foundational Skills for the Workplace

- Identifying best practices in character education
- Identifying foundational work skills
- Embedding character education and foundational work skills into existing curriculum

Cultural Diversity

Addresses: Exposure to Cultural Diversity

- Developing partnerships with other schools
- Developing fieldtrip and special events and programs on cultural diversity
- Embedding multi-cultural information into art and music classes

Volunteers

Addresses: Support and Resources

- Creating a database of volunteers and their talents
- Coordinating volunteers to provide school library assistance, reading to students, tutoring
- Creating a database of community speakers and topics

Representatives from the Steering Committee and E3 Alliance then acknowledged all of the organizations and individuals who supported the process. They reminded the group that input would be compiled into a report and shared with Steering Committee, District and entire community.

Appendix C: Feedback from Participants

At the end of night four, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather their feedback on the dialogue process (see Appendix I). A spreadsheet capturing all responses to the questionnaire is available upon request. However, below are some participant comments captured related to what they enjoyed about the dialogue process:

“Seeing how forward-thinking and proactive our community is!”

“Actually coming up with action plans based on the discussion.”

“The group discussion and diversity of the participants”

“Being part of a terrific and innovative process-meeting other community members; seeing that lots of us have the same views/ideas and now there is a platform to do something about it.”

“Meeting teachers and students and parents.”

“Having conversations on important, real life situations and not just hypothetical”

“Create positive change as opposed to complaining.”

“Interactivity with the student participants.”

“Being able to meet great people.”

“Organized solution oriented. Moderated and recorded; nothing left behind. “

“Hearing different perspectives in an open minded and positive atmosphere.”

“Encountering so many other members of this community with such an interest in and diversity of opinions in our community.”

“Getting a glimpse into current challenges to opportunities”

“Thoughtful discussions about what's most important for my children's future from an Eanes education.”

“Hearing multiple viewpoints - finding solution.”

“A feeling that my ideas were respected and heard.”

“Hearing from so many invested parents, students and community members and realizing we all really want similar outcomes for the kids.”

“Loved the brainstorming and problem solving”

Appendix D: Themes and Samples of Action Ideas

Handout provided to participants on night three. Action ideas were taken from conversations on nights one and two regarding the approaches identified in the discussion guide.

- A. **Relevance is Key:** How can we make learning that takes place in the classroom relevant to what students will be doing in real life and work and show them the connection between coursework and future work?
1. “Science Day,” when experts from various fields present their fields to the students; expand the “Science Day” model to include business exposure.
 2. Increase parent and business leader participation in Career Days; discuss real world applications of the content being taught; start using career days at the elementary level.
 3. Create business / school class ‘think tank’ sessions to help solve business problems.
 4. Use the Late State Time morning as an opportunity for required business seminars.
 5. Use parent connections and/or Westlake High School Alumni to create internships and shadowing opportunities.
 6. Community volunteer mentors/ experts in various fields share expertise and excitement.
 7. Provide vocational learning opportunities.
- B. **Foundational Skills for the Workplace:** How can we help students build character, a strong sense of ethics, and the social and teamwork skills that are so important in any career?
1. Provide more extracurricular activities and purposefully integrate them with learning soft skills.
 2. Grow the Independent Study Mentorship Program (and begin earlier).
 3. Bring in parents/community members through all grade levels to teach (or present, or model) soft skills.
 4. Teachers should provide more feedback regarding their students’ social skills in the classroom, which can assist with the evaluation of soft skills.
 5. Service day incorporated at younger age.
 6. Divide classes into houses that compete in academics and arts and sports towards a goal (e.g., Harry Potter).
 7. Require volunteer hours of all students.
- C. **Community Connections:** How can we involve the entire community in educating and supporting the success of our youth?
1. High School students, football team, cheerleaders, dance team etc. work with younger kids; mentoring.
 2. Parent and administration dialogue.
 3. District-wide participation of community service.
 4. Partner with schools in different areas- web cam lessons together.
 5. Reach out to businesses for resources (sponsorship, mentorships of students and teachers).
 6. Early exposure to other cultures (outside of Westlake bubble) at other school districts, another part of town.
 7. Schools communicate/partner with Austin Community College; Partnerships with community colleges, particularly with special needs population.
- D. **Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education:** How can we continue to emphasize high academic achievement while ensuring a well-rounded education and preventing student burn out?
1. Create some sort of exemption plan for non-AP courses, or cut down the difference between AP credit and non AP credit, so GPA is not affected.
 2. Start emphasizing STEM from a younger age.
 3. Have more project-based learning (especially self-identified projects), which will also build soft skills/teamwork, and better motivate students to learn (following their interests).
 4. Create time in school day for kids to work in business or pursue other work opportunity such as tutoring business

5. Institute year-round school model: shorter, more frequent vacations, rather than 3-month summer.
 6. Re-evaluate emphasis on STAAR and standardized testing.
 7. Turn STEM into STEAM by incorporating the arts.
- E. **Opportunities for All Students:** How can we meet the needs of individual students with diverse needs, levels of motivation, abilities, learning styles and interests?
1. Small class sizes to accommodate learning for all students.
 2. Offer extracurricular activities that aren't so competitive and that are open to anyone who is interested, without requiring a large time commitment.
 3. Investigate increasing opportunities for apprenticeship programs and match students early enough in high school to set them on a pathway before graduation.
 4. Mentoring programs for both students that are interested in college and not interested in college.
 5. Trade schools/trade classes that increase awareness of trade occupations.
 6. Give students the opportunity to be entrepreneurs under EISD umbrella, e.g. run a snow cone stand for the school.
 7. Offer courses related to getting a job (interviewing, resume writing, workplace skills).
- F. **Assessing and Measuring:** How do we identify and build on Eanes current strengths, identify areas for improvement and ensure we're assessing and measuring the right things?
1. Personal assessment of students and teachers related to growth/progress (not GPA).
 2. Documenting individual student progress over years, classroom/peers vs. national (comparison).
 3. Ask Eanes' graduates who are "10 years out" of high school to reflect on what was useful and could be better about the education system.
 4. End-of-course surveys to find out what things worked for students/parents/teachers and what didn't.
 5. Re-design quality assurance measurements currently used to evaluate academic success.
 6. Students review tests with teachers or tutors after the fact, so they can know what they learned correctly and what they did not.
 7. Consider how other countries are able to create students with strong STEM skills.
- G. **Support and Resources:** How can we best support our teachers, provide skill-building opportunities and ensure our teachers and schools have the resources needed to help students succeed?
1. Establish a teacher mentor program where experienced teacher mentor teachers with less experience.
 2. More staff development time [daily time, not just 6 days per year].
 3. More innovative, non-traditional teacher training, especially engineering and technology.
 4. Attract teachers that not only have the academic training to teach, but also have real world experience.
 5. Schools could use newly-retired business people or college professors to enhance instruction in the high school. A person like this could volunteer to help teachers integrate real-world experiences into classroom instruction.
 6. Integrate technology - train teachers in technology use, identify or state goals in regards to technology use.
 7. Use community volunteers to photocopy, getting on busses/carpool line, cafeteria, to give teachers more time/mental health break.
- H. **Integration and Innovation:** How can we enhance learning experiences that integrate academics and soft skills, making learning fun and fostering innovation?
1. Institute project based learning style in all subjects.
 2. Connect and integrate curriculum so courses are interdisciplinary.
 3. Integrate interpersonal skills into classes.
 4. Promote alternative learning programs (project teamwork) that mimic real world job environments and promote the various learning styles of students.
 5. Feature guest teachers from outside the traditional classroom, i.e. Skype lecture from a Stanford professor.
 6. Make Destination/imagination more integrated.
 7. Opportunities for whole grade to go do service projects.

Appendix E: Top Action Plans

THEME	ACTION
Relevance is Key	Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)
Foundational Skills for the Workplace	Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace
Community Connections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Exposure to Cultural Diversity 4. Better use of community resources not currently being utilized
Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Address AP classes (the group did not develop an action plan on this item but talked about concerns of extra grade weight applied to AP and implications for limiting choices of students) 4. Project-based Learning
Opportunities for All Students	Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5 th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.
Assessing and Measuring	Grading practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)
Support and Resources	Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer’s talents.
Integration and Innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Problem Based Learning 4. Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum

Appendix F: Top Action Plans - Detail

A. Relevance is Key

Action: Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)

- 1) What would it take to make this happen?
 - Approval by the curriculum (College Board & school district)
 - Weighted in GPA
 - Principal/Teacher Buy-in
- 2) Who needs to be involved?
 - A champion of the idea
 - Principal
 - Coaches/Mentors
 - Students
- 3) What would success look like?
 - Students demonstrate passion for a career and learn new skills that can be demonstrated
 - Developed products are sold/bought
- 4) What resources are needed?
 - Teachers
 - Space
 - Sponsors
 - Mentors/Coaches
 - Parents
- 5) What resources exist?
 - There are models but not at EANES

B. Foundational Skills for the Workplace

Action: Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace

- 1) What would it take to make this happen?
 - A district-wide focus on the scope and sequence of character education C&I at all levels (Pre-K-12th grade).
 - Teacher training and resources would generate buy in while preparing teachers to teach and model the skills.
 - Identify best practices for character education.
 - Collect consistent feedback from businesses involved in the program to evaluate program effectiveness via surveys.

What this action plan would require at each grade level:

ES: Focus on team-based learning through enrichment clusters. Utilize current programs (e.g., renzullilearning.com destination imagination).

MS: Ability assessment testing to identify aptitude and passions (e.g., D.I.S.C. test, Meyers-Briggs, Johnson-O'Connor, EQ tests, 360 assessments that involve peers).

HS: ISM via businesses (utilize non-profits if participation of for-profit business is low), including virtual implementation opportunities, summer internships, cohort projects in the community .

- 2) Who needs to be involved?
 - Students
 - Teachers
 - Parents
 - The district
 - Businesses
- 3) What would success look like?
 - Students would be engaged and feel focused and prepared.
 - Student job/internship evaluations by the businesses would be positive.
 - Final assessment to demonstrate knowledge of character education.
 - Survey students 5-10 years after high school to track progress and gather a sense of the effect of character education in their lives.
- 4) What resources are needed?
 - Local businesses to provide the internships/jobs; not-for-profits, ideally.
 - Money.
 - A school/campus liaison to administer the program.
 - More time for teachers to plan.
 - Assessments (e.g., Meyers-Briggs).
- 5) What resources exist?
 - Businesses are present, need to contact and establish relationships.

C. Community Connections

Action 1: Exposure to Cultural Diversity

- 1) What would it take to make this happen?
 - Equipment.
 - Technology Integration (web cams, iPads, etc.) beginning at the elementary school level, particularly with classrooms that have Spanish speaking students.
 - Sister partnerships with other schools that include classroom exchange field trips.
 - Incorporate multi-languages into the curriculum. Art and music should also be included in the core curriculum.
 - Spanish Language Radio Program within the school.
 - Parental support.
 - Building relationships with district level personnel.
- 2) Who needs to be involved?
 - Parents.
 - District level staff.
 - Community Involvement Liaison(s)
- 3) What would success look like?
 - Eanes students, who are comfortable in east Austin. Grade school children, who may communicate dual languages (English\Spanish).

- 4) What resources are needed?
- Schools who are willing to form sister partnerships.
 - Equipment.
 - Technology.
 - Technology Coordinator.
 - Manos de Cristo (to partner with or use as a consultant).

- 5) What resources exist?
- Staff.
 - Manos de Cristo.
 - Equipment.

Action 2: **Better use of community resources not currently being utilized**

- 1) What would it take to make this happen?
- Way to connect and get information to community
 - Information delivery more community focused
 - Increased awareness of community service options
 - Increased usage of existing and new social media outlets
 - Continued connection to parents of former students who want to be involved but currently feel isolated
- 2) Who needs to be involved?
- Person or department assigned to update and monitor information channels
 - Local government and community involvement
 - Alumni association (already exists)
 - Parents of alumni
 - Community service organizations/liaison
- 3) What would success look like?
- More career days
 - Student run business models set up within school (Bank, Restaurant, Etc.)
 - Directory of community opportunities
 - Directory of resources needed
- 4) What resources are needed?
- People to get involved
 - Track community service
 - Update information
 - Supplies
- 5) What resources exist?
- Alumni association
 - Eanes social media sites

D. Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education:

Action 1 **Address AP classes (issues discussed of extra grade weight applied to AP and how they may be preventing students from following their passions/interests and becoming well rounded)**

Concerns:

- Pressure to take AP classes preventing students from following interests
- Students “gaming system” by getting as many grade multipliers as possible.
- AP (and G&T) is separating/segregating students
- Important for the kids to have the opportunity to gain college credit (save money) through APs

- Is it a disservice to students to help them place out for AP's and miss out on taking the more rigorous college versions?
- We need all the APs as our students are competing nationally for slots at universities

Ideas:

- Cap the # of AP classes a student can take at one time.
- Integrate AP potential into all classes
- Restructure/de-couple GPA from AP, so students are encouraged to follow their interests, not just GPA
- Exemption for "extra" extracurriculars in GPA
- Improve non-AP courses by de-stigmatizing them, getting good teachers (not coaches), and differentiated teaching to respond to all levels of students
- Reduce AP multiplier
- Study the outcomes of and find data on the results of APs (maybe 10 years out) to see what value they provide or difference they make, or which ones do.
- Find out perceptions/expectations of colleges regarding APs.
- Middle schools need to counsel parents/students about AP to help them plan for high school
- Gather data on how much a full load of APs affects GPA/class rank, especially if not getting all A's.
- Reduce class size - to create time and space to develop relationships
- Limit number of AP courses students can take
- De-stigmatize non-AP classes – don't penalize students who don't take AP-courses; reduce multiplier
- Force students to explore possibilities through electives
- Exempt/make non-AP elective classes pass/fail
- Eliminate AP classes, create new type of advanced courses
- Create a multiplier for senior-level non-academic activities/classes (e.g., theater, band) versus penalize "articulated credit"
- Don't discount value of AP courses, create a balance

Action 2 **Project-based Learning**

Concerns/Issues:

- This is hard to do at high school level. Really up to student initiative to find classes that provide this, like Teen Teaching.
- Community Involvement
- Don't add to teacher's plate/workload! Integrate projects to cover classwork
- Need matrix of what we are trying to add and how to do it.
- Brings up question of what is our GOAL for project-based learning?
- Not at the AP-level – no time, always preparing for AP test

1) **What would it take to make this happen?**

- Project-Based Learning= hands-on, group work, all types of students, produce product, time constraint, end result not pre-determined
- High School Honors Project– create a meaningful, compelling project
- Online learning and online classes
- Smaller class sizes
- Teacher training; support for teachers
- Assessment matrix/rubric for measuring skills
- Class project (e.g., have a garden) to establish leadership/group work skills
- Education for parents and community of why project based learning is a good thing
- Tap other resources - incorporate community members into the class room; get parents involved (e.g., assist teacher prep)
- Mechanism for identifying volunteers/specialties
- Training for teachers to incorporate resources

- Training for volunteers to respect school rules

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Principal
- Students
- Teachers
- Parents
- Community Members

3) What would success look like?

- Great student projects.
- Added meaning for schools.
- Success would be increased skills and passion on the part of students, better team skills and great community involvement.
- Increased meaning in learning process.

4) What resources are needed?

- We need a Resource List that has what people can do and when they are available (how often/how long), so teachers/schools can call upon people.
- We also need a Project/Need List to send out, and hopefully match up needs to community resources.
- Volunteer Coordinator, training, lab materials and project resources.

5) What resources exist?

- There are lots of individual resources/skills in our community, but largely untapped.
- EISD has a lot of good physical materials that have been set aside as teachers have focused on test outcomes and not hands-on projects.

E. Opportunities for All Students

Action: **Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.**

Tagline: Passion, purpose, personalization

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Speakers on different professions
- Curriculum; cohesive; beginning in early stages through high school
- Exposure
- Mentors
- Field trips
- Teacher training so teachers can teach to a diverse group effectively and comfortably
- “Every hour of every day has to have some relevant contribution toward the goal”
- Project-based learning (example: assignment that requires student to interview a community member) (comment: students do this in 6th grade – but it is a one shot assignment – not a common thread)
- Work special needs students into these programs
- More than a “Career Day” – regular exposure for students
- Recognize diversity in classroom
- Mandatory junior year ISM (Independent Study Mentorship)
- Should apply to all student levels (special needs to AP)
- Students should build a portfolio that they add to over time and can see development

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Teachers

- Parents
- Administrators
- Community
- Students (for peer interactions)
- Teacher trainers
- Program czar

3) What would success look like?

- Have an inventory of students' interests (at 5th grade and update along the way)
- Graduating students know what want to explore/pursue
- Fewer students fall through the cracks
- Students that are less stressed out
- Students self-advocate more according to teacher reports
- Students voice interests during sophomore evaluations
- Students set goals for themselves
- Percentage increase for prep for sophomore evaluations
- Ask questions of students each year middle school through high school

4) What resources are needed?

- iPads
- Curriculum
- Community Commitment
- Program coordinators for (1) education and (2) community
- Teacher training

5) What resources exist?

- Talented students
- Talented parents/teachers
- Commitment from community
- [there are bits and pieces but it's not systematic]
- [Some of these concepts are integrated into the Special Ed curricula]

F. Assessing and Measuring:

Action: **Grading practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)**

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- students would not receive 'zeros'
- there would be opportunities to re-test for partial credit
- teachers would use rubrics/plans against which students would be able to gauge or assess their own progress

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students

3) What would success look like?

- there would be more accurate assessment of learning
- there would be more student effort to learn
- there would be more students taking responsibility for their own learning

4) What resources are needed?

- adoption of new policy/policies

- training for teachers (and parents and community also), reflecting a shift in mindset about grades and assessments
- 5) What resources exist?
- invested parent population
 - receptive teachers
 - communication network already in place

G. Support and Resources

Action: **Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents**

- 1) What would it take to make this happen?
- Volunteers to build slides/graphics for power point presentations and to load apps on iPads, etc.
 - Use college students/teen teachers
 - Officer from Chamber of commerce could attend booster club meetings and learn what type is needed, communicate to members and recruit business volunteers
 - Bring in experts to teach as guests
- 2) Who needs to be involved?
- Parents
 - Business Community
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Community Members
 - Grandparents and other family members
 - College students/teen teachers
 - Students (service hours)
- 3) What would success look like?
- Students would be engaged
 - Teachers would get time back - lessening the amount of time spent on 'non-teaching' efforts
 - Things would run more efficiently
 - More innovative learning
 - Test scores will improve
 - A more systematic approach
 - Create opportunities for teachers to attend conferences
- 4) What resources are needed?
- THE Database(s)
 - Survey teachers for needs with some level of detail
 - Scheduling tools
 - A way for teachers to leave feedback on how volunteers can best be used based on their strengths
 - Liaison on each campus to connect faculty with volunteers – volunteer coordinator
 - Tech person to coordinate info and database
 - Specific targeted questions to figure out who can and wants to volunteer doing what, no matter where their kid is
 - An 'outreach' method; a more systematic approach
- 5) What resources exist?
- Booster Club
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Parents
 - Registration – can be used to gather info for where/how people are willing to volunteer

H. Integration and Innovation

Action 1: Problem Based Learning

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- teach more classes like G.T. classes, create life long learners
- teacher development
- support from parents
- block scheduling so teachers have more time each day
- change curriculum to incorporate the problem based learning
- generate student interest in extracurricular activities
- see how other schools implement this
- benchmarks or something so we can assess if we're doing well
- incorporate clubs into the classroom learning environment

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Parents
- Teachers
- D.I alum
- Administration
- community members
- parents/Eanes alum who have careers in problem-solving jobs/roles.

3) What would success look like?

- Engaged and excited students and teachers
- higher academic achievement
- cooperation amongst student body
- see social/soft skills being developed
- more flexible, creative thinkers
- more involvement in D.I., science fair, etc
- connecting with others: students, teachers, mentors, etc

4) What resources are needed?

- financial support
- training of staff
- change in staffing??

5) What resources exist?

- group was unsure

Action 2: Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- a lot of planning for teachers and administration
- cooperation between teachers
- TIME: perhaps block scheduling would give teachers more time to plan and execute lesson
- Expanding the vision: connecting ideas for students ACROSS the courses (Ex- put history in context and getting away from facts)
- Research current examples of success
- Pilot program: start with one subject and build from there (start with English class; what can we integrate into that?)
- GOALS: something to give to parents and comm. Members to measure success

2) Who needs to be involved?

- EVERYONE!- community effort
- teachers (elective AND core) working together
- administration
- universities who could partner with us on our efforts
- students
- community members

3) What would success look like?

- well-rounded students, but how do we assess this? (essays, presentations, surveys, demonstrations of higher level thinking)
- Happy teachers (could help attract high quality teachers too!)
- Higher graders
- increase percentage of students getting in and OUT of college

4) What resources are needed?

- Art for All (a program a former teacher had used in LA)
- parent education
- financial support
- training
- MOST OF ALL, TIME!!

5) What resources exist?

- Great teachers!

Appendix G: Session One Summary

Objectives:

- Provide participants with background information
- Create a collegial atmosphere
- Identify factors that contribute to being successful in the world of work
- Deliberate approach one of Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs

1. HOW DID PARTICIPANTS RESPOND TO THE QUESTION ABOUT WHAT PREPARED THEM FOR LIFE AND THE WORLD OF WORK?

"My grandmother who inspired me to read had a great impact on me. She opened me to the world of literature. Who you are as a person is instilled at a very early age."

"I grew up on a farm. Working hard there as a child helped me learn how to work hard as an adult."

"One teacher in particular encouraged my dream to go to college, even when I thought that I couldn't go"

People:

- Parents and other family members – provide support; high expectations; modeled a strong work ethic
- Teachers – who fostered a love of learning, who were passionate about what they do, who took note of what individuals needed and helped met those needs
- Mentors
- Role models
- Social relationships outside of school

Experiences:

- Clubs – Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, debate
- Internships and summer jobs
- Travelling/Living Abroad
- Having chores and other responsibilities at home
- Removal of a safety net
- Volunteer work
- Student-run organizations
- Extracurricular activities
- Sports
- Reading
- Art classes and by other kinds of kinesthetic learning
- Going on adventures
- Learning responsibility at an early age
- Social interaction; Interaction outside the classroom
- Leadership opportunities
- Working with others (i.e. band, sports)
- Practical application of learning to real-world (not just book learning)
- Curriculum teach students how to learn, study, prepare, use books/resources, provide an important broad base of knowledge
- Rigorous education
- Appropriate / relevant training
- Performing
- Working on teams
- Applying technology
- Gaining expertise through experience

- Participating in networking
- Failures + successes (trial and error)

Skills:

- Communication
- Understanding others' points of view
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Analyzing information
- Time management
- Multi-task thinking
- Thinking outside of the box
- Learning to problem-solve
- Writing
- Persuasion
- Self-advocacy -- making your case
- Resourcefulness
- Developing leadership skills (and social skills)
- Working in groups

Mindset/Attitude:

- Personal responsibility
- Strong work ethic
- Attitudes and values from the top down
- Self-confidence
- Determination, perseverance
- Setting goals -- knowing what you want
- Flexibility
- Integrity and trustworthiness
- Being action / solution oriented
- Being surrounded by an innovative, "You can do it!" attitude
- Using creativity
- Continuously learning
- Feeling responsible to your family and the community

Other:

- Belonging / Sense of connection
- Engagement/ feeling engaged
- Socio-economic background
- Resources and support for new experiences
- Competition and pressure to do more
- iPad and other technology allows you to explore more books and other kinds of information very easily.
- Diversity of cultures and income

Student (reasons why they aren't prepared to make transition to college):

- No focus on critical thinking
- Focus on memorization, not true learning
- Inability to problem solve
- Incredibly tough student competition in college
- Focus on improving learning process (testing) takes away from education
- Getting lost in the crowd (one of many in college)
- Need to relearn how to learn
- Education not keeping up with young society

- Emphasis on short term learning over complete thinking
- Grades having a negative effect on being prepared - just doing what has to be done to get the grade, but no interest or self-motivation
- Peers: both with good worth ethic and those who didn't do well
- Don't have time to follow passions
- Choice between top 10% and courses of interest
- Can gain the softer skills by playing sports but playing sports takes away from weighted courses – there are only so many hours in the day
- No emphasis on “soft” skills

APPROACH 1: HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

“The robotics team has been coached by tech leaders in the local business community (i.e. engineers at AMD and Dell), and they have been highly competitive and successful.”

What participants said...

2. WHAT DID PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THIS APPROACH?

Helps prepare students for future jobs and maintain global competitiveness

- Expanded career potential
- Aimed at jobs of the future
- Ensures our students can compete globally
- High quality, high paying, fast growing and in demand jobs in STEM fields
- Technical skills (hard skills) are a necessary part of production and global competition
- Where the jobs are
- Job security
- Important for future requirements of the job market
- STEM is the foundation for many jobs - not just tech jobs
- STEM is the new language of communication
- Knowledge of math, science will be applicable in many jobs in the future that the student may not anticipate.
- STEM is the backbone of our economy
- Don't want to lose our edge in innovation and creativity, thereby losing our competitiveness in the world

Prepares students for success in college

- College admissions focus on STEM
- This would better qualify our students in higher education, pursuing the most advanced degrees in STEM.
- Better prepare students for the rigors of higher education.
- Basic skills in math and science in the early grades will help students succeed later in middle and high school.
- Preparation for AP classes

Creates Opportunities

- Gives you basic qualifications to get interviews (get in the door)
- Emphasis on technology, which is required for jobs
- Can help open doors for students
- It's people who use STEM who CREATE the jobs
- Our school aren't creating enough professionals in areas such as engineering.
- Facilitate more demographic diversity in STEM fields.

Fosters critical thinking, problem solving and other skills

- Science is highly key to the success of learning

- Scientific Process- that way of thinking when it comes to problem solving
- Inspires curiosity
- Problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Need to help students understand the world
- Math, physics platforms are valuable for musicians, artists and others outside the pure STEM fields
- Hard to learn STEM outside of formal educational settings
- It provides an ability to think analytically/critically/at high levels
- Project and problem based knowledge
- May help students begin to talk/communicate in new ways
- STEM may allow left-brained students to explore their areas of interest more in depth
- The rigor of the fundamental skills required for STEM subjects prepares you for the rigor/stress of real-world jobs and are applicable to other non-STEM subjects

Assessment and recognition

- Easy to quantify and gauge progress
- Helps districts assess their success
- For Eanes: brings high rankings, recognition for schools and students
- Helps with school recognition because this is what society values
- Math and science accomplishments are viewed like football winning state

Other

- Interest in STEM fields does not rule out interest in / involvement in other areas
- Demands accountability
- Requires that we recognize the importance of these subjects
- Offers opportunities to engage/teach students differently (i.e. – incorporation of arts/humanities to teach math)
- Motivation comes from pressure/competition/etc.
- Students may see STEM subjects as “harder” and may need encouragement to try them.
- Opportunities to stretch for gifted students
- Rigor in all subject areas including electives
- Exposure, academic achievement
- Opportunity to be great
- Safe place for gifted students
- May capture interest of students who haven’t been exposed to this curriculum before (e.g., statistics, accounting, etc.)
- Can be adjusted to all learning styles
- Eanes has an excellent base of STEM knowledge in the community (parents, teachers, community members). We should take advantage of that.
- Learning the practical application of STEM is critical

Ideas

- Could be introduced in early education
- Interactive technology
- Engage and hands on (younger kids will then think it’s cool and become interested)
- Kids will get more excited at a young age
- Use existing materials – bring things that are broken from home– have donated by parents, businesses, etc. – to show how technical things actually work
- Lean on community expertise (like science day)
- Survey students for input/class evaluation
- Concept of high tech business partnerships
- Project and team based learning

- Updated learning models necessary: this approach fits with emerging learning models
- Use of tech promotes individual learning methods
- Aptitude testing may help students identify areas of interest or possible expertise
- Can we teach STEM curriculum to encourage interest in these areas (instead of ‘worksheet’-approach to teaching math) and use a more hands on approach?
- Lends itself/themselves to project-based (hands on) learning

3. **WHAT CONCERNS DID THEY HAVE? DID THEY IDENTIFY ANY PROBLEMS WITH THIS APPROACH?**

“At Westlake specifically, students are already pressured enough to get into a certain percentage of the class, and putting such an emphasis on tests would further remove the focus away from learning onto doing what it takes to get the best grade possible with as little time as possible”

“We are teaching students what we think they should know, not what they need to know or they think is important.”

One size fits all

- STEM is not everyone’s strength, The kids who aren’t successful in STEM will suffer
- We shouldn’t put students in a box, let them determine their path
- Limits career diversity
- Limits freedom of choice in career direction
- One approach may not fit culture (or all needs) for schools
- May not work for a school with a different demographic
- Students should be allowed to focus on their passion
- We might push people into STEM and out of other fields (arts/law)
- May leave behind the average/under-achieving students – seems geared to the top performers.
- Trying to force more students into STEM classes won’t meet some students’ needs. For students who don’t have the interest and aptitude in math and science, it could have a detrimental effect.
- Not as many girls interested
- May ‘pigeon hole’ students

Not well rounded

- Stifles innovation, creativity and teaching whole child
- Lack of place for creativity and teamwork
- Whole child approach missing
- Discounts the value of the art
- Limits human interaction
- Promotes less well rounded students
- Creative learning can also be a rigorous method of learning
- Still need outlets for collaborative work
- Not interdisciplinary enough, need to weave the other subjects in
- STEM cannot be taught in a vacuum, we must balance critical and creative thinking
- No prep for people skills
- Being well-rounded is important (skilled in English, writing, etc.
- Need more cross disciplinary approaches
- We should be concerned with teaching/learning concepts before more rigor.
- Learning other languages are important, and becoming more important!
- Have a balanced approach between STEM and other skills, including communication, arts, soft skills and other foundational skills.
- Concern that teachers may not recognize that all children can learn or that children learn differently.
- Narrow mold may not produce well rounded students
- Reduces student involvement in organizations and clubs

- Students aren't being taught writing or grammar enough
- BALANCE!
- This approach leaves out the arts, which are very important.
- Describing high academic achievement as limited to math and science defines high achievement too narrowly.

Resource constraints

- Existing STEM resources already stretched thin
- Overall cost of equipment would increase
- Technically qualified teachers are scarce but necessary to this approach, would require extra training
- Higher cost for labs and technology may shift priorities
- Teachers struggle to stay current with technology to teach even the current curriculum. Need to have teachers progress with technology faster
- As more tech teaching tools become available, EISD will need to pay more \$ for them -- and for teacher training on those new tools
- Need to attract the level of teacher to support teaching this rigorous a STEM curriculum
- Teachers already have too little time and too much to teach (plus administrative duties)
- Concern about whether the qualities of educators are adequate to teach STEM courses passionately and whether educators are willing to be innovative teachers.
- Would require adjusted class periods because classes would require more lab time for hands-on learning and students are already spending a lot of time sitting in class

Pressure to excel

- Pressure could = lost, devastated
- Top students can flame out
- Struggle of / safety net for: those who don't fit mold
- Focus on GPA
- Risk of increased pressure to cheat by those that hate/don't excel at STEM
- Increase stress levels and burn students out by the time they reach college
- May create more competition between students than is desired
- Too demanding on students
- Kids can't be kids, they need time to focus on their hobbies and interests
- Non-STEM focused students might feel undervalued as student and/or "forced" into STEM fields
- Too much rigor leaves little time for practical learning or part-time employment – parents, teachers, students all pointed to this as a driver behind existing/perceived lack of social, civic and job ready skills.
- "free" time is important for students; there will be even less
- May sap confidence if they "fail"/fall further behind in this new system
- Approach can be devastating for students who do not have the ability to do well on a STEM track.
- Danger of students feeling, 'If you're not on top, you've failed'
- Potential dropout increase
- Need to be kids/teens/young adults – the time it takes after school for example to do hours of homework
- Do so well in AP that some students enter college as a sophomore – not good for all – may not be mature enough (it's a balance)

Relevance

- Academic achievement does not equal career success
- Disconnect between academic rigor and college graduation
- Teaching to tests does not fully address the skills needed in the actual workforce
- School would seem less relevant for kids with no interest in STEM
- Are current STEM programs accurately and effectively preparing students?
- Want students to be clear how this will help us in the future
- Global perspective can't really be taught only through STEM. Comes through Social Studies and English (Cross-cultural awareness and communication)

- An emphasis on STEM doesn't support the future in all areas of the economy
- Some students have more 'hands on' needs for job skills training
- Lose students who are not competent or interested in science/math/technology
- Colleges/ Real world are looking for more than just "scores" on a test: extra-curricular activities, etc.
- Doesn't prepare students enough for non-STEM related jobs
- One way to motivate students would be to show them the application of STEM in the real world during the STEM courses
- Many students are not concerned with the issue of the United States falling behind in STEM. They don't see how this affects them or STEM will benefit them in the future

Assessment and accountability

- How do we define "high academic achievement"?
- STEM does not equally high academic achievement (e.g., Gates, Jobs, Dell)
- Accountability – how do you measure success?
- Are we sure when we teach STEM that we are teaching the right STEM
- Testing should be used not just to benchmark success but also to identify areas of improvement
- High Standards must be more than just teaching to the test
- STEM should not be equated with testing
- GPA testing takes on too great of an importance
- More students may opt out of rigorous STEM classes to preserve their GPA
- How do we measure success? How to test? – This is a big hole in existing state, rigor has become about learning more facts in a shorter period of time (because facts can be measured) and not about going deeper or broadening understanding.
- Until testing is re-envisioned, concerned that more rigor means more memorization.
- Muddled measurement leading to skewed view that rigor is more information/accelerated pace.
- Accountability is necessary but there is too strong an emphasis on testing.
- Danger of placing the responsibility for success of this approach solely on the school system
- Danger of too little parental participation
- Fosters teaching to the test
- Teachers are held accountable if students don't succeed
- STAAR tests are more challenging than TAKS tests, but emphasis on testing takes focus away from other important learning activities.
- Teachers score for completion grades because they are too busy teaching the curriculum and need more time for instruction
- Leads to studying to the test (especially in grade school)

Other

- Needs to begin at elementary, not just middle school middle school or high school
- High academic achievement is a valuable concept but it shouldn't just be for the sake of a high GPA versus actual higher education preparation.
- Over-inflate the confidence of those who succeed. Particularly bugged students who had lots of stories about kids they know who think they are geniuses but just know how to take tests on a very narrow set of subjects.
- Students become competitive/selfish and lose the need to want to help others
- Fosters isolation
- We shouldn't assume STEM jobs are only for the college-bound (two-year colleges, trade and technical schools, etc.)
- IPADs in class – kids use for gaming
- Other school districts have the ability to have topic-focused middle schools and high schools. However, with only one high school in Eanes, it's harder to give these kinds of focused choices to students.
- Students needed to feel motivated by themselves and their peers to succeed, as opposed to being given an initiative by their parents / teachers /faculty / administrators.

4. WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THIS APPROACH?

Define / Enhance STEM:

- There needs to be a consensus in the community about which actual STEM terminology will be used in the district
- Turn STEM into STEAM by incorporating the arts
- Offer participation of STEM activities/C&I across all levels (EC-HS)
- Do more to enhance the current state of STEM programs
- Student advising should include more information about STEM pathways/learning plans

Partnerships with business community:

- Provide vocational learning opportunities
- Reach out to businesses for resources (sponsorship, mentorships of students and teachers)
- Utilized community/business partnerships to support teacher re. STEM learning
- Support business mentoring programs (outside of/or in school)
- Stronger partnerships with world of work – mentors, summer internships
- Business leaders should be guest speakers on high school campus – set up [forums] similar to college visits - brown bag lunch style
- Internships for freshmen and sophomores [currently only jrs & srs, but transportation may be an issue for younger students]
- Teachers and business leaders should do rotations where they take each other's positions for a short amount of time
- Invite community members into the classroom to give firsthand accounts of how STEM will benefit students in a practical real world setting.
- School can offer mandatory job/career experiences (mentorships/internships)
- "Science Day," when experts from various fields present their fields to the students.

Assessment:

- Assess student level of interest and level of passion for STEM
- Personal assessment of students and teachers related to growth/progress (not GPA)
- Capture level of soft skills that will be affected that can't be measured
- Documenting individual student progress over years, Classroom/peers vs. national (comparison)
- Identify and build on Eanes current strengths (i.e. parents strengths)
- Allow parents an opportunity to express their opinions and do evaluations
- Ask Eanes' graduates who are "10 years out" of high school to reflect on what was useful and could be better about the education system
- Improve methods of assessment of students, STEM program
- Identify teachers that aren't reaching the high standards BEFORE it is reflected in the end-of-year tests (STAAR may help here, but it is too soon to tell)
- End of course surveys to find out what things worked for students/parents and what didn't
- Re-design quality assurance measurements currently used to evaluate academic success
- Present future job market data to students to show importance of curriculum
- Students review tests with teachers or tutors after the fact, so they can know what they learned correctly and what they did not
- Consider how other countries are able to create students with strong STEM skills as well as multi-language fluency

Teaching methods and strategies:

- Institute project based learning style in all subjects (learning centers)
- Create a student based/multiple intelligences style of classroom
- Project-based learning
- Connect and integrate curriculum so courses are interdisciplinary
- Balance the teaching of STEM with critical/creative thinking
- Accommodate different learning styles
- Plan technology based field trips starting in early school years

- More independent & group projects to replace current course work
- Integrate interpersonal skills into classes [it wouldn't stand alone as a class]
- Core-curriculum teachers provide opportunities for leadership and team-work
- Promote alternative learning programs (project teamwork) that mimic real world job environments and promote the various learning styles of students.
- Have staff and teachers lead by example (i.e., don't use PowerPoint presentation to introduce new technology)
- Re-implement tag teaching
- Increase opportunities for collaborative learning (the real world of work is built on collaborations and teamwork)
- Feature guest teachers from outside the traditional classroom, i.e. Skype lecture from a Stanford professor
- Learn through hands-on foundation basics (Particularly beneficial to kinesthetic learners)
- School activities such as math competitions and science fairs
- Use global interactions via SKYPE, Twitter, etc.
- Create a balance between academic curriculum and hands-on experiments (and problem solving/team work skills)
- Create a cooperative education atmosphere that fosters positive peer group experiences and exposure to students of differing abilities – students helping students.
- Reference RENVULI system being used in Round Rock Laurel Mountain Elementary. (have different 'tracks' for STEM (entrepreneurial classes, statistics math, marketing classes, economics classes; offer classes that might interest someone who has a STEM left-brain but would be bored by calculus.)
- Reinforce other strengths through use of STEM (Chemistry & food, Technology & music, STEM & creative writing)
- Integrate technology better/more, train teachers in technology use, identify or state goals better in regards to technology use

Teachers and teacher development:

- Hiring qualified / trained teachers
- On-going professional development of STEM teacher and accountability of teachers (e.g., fidelity and efficiency of teaching)
- Teachers teach teachers (AP teach lower level)
- Attract teachers that not only have the academic training to teach, but also have real world experience
- Train professionals to teach – recruit teachers
- Teachers should be more technology savvy and incorporate tech in lessons
- More staff development time [daily time, not just 6 days per year]
- More innovative, non-traditional teacher training, esp. engineering and technology -- bring industry experts to teach teachers
- Pay teachers more [to attract highly skilled/ trained workforce, pay has to be more competitive]
- Hire teachers who are highly qualified to teach STEM courses with passion.
- Attract teachers that not only have the academic training to teach, but also have real world experience.
- Recruit teachers from countries with high success in STEM (that you can understand, i.e. who speak really good English)
- Pay good teachers more
- Establish a teacher mentor program where experienced teacher mentor teachers with less experience.
- Bring in aides to help fill in the gaps between learning abilities (Someone to help with students that would benefit from different teaching strategies)
- Change required credentials for qualified teachers -- to make it easier for private industry experts to teach teachers, or maybe even teach students directly
- Develop support (professional development) programs for teachers

Curriculum:

- Teach entrepreneurship – how to create a business and start up skills
- Teach more computer science and languages to students when they are young
- Teach job readiness

- Teach foreign language in elementary school
- Computer programming should be mandatory
- Speech & communications (needed in middle school)
- Improving science experiences at earlier grade levels
- Integrate the arts/humanities into core curriculums
- Develop afterschool/summer/enrichment programs
- Provide master classes prior to children entering high school.

AP Classes and testing:

- Audit classes – rather than have an ‘off’ period so GPA’s are not effected by taking non-AP classes
- Create some sort of exemption plan for non-AP courses so GPA is not effected
- Require certain amount of HS hours NOT to be AP
- Re-evaluate emphasis on STAAR and standardized testing
- Cut down the difference between AP credit and non AP credit (maybe AP worth .5 more for example)
- Find way to provide equal weight for non-STEM courses or to stop grade inflation that encourages students to take AP courses over course that may engage and encourage them to learn.
- Provide grades only for core courses, and then students can take electives they want rather than filling up on more AP.
- Students should not be pressured to take AP/upper level courses if student doesn’t feel it’s compatible with his/her abilities or interests; grade ranking gives preference to students who take AP courses.
- Stop teaching to the tests (STAAR, AP)
- Don’t let STAAR count 15 percent

College level credit:

- Partnership with ACC to get courses out of the way
- Provide college credit for the new/alternative classes – there are a myriad of offerings but they don’t count towards college

Other:

- Institute year-round school model: shorter, more frequent vacations, rather than 3-month summer..
- Get rid of state university top 8% rule
- Engage students in the teaching process
- Small class sizes to accommodate learning for all students
- Research alternative grading methods and make sure employers are using same measure
- To the extent that resources allow, move the teacher:student ratio more toward 1:1.
- Parent and administration dialogue
- Increase parents’ participation in Career Days discussion of the use of STEM curriculum in their work
- Opportunities for all students to stretch (e.g., remediation, advanced courses, heterogeneous mix)
- LET KIDS CHOOSE (or at least have more choice and self-direction – status quo actually punishes self-direction by diminishing class ranking)
- Educate parents and families on how to help students; how to set goals and high achievement standards at home
- Start emphasizing STEM from a younger age
- Place high teaching standards on ALL teachers of ALL students (not just AP or GT students)

5. REFLECTIONS

- STEM opportunities = important + teacher training + classroom size + accountability
- opportunities for exposure for all students
- balance STEM teachers and curriculum
- more teacher training
- resources
- lower class size

- community mentors
- destination imagination type class rooms rather than extracurriculars
- interdisciplinary
- Surprised by data showing graduation level of 40%
- Awareness of degree to which the teachers/students are focused on passing the standardized tests
- Awareness of the quest for a high GPA and top 10%
- Discrepancy among schools and teachers w/level of intensity of teaching
- The need to address All students
- Eanes is doing a great job—we can really go above and beyond.
- The premise that we were given to discuss felt very restrictive. It limited what we might have wanted to say.
- Being given this premise made me think about something that I wouldn't have otherwise considered.
- We were surprised that the high academic achievement in STEM was rejected by the group so quickly.
- We want to talk about other topics (such as becoming a good citizen).
- We had a real dialogue tonight.
- We're looking forward to combining all areas and ideas in future sessions of this dialogue.
- Foreign language instruction came up as kind of an "off the grid" topic. We're surprised.
- We're happy to learn that STEM-area employers are looking for well-rounded employees.
- Having lots of different tools doesn't make you a craftsman. You have to learn to apply your tools later in the world of work.
- Not one style of education fits all students—not everyone wants to be an engineer.
- We need well-rounded opportunities for our students.
- We need to talk about class size and school resources. We need to think about that 20% of students who aren't so successful. We need to find out what "makes them tick."
- The process of identifying 3 approaches seems too thin. We need a more holistic view of what high academic achievement means (it's not just math and science). We didn't like being pushed into this "thin" discussion of STEM.
- Approach one is too narrow; need to blend hard skills with soft skills in ways that show the applications of each; competition to be in the top 10% and the race to get a better score than a classmate makes learning less of a focus; we want to not teach to a test, but still get high test scores—is this possible?
- Surprised that high school students are so focused on jobs and college prep and so much pressure
- Action items require time and money (government cuts to education do not help)
- How will we get this all done?
- May not see effects of changes for a long time.
- Our group towards the end felt they may have overlooked the workload of the teachers and was curious how this approach would affect them. Is there a way for us to eliminate the paperwork, politics, and workload they often deal with? If so, would it allow them to be better teachers and more creative?
- Our group was very surprised how influential the STEM classes are for GPAs of current students. The current WL student in our group felt it was easy to get a good grade in an English class, even if it wasn't your strength, but not in a math or science class. Students seemed very focused on GPA, and some participants thought that was very different from their personal HS experiences.
- Group felt we are already doing a great job, but we need to find ways to reduce stress levels on our students.
- High pressure
- Enough emphasis on creative expression
- At Westlake have to have a home – something to do – for people who do not excel at STEM subjects or have no college ambitions. What happens to disenfranchised students?
- Need to shift focus so not so focused on top 10% class ranking
- Have exceptional teachers in non-AP classes as well
- Conversation kept coming back to teacher training, and I think Eanes already attracts some of the best teaching talent.
- I realize now how important math and science are.

- I'm more focused now than when I walked in about the effectiveness of academic assessment. I thought we were doing a better job of this in Eanes than we are.
- Is there any way to stop the STAAR test?
- Tech moves at such a fast pace it may benefit us to enroll private industry practitioners to keep teachers trained.
- Learned about the importance of AP and why there is such an emphasis on them. Also learned the darker side of AP
- Learned how busy Westlake kids are – too little free time
- Nice to see there are so many ideas/ways/interest to change – people are open to change
- It's not students vs parents or students/adults vs. "the system." We can work together!
- Learned about socio-educational dynamics of CTX
- Changed mind (positively) about year-round school
- Begin to have a regional (CTX) perspective, not just Eanes/Westlake (and make connection between how the big picture affects their and their families' futures)
- The importance of children developing critical thinking skills was a concern for everyone.
- Surprised about concerns with respect to teacher readiness, education and preparation (for the workplace).
- Historically women chose teaching and nursing as their only viable career options. However, women currently have more career choices and are not just choosing teaching and nursing as a career. This may have lead to a decline in teacher readiness, education and preparation.
- It might be beneficial for high school students to perform community service or employment prior to continuing their education giving young adults the opportunity to experience life before taking the next step.
- Recommend year round schooling with minimum breaks between sessions.
- How do we not support high academic achievement if this is the standard
- Extracurricular activities can support high academic achievement
- High academic achievement a partial reflection of Eanes ISD mission statement
- High academic achievement cannot exist in isolation
- High academic achievement leads to increased homework for students and a decreased focus on social interaction/skills building
- Students should be allowed to utilize electronic devices in the classroom for learning purposes

Appendix H: Session Two Summary

Objectives:

- Deliberate the possible advantages and drawbacks of two approaches to preparing students for the world of work, and what these approaches might look like in our community:
 - Approach Two - A Firm Foundation Beyond Education: Focus on soft skills, work ethic and character traits
 - Approach Three - Preparing for the Real World: Prepare students for the needs of the local community and let the community define the educational goals.
- Identify possible actions for each of these approaches

APPROACH 2: A FIRM FOUNDATION BEYOND EDUCATION

Participant Quotes:

“All of these things are characteristics that you bring to learning education, and your job, I kinda take them for granted, but I know at work we have had a series of people who do not have these skills, even with a 4.0 in college and a really great education they cannot succeed with us”

“As a business owner I’ve had to fire employees lacking these skills.”

What participants said...

1. WHAT DID PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THIS APPROACH?

Important for workplace and transferrable skills

- Developing soft skills is essential because these skills are transferrable skills that may be used regardless of the number of job or career changes an individual may have during a lifetime.
- results in pool of candidates willing to work who are reliable, responsible, and have other soft skills
- useful in smaller companies/open work environments
- Critical thinking
- Solid communication skills + technical training = gold in tech. field
- In current jobs, we look for values, not skills
- We don’t live in the days of the “one career” anymore; a lot of professionals hold 5-6 jobs in a lifetime
- Inclusion of ‘soft’ skills important as we increasingly use technology to communicate
- Ability to communicate on the job (and interview) is most important to success
- Having soft skills differentiates between candidates for jobs and may give an advantage to those with these skills
- employers were more interested in individuals with good soft skills, opting to teach employees the hard skills necessary to perform on the job.

Help develop well-rounded students

- Working on group projects helps develop soft skills, including communication skills, learning how to work with others and how to build trust.
- Education is useful beyond high school because it helps to establish institutional memory skills.
- Help teach kids to think for themselves
- Talent development; talent leads to passion
- Team/group work is used a lot for learning, so teaching these skills will help students learn in the class as well.
- communication are essential in a wide range of careers
- elite colleges are looking for creative problem solving skills
- It’s REALLY important to learn to play well with others.
- creative problem solving skills

- Addresses social/emotional aspect
- Encourages initiative, promotes personal sense of ownership and responsibility
- develop leadership qualities
- Improves integrity
- Learning language/music exercises the brain
- Extracurriculars can build character, help students learn to take responsibility.

Fosters skills and attributes beyond the workplace

- Learning character traits and civility at the elementary level is important. Also, participating in community service activities is invaluable because it helps to develop soft skills and civility.
- Teachers sharing life experiences in the classroom can be beneficial.
- Teach philanthropy
- allow students to adapt to this changing world
- they make for a well-rounded citizen
- Effective communication is always beneficial for a community
- Promotes a sense of belonging
- Creates citizens, not just students
- this approach may help school communities appreciate diversity
- Helps to develop empathy
- Encourages global citizenship
- Helps students to step outside of their “bubble”
- Helps develop long-lasting relationships
- learn to manage all different responsibilities and activities—time management

Creates diverse opportunities

- More emphasis on Extracurricular/Student Council, etc.
- Service based projects in the community
- Team attitude should be in the classroom not just in sports (part of curriculum)
- Student council/band, clubs, etc.
- Gardens ; multi-disciplinary
- Schools are a microcosm of/similar to corporations/business and can provide an environment for learning these skills.
- Teaching soft skills are important to make teamwork work!
- Like the idea of reinforcing at school the soft skills taught at home
- Incorporating soft skills makes learning more enjoyable
- Supports academics and social success
- Could help to decrease bullying
- Helps with real-life decision making
- Exposure to something new can open new interests and passions
- An extracurricular group (like band) becomes an important social anchor for students—like a “second family”
- Students should be getting exposure to the arts.
- Exposure to other cultures
- May motivate attendance (keep students involved)

Enhanced Teaching / Learning Strategies

- Imperative to implement soft skills in all classes
- Important to start teaching soft skills early
- Destination Imagination (DI) teaches teamwork and problem-solving skills after school
- Project-based learning; experiential learning
- Allow to thrive in STEM core; blending

- “Sons of democracy” = teamwork to achieve goal (but also need technical skills)
- Burning fire/passion/love at emergent summer camp; killed fire at school
- Can teach to love (subjects)
- These skills are important but “you can’t do problem sets on how to interact with others.”; they need to be taught in real life experiences
- Slow down and not fill in the blanks for our kids; Let them work through it
- Setting kids up to fail INTENTIONALLY so they can learn from it
- Skills are trainable- soft skills are key for all positions
- Creates an environment where kids are encouraged to take risks
- More of an overall K-12 approach
- if teachers were willing to work in small groups and/or one-on-one since there isn’t a standard daily program to teach soft skills
- teaching and learning soft skills in group projects would identify “slackers” and they could be helped to turn their attitude around and understand what the true meaning of teamwork
- could be learned in any sport and other extracurriculars
- a good soft skills education would stem from ½ home and ½ school settings.
- Having to work in a group, with others who may not be pulling their weight, forces students to figure out how to make it work, despite the obstacles
- In evaluating students’ project and group work, teachers should grade students on the process of their work, not on the product—that way, students’ problem-solving and creativity is rewarded, even if the “thing” didn’t work
- This approach ‘applies’ knowledge; Connects to ‘real world’
- Offer an opportunity for including some nontraditional (but very useful) classes in the curriculum, like personal finance (teaching life skills or “life management”), and it fostered civic mindedness.

6. WHAT CONCERNS DID THEY HAVE? DID THEY IDENTIFY ANY PROBLEMS WITH THIS APPROACH?

Definition and measurement

- We should determine what we are measuring. Also, how do we measure the performance of teachers and students?
- Very subjective; would need a standard to judge by
- Would we grade teachers on this and how?
- We need the stats, but how we use it is the problem
- are difficult to define
- Assumes different measures of success
- The soft skills are hard to grade
- Changes performance of school district (such as exemplary rating, which is part of the community identity and builds tax base
- These skills are not internationally measured and reported for comparison
- Hard to measure the ‘worth’ of these skills

Technical skills needed to ensure competitiveness

- Concerned these skills will not help students in the world of big business which is cut throat and all about self benefit, not team work
- Perhaps not realistic to teach collaborative and other soft skills – competition is often, but not always, necessary.
- While beneficial, does not aid in the college admission process
- Don’t think employers can train students for all skills – have to come with some technical skills
- Turned down (for job) because didn’t have technical skills-education; need technical training
- Does not align with metrics for global success
- Lower scores on statewide tests can lead to poor self-esteem for the student
- Cannot only have communication skills to be successful – must also know content (such as STEM)

- Does not prepare students for standardized tests/entry exams

Time and resource constraints

- it would take a significant amount of time to vet an effective method to implement this approach.
- Still need to teach the basics and have balance
- Extracurricular takes a lot of time
- Should be integrated into curriculum not loaded “on top of us”
- How will teachers have time for this when they are so busy “teaching to the test.”
- School should teach what cannot be taught at home, e.g. STEM, especially when limited resources/budgets are considered
- Time: Are kids too busy to focus on that?
- How does this work for families who are just trying to get basic needs met?
- Piling on and not going DEEP into the basics. No time for reflection or absorption on skills
- Puts too much responsibility on teachers
- can we meet the needs of high achieving (STEM) students while taking time to teach this curriculum?
- We need more community involvement to help develop these skills within the school system
- Cannot be required because there are competing demands
- All Eanes’ academics and extracurriculars are very rigorous, which can be too much for many students.
- Teachers need skills to teach these additional ‘soft skills’

Teaching strategies

- These skills are difficult to teach
- Working in group projects can be a valuable experience, however, does it lose its effectiveness if a group is too large.
- Are we addressing current state and world affairs in the classroom?
- Character building is generally taught at the elementary school level, however, it should be taught at all levels throughout high school.
- How do we focus on/integrate soft skills, i.e., what are ways to apply learning or practice knowledge, for example of STEM subjects, with extracurricular activities?
- Not easy to teach? (must be creative)/ How do you teach?
- Teachers not trained on how to teach
- Private schools teach “soft skills,” but can it be done in public school? Should it be done? What skills?
- do the staff/faculty have the skills and/or training to support this
- should be taught in non-AP classes, too.
- The teamwork environment that is used in schools is artificial. People from real work settings could inform schools about how real-world teamwork operates

Role of parents vs. schools

- Some parents are very busy earning money for their family, and some have a hard time just getting their kids to stay atop of the current heavy school load.
- We will be teaching morals; parents might be concerned about this.
- How much do we want schools/institutions to be responsible for soft skill development? Would parents feel “off the hook” to teach them?
- This is taught at home, not school
- Blurs lines between school and home life
- Schools and teachers can’t be all things at once; parents and the community need to be accountable too
- It takes a village—schools can’t give students everything they need all alone—schools need non-school groups and community members and parents to help
- It must start in the home and in the earlier grades – High School is too late

Other

- Our kids have a sense of entitlement; how do we instill a strong work ethic?
- We don’t allow our kids to fail; self esteem comes from perseverance

- Can we teach kids to take risks? To counteract our world of instant gratification?.
- Students' need to succeed, to get good grades, makes them resistant to working in groups. Stronger students who are paired with weaker students don't like it, because they want to make a good grade and not be pulled down by weaker team members. How much work and responsibility a team members takes depends on how much that student cares about the grade.
- This approach (adding extracurricular activities) might increase pressure rather than alleviate it.
- It is hard to separate soft skills vs. personality traits
- Hard to incorporate faith-based community services (see actions)
- Acquiring the skills may not be intrinsically motivated
- Could end up being forgotten over the summer

7. WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THIS APPROACH?

Leverage extracurricular activities

- Provide more extracurricular activities – a wider range that includes dance, etc. – and purposefully integrate them with learning soft skills
- Restructure extracurricular activities, especially sports, to allow any student interested in participating (No more asking 66 girls to compete for 16 spots so that 50 who want to play that sport cannot pursue the interest at school.)
- Link club activities to course “credit” somehow, for an overall grade
- Possibility of adding a classroom component to extra curricular activities
- more community experts to building extra-curricular options
- Raise awareness of extra-curricular/clubs to parents
- Extra-curricular fair- like college fair, but for clubs
- Offer extracurricular activities that aren't so competitive and that are open to anyone who is interested, without requiring a large time commitment.

Teacher development and support

- Help teachers motivate through soft skills in addition to grades, e.g. individual goal-setting. Give teachers “how to” examples and verbiage
- Lessen the burden on teachers; eliminate some of the bureaucracy
- Coaching and training for the teachers
- Teacher training programs (passion is contagious); improve teacher access; give tools and resources (including resources outside of the district)
- Provide teacher training relevant to teaching these skills

Curriculum approaches and teaching strategies

- A three way approach, focusing on Imagination, Team Building and Robotics has been a successful approach to develop problem solving and other soft skills, including learning how to work with others.
- Teachers incrementally checking the progress of students' individual and group projects can help students develop a sense of accountability.
- Teachers should provide more feedback regarding their students' social skills in the classroom, which can assist with the evaluation of soft skills.
- Integrate more discussion/values into learning – NOT just teaching facts/”to the test.” This will help develop these skills.
- Make destination/imagination more integrated; mini DI
- Integrate books/playacting (for example) into curriculum to address things like bullying, not just free-standing, one-off presentations.
- Service day incorporated at younger age
- Combine service day with learning
- Star Early! Integrate this into the curriculum throughout school and build upon it so that high school students can tackle “hard” issues/take risks. AND identify and catch kids who are falling through to provide them additional help.
- Start building/integrating soft skills into all students at early stages, across all cultures and backgrounds

- Start foreign language in elementary school
- Blend perspectives of soft skills (such as dependability) into curriculum but in a way that gives youth a choice. For example, directed volunteer hours or community service could be a great way to teach youth about skills they need to develop
- ask youth to reflect on how they did. Allow them to rate themselves and take ownership of how well they did/didn't persevere, why, etc.
- Lesson plans that hold students accountable and require collaboration on team projects...but how are individuals assessed, and what about the pressure to cheat?
- Encourage group work AND collaboration in a competitive but friendly environment
- Make use of the program proposed in "21st Century Skills Education"
- DI as an in-school class
- Divide classes into houses that compete in academics and arts and sports (e.g., Harry Potter) towards a goal, don't let (team/house) down
- Required service hours that factor into GPA
- Opportunities for whole grade to go do service projects
- Investigate project based learning and best practices by districts that were already taking this approach (Manor and the Ann Richards School for Girls).
- "Reverse Learning": Passive night-time listening to lectures and then implementing the skill in the classroom the next day
- Implement an instructional process that focuses on the process, as opposed to the result. The group referred to this as "backwards planning." For instance, if you understand how something works, than you can fix it.
- Integrate the development of effective communication skills (verbal and written) into all classes and subjects
- Build in FUN to keep students and teachers engaged

Working with parents

- Educate parents/teachers on available resources to help kids with these skills, but of course, this means more investment.
- Create a culture where parents partner w/ schools to teach "soft skills", foster volunteer work and create a community language we all speak
- Bring parents in to share experience/career
- Need ACCOUNTABILITY between parents and school
- Develop parent education component so there is consistency between home and school
- bring in parents/community members through all grade levels to teach (or present, or model) soft skills
- Parent training of skills expected at each level (grade, middle, high schools)
- Increase classroom observations by parents to increase teacher accountability and quality

Mentoring

- High School students, football team, cheerleaders, dance team etc. work with younger kids; mentoring (incentives – example shared that the football players read to younger students and if they read a certain amount the youngsters are able to run through the football banner on the field)
- Implementing mentor programs

Partnerships

- Bring various clubs in to schools to educate on what's out there
- "Connections" across grade levels/campuses
- Improve Physical Education by tapping into community resources, including parent volunteers
- More community experts volunteering/helping with extra-curricular activities (e.g., sports, chess, DI, etc.) so that these skills are introduced in these environments; celebrity subs
- Have more private partnerships/community groups (e.g. lacrosse sports clinic) teach at middle schools as well as high schools
- Use Community volunteers to photocopy, getting on busses/carpool line, cafeteria, to give teachers more time/mental health break; does district have policies that limit the use of volunteers?

- Community volunteer mentors/ experts in the field = expertise and excitement
- Volunteers to help with logistics and community connections
- High school internships to get students out into the community
- Partner with schools in different areas- web cam lessons together
- Have community business people speak to students during voluntary, informal sessions at convenient times such as lunch.

Other

- Agree to accept a drop in scores
- Make the school year longer
- More work done in the classroom, less homework
- Implement a top-down style to encourage the change in mindset and campus culture
- Neutral grading system to create more freedom; students earn pass/fail option for electives if they take AP courses
- smaller classes
- Opportunities to travel and see other countries
- Find measurements for soft skill learning
- Compare with successes from other states
- Make it a requirement for students to participate in something
- School-wide integration of community service
- District-wide participation of community service
- Require at least one internship for each student. Eanes should hire someone who arranges these internships full time. Or use a large number of volunteers to do this.
- Consider having only the 4 core classes grades count toward the student's GPA and class standing. This way, students could try out various elective classes to see what they like, without worrying about the effect on their grade if they don't like it or don't succeed in it very well.
- Require volunteer hours of all students
- Early exposure to other cultures (outside of Westlake bubble) at other school districts, another part of town, other socio-economic situations

APPROACH 3: PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD

Participant Quotes:

“The gutter guy who comes to my house clears \$200,000 a year and he loves what he does!”

What participants said...

1. WHAT DID PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THIS APPROACH?

Increases understanding of business and marketplace issues

- Businesses can communicate what they are seeing come into the work force and what is lacking so that schools know what skills are lacking
- Business input to schools would give students more information about what local opportunities are available.
- Businesses drive the market
- Students should understand the local economic drivers
- may show high school students and in-depth view/appreciation of local community

Engages the local business community

- Invite professionals into the classroom to share knowledge
- Local business put pressure on legislature to change graduation requirements
- Internships
- More partnerships with/ties to business community. We already have the infrastructure/connections here; our community is ACTIVE!

- Idea of mentorship -- having businesses participate in education, especially funding and other ways of supporting education.
- Businesses must know community will reward them for their effort (financial support, advertise on buses)
- Businesses could help schools be better, and schools could become more responsive to the needs of businesses.
- We can take advantage of local businesses to provide internships
- Nice for industries in the Austin area
- Connects with local businesses for curriculum
- Could help special needs population by partnering with businesses
- This would foster more adult mentors for schools
- Businesses can come to the high school to provide opportunities (modeling not teaching)

Real-world experience

- Provides experience (resume building) that employers want/look for.
- Internships provide students with real world experience
- Businesses train students for skilled labor (Example: Samsung); could be an elective
- More prepared to step into jobs whether or not they go to college
- Could open door for a part-time job during college

Creates opportunities for array of students

- Provides opportunity for less academic-oriented/achieving students, but also benefits ALL students who can use this experience.
- We can tailor these to different students; they all need it, no matter their career/life
- Vocational/technical focus; helps students not well served by academic rigorous schooling; not everyone does well w/same approach
- this approach may help the “middle 50%” (Westlake excels at meeting the needs of the top 20% of students and the lower (bottom) 20% of students however the middle range are often forgotten and just coast along.
- increasing vocational classes/clubs to prepare students for licensure/certification (where a four-year degree is not required), apprenticeships, and internships with local businesses (e.g., ISM, TLC)
- Job training opportunities/ help transition from high school to out-of-home for special needs students

Relevance

- Certain elements used in the business world have benefits in the classroom
- Local education matches local economy; everyone gets a job
- Education more relevant to local jobs
- Show the real world applications of that knowledge in order to excite students
- A college-bound student would like to take vocational classes (such as electrician or plumbing) in order to learn the skills to use personally, not as a career.
- Young kids getting hands-on experience from real-world presenters (like a carpenter showing them different kinds of sandpaper) can learn to apply this basic experience to their future learning and interests
- High School students could learn technical drawing and other technical skills that are useful in jobs, but that they don't get the chance to learn until college.
- Includes a pathway for non-college bound students
- Eanes needs to provide computer sciences programs that the community wants.
- Increase the potential of offering real-world skills in current programs; and it offers options to those students not currently interested in a four-year degree.

Helps students discover interests / passions

- Children should be aware that college is not the only route to success.
- We should help children find their passions and help them explore all of their options, including college, trade school, apprenticeship, mentorships and internships.
- Summer employment that would really benefit them by demonstrating it as something they would want to do as a career or not
- Real life experience exposes kids to things they may not have realized (when pondering career direction)

- Students need to know what skills are needed and what jobs are available; so they can make more informed choices
- Figure out something you love, then figure out a way to make money out of it.
- internships may help students find self-direction
- Motivate students to work harder for a “better” job later
- More “hands on classes” (internship like activities), so that students had more exposure to the diversity of the world of work and work opportunities
- Students may be attracted to the ‘job’ related approach
- May demonstrate to students that there is a need for furthering their education past high school. However, this may not be college . . .it might be vocational/technical school for some.

Other

- students were likely to give back to the community.
- Can use this to build and take advantage of ties to ACC in order to test out a trade (ex. ACC’s solar installation program) while also testing out college.
- Technology and computer skills
- “Local” is good in terms of responsibility to engage with your community.
- Texas has oil industry and clean tech jobs
- Austin Ventures (for high school)
- Would help foster a more accepting mentality with others from other walks of life

2. WHAT CONCERNS DID THEY HAVE? DID THEY IDENTIFY ANY PROBLEMS WITH THIS APPROACH?

Control and defining curriculum

- Question whether or not businesses should be responsible for educating students
- The local business community is very important, but they should not be the drivers.
- Don’t want the education of students to just serve the businesses interests
- How do we fit this in with our curriculum and graduation requirements?
- Local business needs drive opportunities with this approach which is limiting and narrows global preparation.
- Who determines local jobs focus?
- Could spark battle for political control
- How are we defining Central Texas jobs? Energy, legal services, agriculture, health care/medicine, technology (SXSW draws high-tech, music, Austin known for gaming) – do we agree that we need to continue developing in these areas (instead of other areas, e.g. manufacturing/factories)? If so STEM applies to all of it!
- How do you teach this? What does curriculum look like?
- Hard to value as an educational basis
- Need school and community support (for internships)

Relevance

- This approach is not that important to the Eanes community, since a very large percentage of our students do go on to college
- We don’t have many non-college-bound students in Eanes. If vocational classes were offered, would there be any interest?
- Apprenticeship may not be good fit for ISD focused on college prep
- May not prepare for jobs of the future, even locally
- Focused on older (upper level) students
- Participants stressed that one size doesn’t fit all and it might be too limited; it should be compulsory: make it more difficult/challenging to increase interest; and “the mentality of the top (1%-10% of) students view the ISM and similar current programs as not worth their time when factoring overall GPA”

- Make it beneficial in a way that reflects on transcripts in order to help with the college admissions process

Time and resource constraints

- Does time spent on this approach take away from students who are ready to be pushed/challenged
- Scheduling of classes for students doesn't allow them time to take non-required subjects.
- Eanes cannot meet every possible different need in every different kind of student.
- Internships and shadowing can help develop character skills, but may not be cost effective.
- Can we really expect businesses/corporations to take more and more time from their actual work to "teach?"
- Westlake is VERY college oriented. Can we prepare them for college and have this experience?
- Some have special people do this, but this can take up a lot of time.
- Need technical base
- Requires a lot from local businesses; when do we have time?

Stigma and lack of support

- How will parents be receptive of counseling re: non-traditional (non 4-yr. college) advice?
- Parents tend to only want the elite jobs. "We're the best" attitude
- Do we want kids to be happy, have good hearts, or be rich?
- It's sad- but there would be a stigma attached to this
- Sets the bar too low
- Job training in school would not be accepted in this district
- Goal 90% to college
- Selling kids short?
- Taxpayers in Eanes don't want non-college-prep courses of study in Eanes.
- Need school and community support (for internships)

Focus too narrow

- Doesn't address global perspective
- Narrow focus to look only at this community
- Curriculum should not teach to specific jobs
- Myopic: we have to be more global, we can't ignore world economics
- Local businesses transact business on a wider (global) level, not just local
- We need to be pushed to see beyond our horizons
- Might not be so good for other communities without Austin's industry base
- Texas is not all of the 'real world'
- Too limiting, does not foster innovation
- Overlooks the need for a breadth of knowledge
- Many students do NOT stay here; we encourage them to go out – go to college/work elsewhere.
- Turns it into a get kids into college vs. a get kids into jobs situation

Doesn't ensure competitive edge

- Seems focused on today's jobs not future jobs, because businesses are focused on today's jobs
- FEAR of coming away from high academic standards ("The Koreans are going to be taking over!")
- Want their children to have an opportunity to be competitive globally.
- Vulnerable to economic 'down' turn consequences
- Job markets change rapidly
- Need progressive community or approach will result in a zero-sum economy (cyclical, stunted, not innovative)

Other

- Assumes student knows what he wants to do
- How could community college connect with students in the elementary and middle schools
- May not be compatible with goals of universities

- Limiting to diverse student needs
- Not perceived as inspiring
- The group felt that when a home grown business fails, it is demoralizing to the community.
- Limits exposure to other cultures, ideas and opportunities
- Should also be educating parents

3. WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THIS APPROACH?

Assessment

- Identify what skills are needed
- Identify what jobs will be needed in the future
- Find way to predict job landscape 10-15 years down the road
- Have students self-identify college or alternate career plans to allow for planning implementation
- Job interests/strengths and weaknesses tests
- do a 9th grade ‘what color is your parachute’ type of survey (review parachute color in Junior year!)
- survey high school graduates 6 years after graduation to see where they are job/school-wise
- better inform students about the results of their personality/career interest test results when exploring career leads during career counseling sessions.
- Encourage youth to have self-driven exploration and ask them to report back.

Mentorship

- Get high school students to serve as mentors for these programs as lower-school levels. This helps the high school students master by teaching; it helps both learn whether they like the topic, and the younger students see older students as models
- Engage senior citizens to mentor youth who will benefit from wisdom, life lessons, and examples of realistic expectations.
- Guidance about what should be doing to prepare (what courses, etc.) non-college opportunities
- Shadow employees
- Mentoring programs for both students that are interested in college and not interested in college
- Guidance counselors be more in touch with needs of local employers in the non-college careers/jobs

Events

- Keep the Science Day in the elementary schools.
- ‘Parent speak’ daily including by Skype and/or YouTube applying usefulness of this approach to curriculum
- Expand the “Science Day” model to include business exposure
- Use the Late State Time morning as a an opportunity for required business seminars
- Bring kid to work day
- Class Fair – relate to job/biz
- Guest teachers; visiting professors
- Start using career days at the elementary level.

Speakers

- Business people should come to class to relate curriculum to work place...”here’s how I use this information in the real world”
- Bring local CEOs into schools to talk to students to inspire them to return to the area after college
- Parents should talk with their children about their daily work activities. Career exposure at the elementary school level.
- Elementary students should interview their parents or others about their work.
- The group suggested an entrepreneur speaker series. This could involve parents coming in and talking about the real world practical application of what the students are learning now.
- Diverse group of professionals, e.g. computer programmers & actors, speak at schools to introduce variety to students.

- Have business professionals show the real world applications of the content being taught

Internships

- Internships that ask 2-3 per week during school and/or summer experiences with option for more hours per week.
- Grow the ISM and begin it in ninth grade, or at least 11th grade; consider beginning it in middle school (it was understood that transportation may be a factor when introducing the ISM to students ages 15 and under)
- Investigate increasing opportunities for apprenticeship programs and match students early enough in HS to set them on a pathway before HS graduation
- Establishing internships for credit, making them a requirement for graduation
- Use parent connections to create internships and shadowing opportunities.
- Find out who administers the Health Occupation Student Association (HOSA) internship program and use it as a blueprint for other disciplines.
- Use Westlake High School Alumni as a resource for internships and shadowing opportunities.
- Get someone to make connections/find opportunities for Summer Internships abroad.
- Establish a liaison position within the school to reach out to businesses and form connections

Curriculum and teaching strategies

- Real-world, project-based, team focused curriculum
- Create time in school day for kids to work in business or pursue other work opportunity such as tutoring business
- Learn about banking and personal finance. Open a bank branch at the school so students can do their own banking.
- Include activities for students to help solve real-life business problems
- Incorporate age appropriate economic course material into curriculum at all levels
- Teach entrepreneurial skills
- Schools could use newly-retired business people or college professors to enhance instruction in the high school. A person like this could volunteer to help teachers integrate real-world experiences into classroom instruction
- Create business / school class ‘think tank’ sessions to help solve business problems
- Relate class topic to business; fully integrate business into the class lesson
- offer more communication/speech classes
- offer courses related to getting a job (interviewing, resume writing, workplace skills)
- Offer entrepreneurship to train entrepreneurial skills as part of school curriculum.
- Teach students bookkeeping
- “Spiraling” into curriculum – build this into curriculum earlier than high school and build on it
- Have more project-based learning (especially self-identified projects), which will also build soft skills/teamwork, and better motivate students to learn (following their interests)
- Improve the Eanes curriculum in computer science classes. Focus on what colleges want students to know and on what is current in the field.
- Increase the onsite/in-school “world of work” opportunities
- Expand Science Day into curriculum
- Trade schools/trade classes that increase awareness of trade occupations
- Give students the opportunity to be entrepreneurs under EISD umbrella, e.g. run a snow cone stand for the school. Build on/bring back Junior Achievement-type programs. Get support from venture capitalists in our community.
- Construct a summer syllabus with structured community volunteer hours.

Teacher development and support

- We need ongoing high quality continuing education for teachers. We need to invest in high-level training for them (such as at Cornell or Duke)
- We should continue with high quality instructional coaches.

- Broaden teacher training
- Encourage/support teachers to find real world applications within the community of subjects they teach. (Discussion whether this is a realistic expectation ensued, and group decided there is time in the summer.)

Other

- Change in legislature
- Increase dialogue around curriculum with businesses/parents/students, just as we are doing here
- Require club/extracurricular activities (it becomes “curricular”!), and make more structured so they tie into school curriculum/internships.
- Summer School/Year Round
- Dual credit – might count as core
- Get Eanes/Austin involved with other communities in Central Texas to increase exposure to diverse populations and expand out of the “bubble”. This approach is harder to fit into a “tight” parameter.
- Encourage youth to participate and enjoy community events, e.g. 5ks, where they will experience a larger community and its diversity.
- Sites with mobile vendors (e.g., food trucks) programs target certain student populations (e.g., special needs students)
- Business incubator like Royrita’s
- What if we shift some academics to the summer, voluntarily, to help make room for more relaxed passions?
- Develop entrepreneurship programs
- Business clubs
- Schools communicate/partner with Austin Community College; Partnerships with community colleges particularly with special needs population
- promote community service (possibly make mandatory), change the reward/social stigma on community service. Right now, it’s a star on your transcript and a cord at graduation. Make the reward higher!
- Have students utilize their tech skills with businesses and extra-curricular activities
- Being responsible for programs (dance) festivals (band) – logistics and organizational skills – must be adaptable to the unpredictable
- Increase the number of un-weighted courses to alleviate stress and allow continuation of extracurriculars enjoyed in ES and MS

REFLECTIONS: WHAT ISSUES DID THEY HEAR DURING THE PAST TWO NIGHTS THAT THEY THINK ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR THEIR COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS?

What participants said...

- Are we putting too much emphasis on our PISA ranking?
- It is important to have parent and student engagement in the classroom, beginning at the elementary school level and throughout high school.
- Also, it is important to address the different needs of each student at each stage of their life. We want our children to be accountable for their actions
- Legislature needs to get it together – out of touch with what’s really going on in the schools and what kids really need/want – “Where did 4x4 come from – a vacuum?”
- Increase flexibility
- We are stifled and choices are limited
- Pursuit of passions and development of talents
- Finding balance; develop whole child
- “Our” kids are good with ethics, etc. Maybe for wrong reasons – internal vs. external
- Pressure pushes kids to cheat
- Connections between grade levels
- Make things relevant
- Internships
- Self esteem and time

- Time Famine
- We need to lighten up current requirements for students so they can learn soft skills and do real work.
- We need to toughen up and require, or offer, the Gifted & Talented (G &T) program/methods to more/all students.
- We have shifted over time from integrated classroom to more sectioned programs like G & T or AP, emphasizing and rewarding these for a few students.
- Related to this, find a way to de-emphasize AP to inflate grades, or separate class rank from college prep/AP classes.
- Pay for someone to coordinate experiential programs (HS students teaching lower levels, work study, etc.)
- Manpower: we need more people, but not just people, we need the right humans to help with this
- If we add these programs, we need effective programs, not for them just to be fluff that we say we are doing
- We have resources in parents, especially in our community, and they may be willing/interested to get involved, but they often do not know how
- Year-round school can lighten the load by spreading things out and be more flexible for out-of-school experiences
- All-inclusive extracurricular opportunities (athletics available to all, in particular) are essential.
- Westlake seems too protected or sheltered and there is big concern over a sense of entitlement. The community is too insular / homogenous. What can we do to change that? How do we get exposure to other cultures? Is volunteering in other areas enough? How do we bring it to us, i.e. encourage diversity in Westlake, versus having to seek out diversity exposure?
- Challenge to maintain a high level of achievement in a highly collaborative yet competitive environment.
- We need to reach out to seniors as a resource of shared wisdom and to add to the community's volunteer pool.
- I wish all schools could have the same or similar advantages we enjoy in Westlake. Maybe our taxes should be shared with other districts or schools in Central Texas because we have a shared responsibility. Maybe we partner with "sister" schools, without making it a charity project, but a true partnership to share ideas, art, actions, and resources. Must be done in a way that comparing resources is not an issue and it is not "us doing things for" other schools.
- Form a community town hall to look for ways to tie school to work experiences within the community.
- Stop looking at things as segmented and start looking holistically
- Give students an opportunity to seek experiences
- Teach in a way to produce a well-rounded child, stressing academics and experiences as well as an ability to communicate
- A greater need for quality senior management in the district
- Instill the importance of knowledge, cultivate a desire to learn, knowledge for knowledge's sake
- Put happiness before economic gain
- Children as early as junior high (maybe earlier) should be given aptitude tests and schools should be structured in tracks to allow for success and growth based on aptitude
- All of these need to be integrated into the fabric of EISD
- We need to rethink existing constraints, on teachers in particular, and allow the process to be less structured
- Give teachers more control of their classes and encourage them to invite successful business people to the team with them to give students real world experiences, which involved both hard and soft skills
- "no child prevented from going forward" (special needs, college-bound, technical/vocational school bound)
- connections with community, businesses, and volunteers need to be increased
- teacher development/training
- Teamwork
- New or magnet school at the high school level; when will WHS reach maximum capacity?
- Class size
- EISD needs more money
- Community involvement – volunteers, mentors
- More electives for kids
- Culture shift of attitude, more realistic in thinking
- Globalization
- Partner with other community schools in different neighborhoods

- Volunteer work- give back to the community
- Digital citizenship (the iPads)
- Stop teaching to the test and skimming surface of topics
- How do we instill the work ethic and accountability- WE NEED TO!
- Define achievement as a community
- Happiness, \$\$, passion, prestige?
- Money management skills for students (soft skills)
- Teacher morale - They are overworked, stressed, underpaid-They need more respect
- Maintaining high academic achievement using cooperative learning techniques to introduce soft skills
- Addressing STEAM while integrating soft skill learning
- Integrated learning experience
- Practical application
- Valuing academics and teamwork
- Soft skills are main barrier to learning for younger students: addressing these earlier will provide more sound foundation – it is easier for students and teachers.
- Managers experience much frustration with employees lacking soft skills: these cannot be taught in the workplace.
- Importance of getting parents, community members and business leaders involved
- don't forget about the middle 50%
- importance of internships; importance of helping students find their interests/passion
- guidance/college counselor training
- accepting not all students not on traditional 4 yr. college track – prepare them!
- Emphasize and develop responsible behavior in all
- Need classes/teachers that motivate students to be held to higher standards
- Teachers that encourage communication
- Value and prepare students that are not 4-year-college bound while still preparing those that are
- Keep lessons of New Deal summer programs in mind because they gave opportunities to focus on both soft skills and STEM experiences at the same time
- Focus on summer school/after school programs and extracurricular activities to teach soft skills and not entirely during the school day
- Student class choices are driven too much by overall GPA
- The top 10% across the board seems unfair; it should be top 25 at Westlake HS
- Are teachers being taught soft skills and how to effectively teach them when studying in their teacher preparation programs to earn their teaching degrees?
- We need to engage non-college bound students as well as college-bound students.
- It is important to get business and school communities more integrated, in order to give students exposure to the real world and prepare them for life after high school.
- UT is a great resource—we need to use it to support our school program.
- Also use Texas A&M—to get competition for the best influences!
- How will we get a handle on what's important? How can we harness all these different ideas and get a focus? Especially in light of the reality of the resources that are available.
- Universities have adjunct professors that come in to teach for limited amounts of time. Could our high schools have something similar? Have adjunct teachers from the outside (such as a videogames industry developer) come and teach a course to students?
- Collaboration among the community, businesses, universities and the schools is important.
- Exposure to different knowledge and experiences is important.
- Engagement for non-college bound students and for younger students should be considered.
- Teaching real-world problem solving is critical for life and school success
- Increase feedback to students
- Reduce class sizes
- A focus on teaching to the test can have negative consequences for students and their ability to problem solve and think critically.

- There must be a balance between the students educational needs, real world/work skills and testing needs
- The need to start teaching the soft-skills in the early grades, high school is too late (and it really starts in the home)
- The Eanes community and its families have significant assets to contribute to student success
- Tracking and defining success: look at employment and not only college or academic success
- Decide what EISD should measure
- Need to collect data and analyze
- Broaden horizons, language, travel, volunteer
- Teach to different learning styles
- Assess why secondary education is superior overseas
- Teaching in real time versus set, tried and true curriculum
- iPad – has not change how teaching is done, as promised
- teachers need to learn how to teach with ipad or any new technology
- Students so focused on rigor that they do not have time to explore or do other things
- Teachers should post lesson plan in advance for students and parents so they can better manage time and spread out work load.
- Last semester of senior year is too easy – should spread out the work and focus until the end
- The thing that keeps America strong is entrepreneurs and leadership - STEM has been outsourced
- Pressure on high school students to ‘succeed’ has both good and bad consequences
- Relevant teacher training is needed for any approach – STEM and/or soft skills
- Connections to business are needed
- Knowing how to use book learning in real world applications is important
- Are we going to have a single path or multi-path curriculum

Appendix I: Session Three Summary

Objectives:

- Review common themes from session 1 and 2.
- Develop possible action plans related to common themes.
- Identify what is needed to accomplish action plans
- Identify top action for each theme.

Theme: Relevance is Key

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Create curriculum connections that are based on real life problems that are across disciplines and across grade levels
- Use “strength-based” student assessments to identify a student’s strengths and then focus on those strengths to further develop them, rather than just trying to improve their deficit areas.
- Expand independent study to middle schools with outside mentors
- Acton Business Fair (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community
- Explore technology more hands on, and include technology as much as we can in lessons because in the future we will be using a lot of technology in our everyday life and jobs
- To help students be more engaged in high school, high school students present at middle school about activities available at high school to help increase awareness of opportunities at the high school. This should be mandatory.
- Longer career day, students choose which sessions they want to participate in
- Doing science day more often to reinforce opportunities available in science
- Career-related project (especially for elementary students) to research and present on a specific career to their class. Helps them find their passion
- Should structure all classes the way that gifted/talented classes are structured
- Teach emotional intelligence
- Thread of teaching life skills as a systematic part of curriculum
- Reverse learning/flipped model—homework is learning time, the following class period is discussion and review and Q an A

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1 Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Approval by the curriculum (College Board & school district)
- Weighted in GPA
- Principal/Teacher Buy-in

2) Who needs to be involved?

- A champion of the idea
- Principal
- Coaches/Mentors
- Students

3) What would success look like?

- Students demonstrate passion for a career and learn new skills that can be demonstrated
- Developed products are sold/bought

4) What resources are needed?

- Teachers
- Space
- Sponsors
- Mentors/Coaches
- Parents

5) What resources exist?

- There are models but not at EANES

Action 2 **Expand independent study to middle schools with outside mentors**

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Curriculum approve by School District and College Board

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Teachers in Middle School and Teachers in High School to explain how it is done
- Companies
- Champion(s)
- College Board

3) What would success look like?

- Students pick the right profession

4) What resources are needed?

- Teachers in Middle School and Teachers in High School to explain how it is done
- Companies
- Champion(s)
- College Board

5) What resources exist?

- Volunteers/mentors
- Teachers

Action 3 **Reverse Learning/Flipped Model, Change structure of classes so that the learning is done at home before class and class time is spent reviewing the material and answering questions**

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Open-minded teachers
- Training
- Review of existing EISD curriculum to see which parts could be easily converted into this format
- Computer access (some disagreement on this point)

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Bechtol
- Teachers
- People who already use this model
- Parents because they need to help implement the at-home part

3) What would success look like?

- More collaboration
- Less lecture
- More cooperative learning

- Learning soft skills
- Less standardized
- Less cheating

4) What resources are needed?

- Training
- Computers for each student (some disagreement on this point)
- Models and best practices that already exist
- Training for parents

5) What resources exist?

- Parents who want to assist
- Community/parent volunteers with specific experiences to share

Top action selected: Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)

Theme: Foundational Skills for the Workplace

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Make volunteerism part of the curriculum and instruction (C&I);
- “Mission” program;
- Expand teen teaching;
- Mandate ISM program (possible virtual capabilities) to include interview and resume skills training;
- Internships in 9th grade for ~ 6 week intervals;
- Exposure to foundational skills for the workplace;
- Aim to reach for all students, especially those who aren’t displaying self-motivation; 8) Focus on work ethic/self-motivation when discussing and teaching soft skills; learned via modeling of self-disciplined effort(s);
- Begin character education at the elementary school level (ES) by gearing toward self-interests/passions with 1:1 interviews with teachers to identify these interests; offer rotating internships on campus with virtual capabilities;
- Build upon character education taught in ES to MS with peer feedback and shift to collaborative efforts to introduce collaborative skills for future co-worker/boss interactions;
- 11) Foster random/balanced encouragement among students for mutually beneficial results: a) project-based, not so much a cohort design, perhaps same groups of students per subject class; b) keep focus on real-world applications to ensure ownership growth of these new skills, and c) criteria within a group could be identified to highlight both individual and group efforts;
- 12) District-wide C&I teaching age-appropriate spiraling C&I for character education: “Move with purpose”, integrate with parents, student led conferences, provide teachers with character education training and resources to generate buy-in;
- 13) Spotlight students who display the lessons of character education;
- 14) Encourage positive peer pressure

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1: Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- A district-wide focus on the scope and sequence of character education C&I at all levels (Pre-K-12th grade).
- Teacher training and resources would generate buy in while preparing teachers to teach and model the skills.

- Identify best practices for character education.
- Collect consistent feedback from businesses involved in the program to evaluate program effectiveness via surveys.

What this action plan would require at each grade level:

ES: Focus on team-based learning through enrichment clusters. Utilize current programs (e.g., renzullilearning.com destination imagination).

MS: Ability assessment testing to identify aptitude and passions (e.g., D.I.S.C. test, Meyers-Briggs, Johnson-O'Connor, EQ tests, 360 assessments that involve peers).

HS: ISM via businesses (utilize non-profits if participation of for-profit business is low), including virtual implementation opportunities, summer internships, cohort projects in the community .

- 1) Who needs to be involved?
 - Students, teachers, parents, the district, and businesses
- 2) What would success look like?
 - Students would be engaged and feel focused and prepared. Student job/internship evaluations by the businesses would be positive.
 - Final assessment to demonstrate knowledge of character education.
 - Survey students 5-10 years after high school to track progress and gather a sense of the effect of character education in their lives.
- 3) What resources are needed?
 - Local businesses to provide the internships/jobs; not-for-profits, ideally.
 - Money.
 - A school/campus liaison to administer the program.
 - More time for teachers to plan. Assessments (e.g., Meyers-Briggs).
- 4) What resources exist?
 - Businesses are present, need to contact and establish relationships.

Top action selected: Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace

Theme: Community Connection

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Expanded career days to include parent class days and improved links to curriculum
- Student field trips to local businesses
- Corporate sponsored writing, critical thinking/problem solving, etc competitions
- Classroom and extra curricular activities swapping with other districts
- Classroom web cam sharing
- Reinstate foreign languages (especially Spanish) into elementary schools
- Local government involvement
- Increased community involvement outreach, particularly to those w/o school aged children
- Community member audits of high school classes

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1 Exposure to Cultural Diversity

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Equipment.
- Technology Integration (web cams, iPads, etc.) beginning at the elementary school level, particularly with classrooms that have Spanish speaking students.
- Sister partnerships with other schools that include classroom exchange field trips.
- **Incorporate** multi-languages into the curriculum. Art and music should also be **included** in the core curriculum.
- Spanish Language Radio Program within the school.
- Parental support.
- Building relationships with district level personnel.

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Parents.
- District level staff.
- Community Involvement Liaison(s)

3) What would success look like?

- Eanes students, who are comfortable in east Austin.
- Grade school children, who may communicate dual languages (English\Spanish).

4) What resources are needed?

- Schools who are willing to form sister partnerships.
- Equipment.
- Technology.
- Technology Coordinator.
- Manos de Cristo (to partner with or use as a consultant).

5) What resources exist?

- Staff.
- Manos de Cristo.
- Equipment.

Action 2: Better use of community resources not currently being utilized

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Way to connect and get information to community
- Information delivery more community focused
- Increased awareness of community service options
- Increased usage of existing and new social media outlets
- Continued connection to parents of former students who want to be involved but currently feel isolated

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Person or department assigned to update and monitor information channels
- Local government and community involvement
- Alumni association (already exists)
- Parents of alumni
- Community service organizations/liaison

3) What would success look like?

- More career days
- Student run business models set up within school
- Bank

- Restaurant
- Etc.
- Directory of community opportunities
- Directory of resources needed

4) What resources are needed?

- People to get involved
- Track community service
- Update information
- Supplies

5) What resources exist?

- Alumni association
- Eanes social media sites

Top action selected: The group opted to recommend two actions which reflect their interest and concerns - Exposure to Cultural Diversity and Better use of community resources not currently being utilized.

Theme: Academic Rigor Balanced With Holistic Education

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Video learning (flip-learning: students watch videos as homework, discuss questions with teachers in class)
- Don't focus too much on technology
- Social entrepreneurship – students work to solve a social problem; service learning
- Project based learning
- Discussion-based learning
- Hands-on science projects (start at a young age)
- Group projects
- Develop creative projects students can own
- Evaluate non-academic skills; integrated evaluation of team work
- Extend school through
 - Summers school: will de-stigmatize summer school, increase ability to take electives, economical because already have facilities and students, can make more;
 - Year-round schooling
- Summers off creates an opportunity for students to become more well-rounded
- Survey students – to see if this is what they want
- Reduce class size - to create time and space to develop relationships
- Limit number of AP courses students can take
- De-stigmatize non-AP classes – don't penalize students who don't take AP-courses; reduce multiplier
- Force students to explore possibilities through electives
- Exempt/make non-AP elective classes pass/fail
- Eliminate AP classes, create new type of advanced courses
- Create a multiplier for senior-level non-academic activities/classes (e.g., theater, band) versus penalize “articulated credit”
- Don't discount value of AP courses, create a balance

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1 We never really got to a specific Action, but we discussed what to do about AP classes, their extra grade weight and how they be preventing students from following their passions/interests and becoming well rounded.

There was a general feeling that this was a system that students just tried to “game” by getting as many grade multipliers as possible. This included the 3 students in our group.

- Maybe we should cap the # of AP classes a student can take at one time. Too many APs can lead to unbalanced (not well-rounded) students.
- But we need all the APs as our students are competing nationally for slots at universities
- Worried that AP (and G&T) is separating/segregating students. Could we integrate AP potential into all classes? Students would have the potential to do extra/superb work to gain AP credit
- Some felt it was important for the kids to have the opportunity to gain college credit (save money) through APs, at least one questioned whether we should be “paying” for kids to get college credit
- Universities handle giving credit/placing out for APs differently with many, especially top ones, not doing it as APs are often not considered equivalent. Thus, some wondered whether it was a disservice to students to help them place out and miss out on taking the more rigorous college versions.
- Restructure/de-couple GPA from AP, so students are encouraged to follow their interests, not just GPA. One student was contemplating quitting orchestra in order to take another AP.
- Exemption for “extra” extracurriculars in GPA
- Improve non-AP courses by de-stigmatizing them, getting good teachers (not coaches), and differentiated teaching to respond to all levels of students
- Reduce AP multiplier
- We should study the outcomes of and find data on the results of APs (maybe 10 years out!?) to see what value they provide or difference they make, or which ones do.
- Find out perceptions/expectations of colleges regarding APs.
- Middle schools need to counsel parents/students about AP to help them plan for high school
- Would be nice to have data on how much a full load of APs affects GPA/class rank, especially if not getting all A’s. One student gave the example of a friend of his who had a higher GPA even though he was taking fewer APs.

**Dr Bechtel was asked to comment what was happening about this in the district:

- APs are run by the College Board with national standards; teachers take training
- Top universities generally do not provide credit for APs, but they won’t accept students who do not have a bunch of APs (one exception was that most universities provide up to 2 years of English credit for AP)
- District is considering changing the Ap multiplier from 1.2 to 1.1 (1.05 for pre-AP)
- District is considering requiring all students take 4 regular (non-AP) courses
- Top 10 students are always taking all AP.

Action 2 Project-based Learning

- This is hard to do at high school level. Really up to student initiative to find classes that provide this, like Teen Teaching.
- Community Involvement
- Don’t add to teacher’s plate/workload! Integrate projects to cover classwork

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Need matrix of what we are trying to add and how to do it.
- Brings up question of what is our GOAL for project-based learning?
- Project-Based Learning= hands-on, group work, all types of students, produce product, time constraint, end result not pre-determined
- Not at the AP-level – no time, always preparing for AP test
- High School Honors Project– create a meaningful, compelling project
- Online learning and online classes
- Smaller class sizes
- Teacher training; support for teachers
- Assessment matrix/rubric for measuring skills
- Class project (e.g., have a garden) to establish leadership/group work skills
- Education for parents and community of why project based learning is a good thing
- Tap other resources - incorporate community members into the class room; get parents involved (e.g., assist teacher prep)

- Mechanism for identifying volunteers/specialties
- Training for teachers to incorporate resources
- Training for volunteers to respect school rules

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Principal
- Students
- Teachers
- Parents
- Community Members

3) What would success look like?

- Great student projects.
- Added meaning for schools.
- Success would be increased skills and passion on the part of students, better team skills and great community involvement.
- Increased meaning in learning process.

4) What resources are needed?

- We need a Resource List that has 1) what people can do and 2) when they are available (how often/how long), so teachers/schools can call upon people. We also need a Project/Need List to send out, and hopefully match up needs to community resources.
- Volunteer Coordinator, training, lab materials and project resources.

5) What resources exist?

- There are lots of individual resources/skills in our community, but largely untapped.
- EISD has a lot of good physical materials that have been set aside as teachers have focused on test outcomes and not hands-on projects.

Top action selected: Group felt that addressing AP issues was very important but did not formulate a specific action. Project Based learning was discussed as an action item on night four.

Theme: Opportunities for all students

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Mentoring programs for college and non-college bound students, where both the mentor and one being mentored are compensated
- Apprenticeship/Mentorship as a mandatory class
- Education about adverse impact of drug and alcohol abuse
- Smaller class sizes and group kids with same needs; variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles.
- Early education – to help students know what they want to do (help them find their passion); required class in 9th or 10th grade to explore career paths. (6 dots)
- Community apprenticeship – relate the curriculum to real life; “make it real”
- Foster students’ interest in systematic way
- Offer an entrepreneurship program
- Offer an orientation class to freshmen that provides an overview of the classes and programs that are available to them

- Teach to all levels with smaller class size; diversity of teaching levels (1 dot)
- Expand campuses to achieve smaller class sizes, which will facilitate specialized teaching styles (2 dots)
- Teachers get training in specialized teaching styles
- Incorporate some high school programs and approaches at middle school and elementary so students identify their own interests early and can follow through
- Peer interaction between high school and middle school students
- Robust version of Independent Study Mentorship (ISM) in junior year (7 dots)
- Limit number of multipliers allowed so students can take more electives
- Offer programs that cater to visual learners
- Personalize education by providing an iPad for every student (not just high school students).

Top actions items that emerged:

1. Know yourself and your interests
2. Passion to purpose
3. Personal Empowerment/Personalization

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1: Know yourself: Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.

Passion, purpose, personalization

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Speakers on different professions
- Curriculum; cohesive; beginning in early stages through high school
- Exposure
- Mentors
- Field trips
- Teacher training so teachers can teach to a diverse group effectively and comfortably
- “Every hour of every day has to have some relevant contribution toward the goal”
- Project-based learning (example: assignment that requires student to interview a community member) (comment: students do this in 6th grade – but it is a one shot assignment – not a common thread)
- Work special needs students into these programs
- More than a “Career Day” – regular exposure for students
- Recognize diversity in classroom
- Mandatory junior year ISM (Independent Study Mentorship)
- Should apply to all student levels (special needs to AP)
- Students should build a portfolio that they add to over time and can see development
- [this idea was discussed very late so wasn’t fully fleshed out, but there was talk about removing the gpa multiplier from some classes so students would be more willing to take certain classes and not have it hurt their gpa? (I’m not even sure I captured that correctly...Theresa)]

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Teachers
- Parents
- Administrators
- Community
- Students (for peer interactions)
- Teacher trainers
- Program czar

3) What would success look like?

- Have an inventory of students' interests (at 5th grade and update along the way)
- Graduating students know what want to explore/pursue
- Fewer students fall through the cracks
- Students that are less stressed out
- Students self-advocate more according to teacher reports
- Students voice interests during sophomore evaluations
- Students set goals for themselves (they don't feel lost)
- Percentage increase for prep for sophomore evaluations
- Ask questions of students each year middle school through high school

4) What resources are needed?

- iPads
- Curriculum
- Community Commitment
- Program coordinators for (1) education and (2) community
- Teacher training

5) What resources exist?

- Talented students
- Talented parents/teachers
- Commitment from community
- [there are bits and pieces but it's not systematic]
- [Some of these concepts are integrated into the Special Ed curricula]

Top action selected: We only discussed one action, but the group eventually agreed that all three of their actions were related and overlapping and seemed satisfied that the discussion and resulting action plan encompassed most of their desired actions.

Theme: Assessing and Measuring

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Grading practices that support learning as opposed to 'punitive' approach
- Get rid (or standardize use) of '0's
- Possibility to re-test for full or partial value
- End of year survey by parents and students of individual teachers
- Standardized and enforced departmental curriculum
- Multiple assessment targets including subject matter competency and soft skills mastery throughout all grade levels
- Detailed feedback to parents with more than just numerical values
- Find alternate opportunities for students to 'reach the target'
- Establish soft skills competency goals list for each grade
- More detailed and frequent feedback on soft skills including peer assessments and student self-assessment
- Use of soft skills categories and standards against which students are able to gauge their own progress

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1 Grading Practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- students would not receive 'zeros'
- there would be opportunities to re-test for partial credit
- teachers would use rubrics/plans against which students would be able to gauge or assess their own progress

2) Who needs to be involved?

- teachers
- parents
- students

3) What would success look like?

- there would be more accurate assessment of learning
- there would be more student effort to learn
- there would be more students taking responsibility for their own learning

4) What resources are needed?

- adoption of new policy/policies
- training for teachers (and parents and community also), reflecting a shift in mindset about grades and assessments

5) What resources exist?

- invested parent population
- receptive teachers
- communication network already in place

Action 2 Multiple Assessment Targets Including Subject Competency and Soft Skills Mastery

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- development of assessment criteria and tools for soft skills measurement for all grades beginning in elementary school
- assessment to be driven by students

2) Who needs to be involved?

- students
- teachers
- parents
- model district already doing this

3) What would success look like?

- soft skills measured throughout all grades
- soft skills assessments available as part of transcript

4) What resources are needed?

- teacher training
- connection to model district already doing this

5) What resources exist?

- districts using a similar model
- online access

Top Action Selected: Grading Practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)

Theme: Support and Resources

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Need for technology dollars is ongoing (funding from the bonds won't last)
- Innovative non-traditional teacher training – especially engineering and technology – develop with outside companies
- Volunteers to help with teaching
 - Lessen paperwork
 - Opportunity for teachers to attend workshops
 - Bring in volunteers with specific expertise
 - Guest teachers who are experts in a certain area
 - Filter all the way down to elementary level
- Allocate more funding to teacher training; Funding to attend conferences (some require travel; hefty expense) Are iPads as important to students as trained teachers? iPads do not lessen other costs/paperwork.
- Survey teachers – what do they communicate as their needs?
- More late starts or early dismissal (time to meet professional goals; plan lessons, etc.)
- Inter-disciplinarian work between teachers (re-implement teaming concept)
 - Formal mentor training for experienced teachers and those new to the district
- 4 day school week
 - Take a day for inter-disciplinarian interaction between teachers; create more time for teachers; re-implement collaborative time between teachers during school year
 - Need more collaborative/communication time between teachers (especially in middle school)
- Year round schooling

Details from discussion on top action items:

- Teacher Training
- Volunteers to Help with Teaching - Create/Give back time to Teachers
 - Lessen paperwork
 - Opportunity for teachers to attend workshops
 - Bring in volunteers with specific expertise
 - Guest teachers who are experts in a certain area
 - Filter all the way down to elementary level

Action 1 Teacher Training

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Get companies to volunteer
- Volunteers to make those connections to businesses
- Committee to work with curriculum department to define what the needs are. Include people from community on committee.
- Time and money
- Economic support from local businesses
- Parent volunteers to take on tasks to save money for training

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Businesses
- Parents (Wealth of knowledge and many are entrepreneurs and/or have connections to the business community)
- Administrators
- Teachers
- Liaison between teachers and the community
- Database of parents with their experience (note who the good lecturer/communicators are and which grade level best suited for and can they teach teachers?)
- Volunteer subs for teaching/planning/team time/training time, etc)

3) What would success look like?

- We would have more innovation and integration
- More relevant lessons
- Help kids find their passions
- More systematic approach/process for utilizing resources

4) What resources are needed?

- Need a schedule for resources
- Need a way to capture information in the database(s)
- \$\$\$
- Use parents as volunteer subs

5) What resources exist?

- Parents
- Business Community
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Members

Action 2 Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- Volunteers to build slides/graphics for power point presentations and to load apps on iPads, etc.
- Use college students/teen teachers
- Officer from Chamber of commerce could attend booster club meetings and learn what type is needed, communicate to members and recruit business volunteers
- Bring in experts to teach as guests

2) Who needs to be involved?

- Parents
- Business Community
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Members
- Grandparents and other family members
- College students/teen teachers
- Students (service hours)

3) What would success look like?

- Students would be engaged
- Teachers would get time back - lessening the amount of time spent on 'non-teaching' efforts
- Things would run more efficiently
- More innovative learning
- Test scores will improve
- A more systematic approach
- Create opportunities for teachers to attend conferences

4) What resources are needed?

- THE Database(s)
- Survey teachers for needs with some level of detail
- Scheduling tools
- A way for teachers to leave feedback on how volunteers can best be used based on their strengths
- Liaison on each campus to connect faculty with volunteers – volunteer coordinator
- Tech person to coordinate info and database
- Specific targeted questions to figure out who can and want to volunteer doing what, no matter where their kid is

- An 'outreach' method; a more systematic approach

5) What resources exist?

- Booster Club
- Chamber of Commerce
- Parents
- Registration – can be used to gather info for where/how people are willing to volunteer

Top action selected: Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents

Theme: Integration and Innovation

Possible actions brainstormed by Theme Team Group:

- Problem based learning (Science fair at HS level, raise awareness and participation for D.I. (Create curriculum so all teachers can do it or make it a "special" at elem. Level)
- Group projects based on student interests
- If they fail a test, can make up the grade in a creative way (still prove they know the material, but different learning styles are incorporated) This was not discussed further by others around the table.
- Take what we learn in the class and use in a real world way (mentoring, volunteering, community reach out, etc) Kids going deeper into real world applications
- Interdisciplinary learning; integrated curriculum. (But we need to give teachers time for this. Kids teaching kids?)

Details from discussion on top action items:

Action 1: Problem Based Learning

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- teach more classes like G.T. classes, create life long learners
- -teacher development
- -support from parents
- -block scheduling so teachers have contiguous time periods for certain subject each day
- -change curriculum to incorporate problem based learning
- -generate student interest in extracurricular activities
- -see how other schools implement this
- -benchmarks or something so we can assess if we're doing well
- -incorporate clubs into the classroom learning environment

2) Who needs to be involved?

- parents, teachers, D.I alum, administration, community members, parents/Eanes alum who have careers in problem-solving jobs/roles.

3) What would success look like?

- -Engaged and excited students and teachers
- -higher academic achievement
- -cooperation amongst student body
- -see social/soft skills being developed
- -more flexible, creative thinkers
- -more involvement in D.I., science fair, etc
- -connecting with others: students, teachers, mentors, etc

4) What resources are needed?

- -financial support
- -training of staff
- -change in staffing??

5) What resources exist?

- -group was unsure

Action 2: Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum

1) What would it take to make this happen?

- a lot of planning for teachers and administration
- flexibility and cooperation between teachers
- TIME: perhaps block scheduling would give teachers more time to plan and execute lesson
- Expanding the vision: connecting ideas for students ACROSS the courses (Ex- put history in context and getting away from facts)
- Research current examples of success
- Pilot program: start with one subject and build from there (start with English Lit. class integrated with history; what can we integrate into that?)
- GOALS: something to give to parents and comm. members to measure success

2) Who needs to be involved?

- EVERYONE!- community effort
- teachers (elective AND core) working together
- administration
- universities who have implemented curriculum integration could partner with us on our efforts
- students
- community members

3) What would success look like?

- well-rounded students, but how do we assess this? (essays, presentations, surveys, demonstrations of higher level thinking)
- Happy teachers (could help attract high quality teachers too!)
- Higher graders (I'm not sure what this means – students?)
- Increase percentage of students getting in and graduating from of college

4) What resources are needed?

- -Art for All (example: a program a former teacher had used in LA)
- -parent education
- -financial support
- -training
- -MOST OF ALL, TIME!!

5) What resources exist?

- -Great teachers!

Top action selected: Problem Based Learning and Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum

Appendix J: Session Four Summary

Objectives:

- Understand the tough choices and tradeoffs that will need to be made since resources are limited
- Explore the barriers and enablers to making progress on action plans developed in night three
- Sign up individuals interested in pursuing specific current volunteer opportunities

THEME: Relevance is Key

ACTION: Acton Business Fair/Competition (lower Grades)/Entrepreneur Track (High School) with mentors/coaches from the business community (extra credit at lower Grades – graded in High School)

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

1. Absence of approval or buy-in from teachers and community;
2. Lack of or low participation;
3. Lack of money;
4. Non-school-based sponsorship;
5. Non-mandatory status;
6. Parent submission of “fraud” (e.g., their child read 20 books in one month); and
7. Only giving a “taste” of the program to some and not all students

Enablers:

1. Market/Advertise to ensure “popularity”;
2. Incentives;
3. Age-appropriate competition/relevant process implementation, according to age level in ES/MS/HS;
4. The program’s uniqueness;
5. Positive influence of lessons learned from failures;
6. Monthly theme of directed study;
7. Spiral C&I in K-12; 8. Success at the HS level;
8. Voluntary/elective/on-site speakers/brown bag lunch;
9. Recognize the existing business-like environment of HS and capitalize on this fact; and
10. Utilize existing models (e.g., Junior Achievement) for best practices study and/or modify to implement.

Top Barrier: Lack of money

Top Enabler: Utilizing existing models for best practices study and/or modify to implement.

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Loss of other instruction time (if part of school day)

- What subject(s) will give up time?
- Need outside community members support
 - Who's going to do it?
- Backlash from parents.
 - Why adding/removing subject (versus Destination Imagination)?
- Is there a way to make it interdisciplinary?
- Time constraints – harder to implement at the middle and high schools. There is already Destination Imagination at middle school level.
- Lack of student interest –
- No multiplier effect. Students give up academic credentials.
- Block scheduling would allow for more electives, but it's expensive.
- Lack of time with current schedule.

Enablers:

- Require freshmen to take an elective class (e.g., business competition/business fair)
- Incorporate as part of science fair/current school curriculum
- DECA – business and office education
- Resurrect old classes
- Achieve Texas
- Align with ACC courses
- MARE program at Elementary School; class is business, develop project, sell at fair
- Student run on-site business (e.g., coffee house)
- Pat Betsner (?) – CATE has experience
- Could model school curriculum after National Lemonade Day program
- Tie to scholarships
- Mentor/coaches at UT's Business School
- Chamber of Commerce, surrounding businesses
- Parents, particularly if there's a competition at the elementary school level
- Community buy-in, true partnerships
- Home for uninvolved students
- Austin Business Center – summer camp, partner, seminar
- Bill Gates Foundation
- Block schedule
- Existing resources
- Use time after AP tests
- Career Fairs
- Require Senior Thesis Project (final semester)

Top barrier:

- Loss of other instruction time (if part of school day)

Top enablers:

- + Existing resources; resurrect old classes and student-run on-site businesses (e.g., coffee shop)
- + Chamber of commerce, surrounding businesses
- + Require freshmen to take an elective class (e.g., business competition/business fair)

THEME: Foundational Skills for the Workplace

ACTION: Longitudinal Action Plan for Fostering Foundational Skills for the Workplace

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

- Assessment Tools
- How do you teach it?

- Self awareness @ elementary and middle school
- Assessment @ young age; could be stifling
- Not deemed as important by colleges
- Assessing is so subjective

Enablers:

- Important to employers
- Dansville schools – District wide teacher/student skill based assessment (Work habits rubric) see for example
- Weighting “soft skills” Like AP
- Tests that would continue to transition and bridge more age appropriate assessments
- Howard Garnder and plenty of other resources

Top Barriers: Not deemed important by colleges and assessing is so subject

Top Enablers: Dansville Schools, Howard Gardner

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

1. “Pushing this plan too much/too early via tracking” and “Putting kids into a box;”
2. Lack of awareness/exposure of character education at home;
3. Sense of school district entitlement could impede progress by discouraging the need and/or importance of the program;
4. Lack of risk taking in the model;
5. Lack of fiscal knowledge in students;
6. Possible feelings of isolation within the district;
7. Mandatory business internships could translate as harassment to business leaders – not the image we want to project.

Enablers:

1. Exchange program with Title 1 schools (MS and HS levels) via face-to-face and/or virtual interactions;
2. Mentoring opportunities;
3. Increases community service opportunities;
4. Three-day camps during the school year;
5. At ES level, establish a pen pal program and/or co-authoring written assignments with students in other school districts;
6. Allows for lesson of gratitude;
7. Utilizes existing cultural programs in the city allowing for cultural diversity lessons (e.g. Refugee Services of Austin);
8. Internship fair;
9. Invites business owners to expose students to internships;
10. Student repercussions for internship success/advancement;
11. Allows for leadership skills training.

Top Barriers: “Pushing this plan too much/too early via tracking” and “Putting kids into a box;” and Sense of school district entitlement could impede progress by discouraging the need and/or importance of the program

Top Enablers: Exchange program with Title 1 schools (MS and HS levels) via face-to-face and/or virtual interactions;

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Philosophical difference: believe this is parent’s job – not the school district
- Time: demands for academics, tradeoffs

- Benchmarks for these skills do not exist
- Teacher training
- Additional teachers needed
- Start-up of program
- Business involvement
- Money and materials
- Coordinator
- What would be return for business involvement? What is value to businesses?
- How to get business to see value and get involved?
- How to prioritize?
- How to differentiate from existing programs?

Enablers:

- Willing groups: students and businesses
- Make it a privilege
- Database of where students were accepted for specific majors
- Focus on successful outcomes/alumni
- Feedback from business to highlight what works
- Business leaders/non-profit should connect through a liaison (not a teacher)
- Require participation or offer community service credit
- Use technology/web based options to ease implementation
- Job skills/resume writing
- Communication with businesses is important
- Motivate students to perform well at internships
- Teen teaching
- Strong coordinator
- Offer summer internship to allow time for AP classes during school year
- Recognition for businesses that participate (such as signs at ball fields)

Top barriers:

- Time: demands for academics, tradeoffs
- Money and materials
- How to differentiate from existing programs?

Top enablers:

- Willing groups: students and businesses
- Strong coordinator

THEME: Community Connections

ACTION: Exposure to Cultural Diversity

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

- How do we add this to an already compact/full school schedule?
- Develop teacher skills (training)
- DEFINING Cultural Diversity! This item seemed to possibly focus on Spanish language exposure or to Latin America culture that exists in Austin
 - Which cultures do we focus on?
 - How big is this? How often? How much?
 - Year-long? 1 week?
 - How do we agree on curriculum?

- Overcome EANES' history of being less diverse – started as “segregated”/separated from Austin

Enablers:

- There is a strong desire in the community for this
- Partnerships with sister schools in Austin as well as other parts of the world
- Austin has Sister City program with numerous countries – plug into local group/organization that runs this!?
- Technology to enable these, like Skype, or using e-mail for pen pal program with students from other cultures/countries
- Exposing teachers to other cultures and helping them develop cultural sensitivity to better implement this
- EANES has become more diverse, and we can tap into this increasing resource of community members
- There are examples of school districts instituting language immersion for all students (sometimes only at certain schools with each school using a different language). Edina, MN is an example
- We might limit program or exposure in order to reduce the need for extra resources to implement this, but limited exposure should still stimulate students' desire to pursue more
- To get teachers who can better implement this, we need to track the available teacher pool/skills, expand recruitment and PROACTIVELY recruit for diversity and these skills. This may require assistance to teachers to get them to move here and get established (cost of living/housing availability, etc.)
- More student exchange, especially bringing foreign students in through programs like AFS
- Volunteer database

Top Barriers:

- Defining Cultural Diversity and curriculum
- Training/getting teachers to implement
- Finding way to integrate/add to curriculum

Top Enablers:

- Proactive recruitment of teachers and training to assure skilled and culturally diverse/sensitive pool
- Tapping into diverse EANES community
- Technology

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Perceived lack of diversity within Eanes
- All or nothing attitude (success can be achieved in chunks)
- Lack of awareness of cultural diversity that does exist currently
- Current cultural resources not being used (residents ethnic backgrounds)
- Lack of time to work into existing lessons plans (what goes?)
- Not a current focus of district
- Perception that kids have no time to incorporate other activities or learning opportunities
- Lack of fidelity in implementation

Enablers:

- Explore and celebrate student's ethnicity
- Develop global days
- Restructure student's free time and put to good use
- Assessing the use of parents and community outreach
- Students proactively bring parts of their heritage in curriculum

Top Barriers:

- Perceived lack of diversity within Eanes
- Not a current focus of district

Top Enablers:

- Explore and celebrate student's ethnicity

- Assessing the use of parents and community outreach

THEME: Community Connections

ACTION: Better use of community resources not currently being utilized

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

1. In past experience for some parents, principals are hesitant about parental involvement. They don't want that.
2. Management Issue for schools
 - a. Safety, influx of people, background checks
 - i. COST of background checks and security needed
3. Not all "volunteers" are going to be contributing what we want
4. Community Outreach- the information and needs will need to get out somehow
 - a. Need a proactive person to take advantage of the missed opportunities and promote communication between schools, families, business owner, community members, etc.
 - i. Can tap into pre-established groups
 - ii. Need a large STAFF (\$\$) to act as community liaison between community and schools
5. What ARE our community resources? How do we figure this out and who does it?
 - a. A LOT of information that requires some sort of database
6. Financial Support
 - a. Who pays for it?
 - b. The motivation needed to raise the funds
7. What is our "community"?
 - a. Eanes, Rollingwood, West Austin, Austin metro?
8. TIME
 - a. Classroom time given up; will teachers be willing?
 - b. If this isn't mandated and not TEKS how do we fit it into the school day?
 - c. Time to get it in place

Enablers:

1. Need a CHAMPION
 - a. Someone to be a spokesperson for the program; lead the way; build confidence in program
2. Could help teachers fill the gaps
 - a. Give them extra support to do the things they want to do in their classroom and don't have time for
3. Need a Pilot Program starting with principal and teacher values
 - a. Start small; success builds on success
 - b. Video classroom visits to show the benefits
4. Could be a good way to break down the barrier for teachers
 - a. Teacher pressure to succeed keeps them from trying new things
 - b. This would reward experimentation with this new idea
5. Technology: We have it!
 - a. Could tap into an established volunteer program as a first step
 - b. Mold something that's pre-existing to fit the needs
 - c. Facebook, Twitter, other social networks? Could these be useful?
6. This idea connects to our community core values and Eanes mission statement
7. What do the teachers and admin value
 - a. Figure that out and start from there
8. Can tie in really well to what teachers are already doing
 - a. Ex: Use it to tie up a unit they've already taught; make that real world connection

Top Barriers: Time (#8 in outline) and Financial Support (#6 in outline)

Top Enablers: Need for a Champion (#1 in outline) and Pilot Program (#3 in outline)

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Generating interest; focus
- Time
- Lack of connection with resources/communication
- How to identify resources
- No existing database
- How to interest people who do not have children in school district (empty nesters, retirement communities, and parents of alumni)
- Who to coordinate?
- Motivate participation from community

Enablers:

- Guest speakers
- Inter-generational exchange
- Expand senior service day to increase student involvement in community
- Use internet/social media to identify need areas and get other groups involved
- Recognition for participants – motivates future participation
- Coordinator – maybe a volunteer
- Alumni – discuss life successes at career day
- It's fun – useful with a purpose
- It can be an outlet for students who are under pressure

Top barriers:

- Who to coordinate?
- Motivate participation from community

Top enablers:

- Expand senior service day to increase student involvement in community
- Coordinator – maybe a volunteer

THEME: Academic Rigor Balanced with Holistic Education**ACTION: Project-based Learning**GROUP ONE:**Barriers:**

1. PBL is too broad to a teaching style to meet the needs of all students that will represent a wide variety of abilities and learning styles. It's too general.
2. PBL is overly difficult to grade/quantify fairly . . . particularly in cases where you have one or two members of the group doing the majority of the work.
3. It is difficult to set initial expectations, which are a must for success.
4. With PBL, variations in the teachers ability has more of an impact on student success than with traditional curriculum.
5. PBL is resource intensive (training, for example, will be extensive).
6. PBL may teach some students (particularly those that don't pull their own weight) the benefit of "riding others coattails."
7. PBL requires a lot of group work, and it is logistically difficult for that many students to get together outside of normal school hours.
8. Students that are quite and do not have dominant personalities may not do as well in a PBL environment.
9. Teachers don't currently have the flexibility in teaching styles that may be required with PBL. They are often forced to do things by the book. PBL is not by the book.
10. Currently, students think that they will be graded on an end product. Good test results = success. PBL has more emphasis on the process . . . teamwork is key. It will be difficult to get students out of the current mindset. We need to show them that process can be more important than results.

Enablers:

1. GT instructors could be tapped to help out, as their model is already very similar to PBL. It could be used as a template. Physics and journalism and special needs classes were specifically mentioned.
2. Smaller class sizes would enable PBL.
3. A district wide database of individuals willing to come in and lecture on various topics/careers would really be beneficial in showing students the practicality of what they are learning in the classroom. They could also serve as mentors.
4. Eanes ISD has been proactive in the past by bringing groups/professionals in to get momentum going with certain programs (E3 was brought in to get this project going). This is great in getting people excited and talking about things, thus spurring excitement. We need to key in on this and keep it going with these new programs. This top down approach (where Eanes takes the horse by the reigns, and it gets parents/students excited) works well.
5. Bring in curriculum professionals to help teachers.

Top barriers:

1. It is difficult to set initial expectations, which are a must for success.
2. With PBL, variations in the teachers ability has more of an impact on student success than with traditional curriculum.
3. Teachers don't currently have the flexibility in teaching styles that may be required with PBL. They are often forced to do things by the book. PBL is not by the book.

Top enablers:

1. A district wide database of individuals willing to come in and lecture on various topics/careers would really be beneficial in showing students the practicality of what they are learning in the classroom. They could also serve as mentors.

GROUP TWO:**Barriers:**

- Must coordinate among many classes to set up multi-disciplinary project.
- Hard to do in science and math classes.
- State regulations.
- AP multiplier.
- What's going to give?
- Too much time working on project. Can't add more projects to students' plate
- Difficult to develop; needs to be meaningful, worth effort. Takes a lot of teacher time/planning, goes above and beyond expectations.
- Difficult to develop something that serves all students.
- Many times group work falls to the one student who cares about their grade; free rider problem (use individual assessment to counter)

Enablers:

- Science fair (e.g., rockets).
- High School Honors Project.
- Add required non-AP/non-pre-AP electives without multiplier per year.
- Make multiplier smaller.
- Eliminate multiplier.
- Lack of multiplier at middle school level.
- Projects already exist at elementary and middle school.
- Require study hall at high school (either one time/day or one time through high school career) to create time for group project work.

- Pick one subject area and pilot.
- Do at middle school level.

Top barriers:

- AP multiplier
- Difficult to develop; needs to be meaningful, worth effort. Takes a lot of teacher time/planning, goes above and beyond expectations.

Top enablers:

- + High School Honors Project.
- + Lack of multiplier at middle school level.

THEME: Opportunities for All Students

ACTION: Helping students better learn who they are, and their interests & strengths beginning in the 5th grade, resulting in a self-profile portfolio to carry along with them so all students are ready to participate in the ISM/ mentorship program.

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

- Expanding/requiring ISM/mentorship program will replace an AP class
- Currently too limited
- Is it possible to find enough opportunities for all students? How?
- Unintended Consequences: starting such programs early might pigeon hole kids too early; kids need time to find themselves
- We need to match offerings to kids' (changing) interests. We limit kids' interests at times because programs have limited slots. The example of sports teams was given as they have limited slots, and while facilities are available, students may then not be able to pursue their interest. A specific example given was that because of declining interest in girls basketball, girls who did not make the volleyball team were being pushed into that in order to maintain a team.

Enablers:

- Expand any intern/externship experiences to include multiple professions to broaden exposure
- For such programs, we should encourage broad exposure and exploration at early ages and then allow more focused program later on (HS level)
- The only way to implement this at HS level will be to alter the AP system, so it is fair to everyone who wants to participate in this.
- We need to study AP system, related to college admissions and how changes will not hurt students' competitiveness (hopefully increase it), and then communicate this to students and parents.
- Personality tests (e.g., Briggs Meyers) - not at too early an age – to help students direct themselves

Top Barriers

- Unintended Consequences

Top Enablers

- Altering AP system
- Personality Tests

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

1. New kids moving into the district will have a difficult time catching up.

2. At a young age, kids are not passionate about much, and may need the guidance that the curriculum provides.
3. It is difficult to grade/quantify/assess.
4. The maturity level of young students may not be conducive to this process.
5. There is too little time in the current student schedule for electives, which do a great job of exposing students to a wide variety of topics.
6. Students view current “career days” as a waste of time. Events like this need to be thought out a bit more, so they are valued by students. Something like a mentor program that is more concentrated and regular would be better than a one time career day.
7. Lack of community involvement.

Enablers:

1. TED Talks
2. Brown Bags or Lunch-n-Learns
3. Engage university professionals to come and speak
4. Ensure that the curriculum involves a community connection that really brings home the practicality of what students are learning.
5. PTO-like database that contains individuals that are willing to come lecture about a topic/career. This database should include a grade for each individual that represent how well he/she was received.
6. Utilize the power of list serves for community involvement.
7. Utilize the Adult Transition Services (ATS) template – putting young adults to work.
8. Let kids know that you don’t necessarily have to be a “professional” to be successful. There are lots of unorthodox jobs out there that can bring wealth and happinessyou don’t have to be a doctor or lawyer. Eanes should tap into non traditional career individuals to exemplify this.

Top barriers:

1. Students view current “career days” as a waste of time. Events like this need to be thought out a bit more, so they are valued by students. Something like a mentor program that is more concentrated and regular would be better than a one time career day.
2. Lack of community involvement.

Top enablers:

1. PTO-like database that contains individuals that are willing to come lecture about a topic/career. This database should include a grade for each individual that represent how well he/she was received.

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Time and money
- Lack of everyone buying in (parents, teachers, community, etc)
- Sustainability of structural integrity of portfolio
- Lack of consistency between grades and campuses reporting in portfolio
- Lack of curriculum standards
- Teacher’s already have time constraints
- Must make work with current system
- Lack of grade appropriate tools and activities

Enablers:

- Parent input and involvement
- Parent reporting student interests to teachers
- Training parents
- Use of existing assessment tools (Myers Briggs, DISC, etc)
- Project based programs already exist
- Site visits to schools already doing this

- Easier to achieve in elementary

Top Barriers:

- Lack of buy in
- Sustainability of structural integrity
- Must work with current system

Top Enablers:

- Use of existing assessment tools
- Project based learning programs already exist

THEME: Assessing and Measuring

ACTION: Grading practices that support Learning (as opposed to punitive ones)

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

- Inconsistent grading policies
- Lack of a mastery based grading policy
- Policies in place are too harsh
- The current focus on preparing for the college environment
- Teachers set in their ways
- Lack of time
- Classes too large, how do you incorporate this?
- Fairness for all students
- Student perceptions of just getting the highest grade possible at the expense of mastery

Enablers:

- Implement a system to promote the desired behavior
- Incorporate a more mastery-based system
- Being able to separate knowledge from behavior
- Incentivize students to gain better best grades for less homework in return
- Report missing grades early, provide a timely grade report
- Provide more extra credit opportunities
- Encourage gaining a mastery of material, not just the maximum grade
- Use homework as a system of recognizing areas to expand upon
- A consistent district wide model that promotes mastery based grading that is analogous to different departments

Top barrier:

- student perceptions of just getting the highest grade possible at the expense of mastery

Top enabler:

- a consistent district wide model that promotes mastery based grading that is analogous to different departments

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- extra time would be required for teachers to re-test, re-grade, etc.
- lack of flexibility in policies

the following three were considered potential risks rather than barriers:

- if credit is given to student for something other than showing mastery

- perhaps undermines the development of students' appreciating the importance of doing their best or 'getting it right the first
- lack of consistent policies within departments

Enablers:

- allow retesting under more circumstances – shouldn't all students be given the opportunity to show mastery from the A student to the failing student
- consistent policies in high school, middle school, elementary school (at least within departments)
- teacher buy-in
- teachers establishing guidelines
- focus on mastery of knowledge, not the grade
- student more responsible for ownership of their own learning (ex., rubrics, learning contracts, etc.)
- allow alternate/multiple assessments or products to show mastery of content

Top barriers:

- extra time would be required for teachers to re-test, re-grade, etc.
- lack of consistent policies within departments

Top enablers:

- student more responsible for ownership of their own learning (ex., rubrics, learning contracts, etc.)
- consistent policies in high school, middle school, elementary school (at least within departments)

THEME: Support and Resources

ACTION: Utilize volunteers - Create a database to help teachers identify additional volunteers and document volunteer's talents.

GROUP ONE:

Barriers:

- Need to designate/hire a person or team to create, coordinate, and maintain the database.
- Database needs to be fluid to allow teachers to add input and edit notes on volunteers' skills
- Need to first *find* the volunteers and then *document* them for accessibility to other teachers
- Even with the database, the district needs to figure out ways to increase volunteer participation
- Would volunteer substitutes and guest teachers require training of volunteers?
- There may be confidentiality issues with sharing volunteers' information

Enablers:

- Could use registration forms and other modes of existing communication with parents/families to gather information
- Would be easy to promote because it could save the district money and save the teachers time
- Would give parents a way to feel more involved in the district and their children's education
- Could bring back the Celebrity Sub program and use it as a model to expand upon
- The database would allow teachers and the district to further tap into the community members' strengths and resources

Top barriers:

- Need to designate/hire a person or team to create, coordinate, and maintain the database.

Top enablers:

- Could use registration forms and other modes of existing communication with parents/families to gather information
- Could bring back the Celebrity Sub program and use it as a model to expand upon

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

- Generating/Designing the database
- Maintaining the database
- Holding volunteer's to commitment
- Missing out on classroom volunteer "sign up" s it is today.. with that particular system the parent knows exactly what they are committing to and when.
- Mind set of and for volunteers
- Have time? Feel Welcome? Comfortable speaking/teaching?
- Keeping the database relevant – find a way to keep volunteers coming back
- How do we involve those that are not parents? How do we reach them?
- Kids don't want their parents there once out of elementary
- Time
- Teachers don't want to give up rigor teaching tops (which is why volunteers should cover lower level efforts so teachers can focus on instruction time)
- Don't know how to utilize volunteers

Enablers:

- Log info at time of registration
- Students receive extra credit to attend city council/chamber meetings
- Way for teachers to enter their requests as a call out for volunteers to answer to
- Volunteer Liaison
- Enable teachers more instruction time
- Survey teachers; how could/would you use volunteers ie., needs??

Top Barriers:

- Maintaining the database keeping it relevant.
- Reaching others outside of parents

Top Enablers:

- Volunteer Liaison
- Survey teachers for needs assessment

THEME: Integration and Innovation**ACTION: Problem Based Learning**GROUP ONE:**Barriers:**

- Will need a method of assessment
- There will be scheduling issues beyond the elementary level integrating with existing curriculum
- Would require teacher training (and buy-in)
- Budget demands and AP demands shift focus away from this problem-solving interdisciplinary style of learning
- This type of teaching takes teacher coordination; teachers would need more time to shift from their isolated disciplinary training
- Requires more advanced planning and question creation (again back to the time constraints on teachers)
- Middle schoolers are being pushed to take high school credits instead of electives that may foster this type of learning
- Need alignment between elementary, middle and high school levels
- Could this potentially increase burdens and the stress level on students?

Enablers:

- There are models to follow that are already being used by other schools (E-slot example at Round Rock elementary schools)
- The Think Loud program is already being used at the elementary level

- Block scheduling could make this type of learning easier (but this comes with its own difficulties and a need for more teachers)
- Could expand/incorporate existing programs such as Destination Imagination, which could be offered as an elective

Top barriers:

- Teachers would need significantly more time to plan and train to teach under this style, as well as coordination time with other teachers

Top enablers:

- Could encourage the middle school model of learning, rather than pushing students to take high school or AP credits which do not cater to this type of learning
- Could add Destination Imagination (or a class like it) as a WHEEL class, perhaps in addition to or instead of other electives (group suggested subbing it in for music for students who were not interested in music)

GROUP TWO:

Barriers:

1. Classrooms are too big and diverse for teachers to really implement this
 - a. Teachers explained they already struggle getting through some of the Everyday Math materials because of this
2. Requires a lot of PLANNING; both at admin and teacher level
 - a. Aligning it to the TEKS will be necessary
3. TIME in the school day is limited
 - a. If they only have 1 hour a day for science, how do you fit in a project? They require more time
 - b. Classrooms so diverse and large, can't get them all the way through the curriculum
4. Parent role needs monitoring
 - a. They can't do the project for their kids (at home assignments, science fairs, etc.)
5. Parent Expectations
 - a. Teachers cannot do it all and can't make everyone happy
 - b. Parents will have to understand that they might not get to Language Arts daily because they're making time for something else; but things would still be balanced in the long run
6. Does this approach align to the test?
 - a. How would this skill be tested?
7. What are we going to give up?
 - a. Teachers report their days are SO full and kids/teachers are already so overwhelmed. Then we're going to cram in more?

Enablers:

1. Problem-based UNIT that occurs once each grading period
 - a. Would help with the time barriers teachers have
2. Makes this type of learning more inclusive
 - a. Not everyone can participate in programs like D.I.; this makes it much more accessible for students
3. This approach allows for different learning styles
4. Could create TEKS directed projects so they align to what teachers are doing in the class already
5. Project will need a clear time line and syllabus with interim steps
 - a. Teaches time-management for students
 - b. Makes it easier for teachers to plan and control
6. Lot of curriculum already out there
 - a. Don't want teachers to have to "re-invent the wheel"
 - b. Should be made consistent across the district so teachers can pool and share resources
7. Some problem based learning already in place
 - a. Everyday Math
8. Tie in to what already exists
 - a. Tie into those existing programs that do this and already exist
 - b. Students could solve problems that actually need solutions!
 - i. Ex: Address problem in community like Rollingwood needs more sidewalks

Top Barriers:

- Planning Requirements
- Time

Top Enablers:

- Materials Already Exist
- Tie it in to what already exists

THEME: Integration and Innovation**ACTION: Interdisciplinary learning and integrated curriculum****Barriers:**

- Some classes (AP) do not work well in block scheduling situations, regular classes would
- Some students may have a higher proficiency in one and not the other
- More of a burden on the teacher
- How do you keep kids interested in learning?
- Time & money
- AP classes have very little group work

Enablers:

- Target the right age group
- Pilot in the non-AP classes
- Learn from Northwestern Universities “passion based learning” system and similar systems: Arts for All (in LA), D.I.
- Incorporate D.I. type atmosphere into the classroom setting
- Make use of a cohort system
- Encourage involvement in clubs
- Take another look at available resources, chances are there is something to make this happen
- “Teen teaching” program

Top barrier:

- it was a tie between more of a burden on the teacher and more time & money

Top enabler:

- learn from Northwestern Universities “passion based learning” system and similar systems: Arts for All (in LA), D.I.

GROUP TWO:**Barriers:**

- lack of funding for teacher hiring/training/development time
- the need for coordinated planning time for teachers
- ongoing support needed
- mindset/cultural shift needed on behalf of teachers and students required
- lack of formal communication channels
- will change in class size be required?
- implementation without sufficient study/training/preparation

Enablers:

- teachers identify opportunities while planning lessons
- willing teachers/teacher buy-in
- provide teacher training and support
- curriculum planner/coordinator necessary
- team teaching
- draw from elementary school model

- look for existing examples in the Eanes district and beyond
- use current teachers as 'guests' in other teachers' classes
- use community members as visiting 'experts'
- need a more flexible approach to scheduling
- start with a pilot

Top enablers:

- teacher training and support
- look for existing examples in the Eanes district and beyond

Top barriers:

- planning time for teachers
- mindset/cultural shift needed on behalf of teachers and students required

Appendix K: Eanes Steering Committee Members

- Laura Avery, Community Resident
- Ellen Balthazar, EISD Board of Trustees, Board Vice President
- Hilary Bellm, Pre-school Parent
- Tammy Berry, Valley View Elementary, Parent
- Brenda Blue, Hill Country Middle School, Parent
- Sheila Bostick, Westlake Chamber of Commerce, Community Member
- Jackie Boykin, Barton Creek Elementary, Teacher
- Jessica Brown, Bridge Point Elementary, Teacher
- Tim Coffey, Westlake Chamber of Commerce, Community Member
- Kerry Gehring, Cedar Creek Elementary, Teacher
- Martha Hansen, West Ridge Middle School, Teacher
- John Havenstrite, Community Resident, Parent
- Shannon Helmi, Cedar Creek Elementary, Parent
- Jo Hendrick, Westlake High School, Parent
- Donna Jackson, Hill Country Middle School, Assistant Principal
- Shalini Komarla, Community Member
- Ronna Martin, EISD Board of Trustees, Board Member
- Mike McDonnell, Barton Creek Elementary, Parent
- Claudia McWhorter, EISD Communications
- David Mebane, Bridge Point Elementary, Parent
- Keyur Mehta, Westlake High School, Student
- Todd Ramberg, Forest Trail Elementary, Parent
- Grace Robertson, Westlake High School, Student
- Rene Schmidt, Eanes Elementary, Parent
- Kathy Seitzman, Valley View Elementary, Admin. Assistant
- Cody Spraberry, Forest Trail Elementary, Teacher
- Lisa Streun, Cedar Creek Elementary, Principal Volunteer
- Kathleen Sullivan, Hill Country Middle School, Principal Volunteer
- Jane Tomick-Wold, Eanes Elementary, Teacher
- Debbie Vickery, Children's Education Minister, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Faith Community
- Julia Webber, Community Resident, Parent
- Nola Wellman, EISD Superintendent
- Matt Zemo, Westlake High School, Teacher

