

This report is presented as a resource document for the *Imagine Houston* process. Its contents are the result of almost a year of public discussion and represent the consensus of the focus group volunteers. While the Planning & Development Department provided support to the process, it did not screen, edit or modify anything contained herein.

**Learning  
for Life**



March, 1995

Dear Fellow Houstonians:

It is with great delight that we write on behalf of the ***Imagine Houston*** focus group entitled *Learning for Life*. Throughout the past nine months in our particular focus group, more than 150 ordinary (and extraordinary!) citizens of Houston have been a part of this truly grassroots effort made possible by Mayor Lanier. We worked hard! We shared a mountain of ideas! We talked, listened, agreed, and disagreed. We got excited about making Houston a city that prizes learning--for every individual--for a lifetime--both in word and deed!

We all realized that in this age of mushrooming knowledge and information, education is the key to success. So that no one was lost along the way, education has to be readily accessible and available to all, from “the womb to the tomb.”

Now we sell our excitement for learning to all Houstonians, and we must do it at least as well as we sell our world-famous sports teams! As we join in doing that, Houstonians of all ages, lifted up by learning for life, will make positive choices, and we will all win!

Houston has the resources to make this dream come true. We know that when we set our collective mind on a goal, we reach it. And we know how to enjoy the trip!

Many programs are already in place. We learned from our own and other focus groups, that lots of dreams are ready to be born. We just need our will and vision to make them happen. We need our city leaders to use their collective influence in this endeavor and to provide the opportunity to budding leaders to show what they can do. We must value every individual's ability to participate!

So - join us in our dream! Let's begin now to make this dream come true by allowing the ***Imagine Houston*** experience to be the foundation and springboard for making what we've “imagined” a living reality!

Respectfully,

The *Learning for Life* Focus Group

# *Table of Contents*

*iii Preface*

*1 Section 1: Introduction*

*5 Section 2: Goals and Actions*

*21 Appendix A:  
Index of Actions*

*25 Appendix B:  
Resources*

*27 Appendix C:  
Acknowledgements*

---

# Preface

---

In March of 1994, Houstonians seized an opportunity created by Mayor Bob Lanier to help determine the future of our community. Over one thousand people participated in a three-day Imagine Houston forum, during which they identified the issues facing Houston and set the agenda for future discussions.

**Imagine Houston** is a community-wide visioning process designed to bring people together to share information, learn about each other's viewpoints and to develop a consensus on the issues, goals and opportunities that will shape Houston's future. It will result in a plan that public, private and not-for-profit organizations can use as guidance on how to structure programs, services and financing to the betterment of our community.

After the March forum, working groups called focus groups, were formed to deal with specific topics:

*Community Safety*  
*Fostering Our Cultural Resources*  
*In Service to the Public*  
*Learning For Life*  
*Minding Our Natural Resources*  
*Taking Care of Ourselves*  
*Where We Live*  
*Where We Meet*  
*Where We Work*

An additional group, the *Youth Focus Group*, was subsequently created to obtain ideas from Houston's young people on the issues facing them.

Membership in the focus groups was open at all times to anyone; nearly one thousand Houstonians participated in

discussions from March to December. The work completed by the focus groups is the result of those public discussions. Each group developed a vision statement and a list of goals and actions that can be taken to achieve the goals.

While each focus group concentrated on its respective topic, certain themes emerged as constants throughout the reports. They include:

*economic competitiveness...* with other cities throughout the world, internationalism, job growth and training, economic opportunity for all residents;  
*education...* youth, education, preparing the leaders to lead, ensuring our future by ensuring theirs;  
*community building...* self-defined "urban villages", the idea of belonging to a community, personal responsibility;  
*urban and natural resources...* space and place, physical elements blending with the natural environment, a livable community;  
*celebrating diversity...* through public art, cultural and educational training, and through equal access for all.

**Imagine Houston** does not stop here. These ten reports form the foundation for the work of the **Imagine Houston** Steering Committee in creating a vision plan for Houston. The Steering Committee consists of members appointed by Mayor Lanier, a representative of each Council Member and a representative from each focus



group. The Committee recognizes the importance of continued public dialogue. When complete in Spring 1995, this Plan should serve for the next 20 to 30 years as the basis for actions by every segment of our community including individuals and public and private-sector organizations.

*Imagine Houston* is an extraordinary exercise in grass roots democracy. The committed citizens who participated have given our community insightful ideas to lead Houston into the next century. We are grateful for their efforts. We are hopeful about our future.

# Preface

---



# Section 1: Introduction

---

## ***Vision***

*The Houston community unites to create a lifelong learning environment in which each person develops his or her unique gifts and talents to achieve his or her full potential, and participates as a responsible person in the community. We build this environment with collaborative efforts of the entire community, its educational resources, global information networks, and new learning technologies.*

## **Executive Summary**

As our society and economy become increasingly dependent on knowledge as a resource, and urban problems such as crime and poverty continue to grow, we must make education our top priority. In doing so, the Learning for Life focus group would like Houstonians to view education as a lifelong learning process that begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. This process includes three distinct phases: the early years, the school years, and the rest of our lives. Several themes and implementation strategies are important at all levels. We believe these components of the education process, summarized below, will inspire Houstonians to create an environment where learning is expected

and encouraged at all levels and in which the entire community participates.

## **General Themes**

As the focus group discussed education from birth to death, we realized that several issues influence all phases of the learning process. We believe the most important of these is that the entire Houston community must participate in supporting and improving the educational process. To achieve this, Houstonians must make a long term commitment to education by donating time and resources to the community. The community must ensure that all people, young and old, have the basic necessities: food, clothing, and shelter. Without these, learning will not be a priority. We must provide support and encouragement to those who do not have families or whose families cannot afford the time to support one another. Therefore, community facilities should be available for educational and recreational pursuits after normal working/school hours. After identifying these common themes, we were able to focus on the following stages of lifelong learning.

### **The Early Years**

The early years begin at or before birth. These years are an essential part of the educational process; at this stage, parents instill in their children a desire to learn. This phase is based on responsible parenthood: providing prenatal care; attending parenting classes; providing quality child care; instilling a commitment to widely shared community values; and challenging young children to learn. All children

---

should be ready to learn when they enter the school years.

### **The School Years**

The school years (K-12, universities, community colleges and technical schools) provide training not only in the traditional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but in critical skills such as processing, sharing and communicating information. Students must learn skills necessary to secure a job and participate responsibly in the community. Students should be challenged academically and should be encouraged to have high expectations for their future. This includes attending universities, community colleges and technical schools and developing a career of their choosing. To achieve this, learning institutions, along with the community, must continually evaluate and redesign curriculums. Mentors are needed to give guidance and support to all at-risk students. Also, higher learning institutions should inform all students about college opportunities before they leave elementary school.

### **The Rest of Our Lives**

While the first two stages target children, youth and young adults, the rest of our lives focuses on people who are beyond the school years. Adult education and enrichment focuses on people who want to become literate, complete GED requirements, update their job skills, change career paths, become volunteers in their communities, or learn for the pure joy of learning. One of our most important goals is to give adults the chance to change their lives by learning to read. Special effort is needed to reach adults who are ashamed to admit they

can't read but are willing to participate in nontraditional literacy programs. Job training/re-training programs are also very important. We must examine current employment needs as well as future trends and teach skills that will be useful in the workplace. Last, but not least, opportunities for continuing education should be promoted throughout the community. As with all educational programs, recreational learning must be both accessible and affordable to all.

### **Technology**

Technology affords us the opportunity to greatly improve the way we educate at all levels. Not only can we exchange information more easily using current technology, but we can also make learning a more exciting and enjoyable experience for Houstonians of all ages by giving access to interactive multimedia to children and adults during and after school and working hours. Technology offers interactive learning at an individual pace. To take full advantage of these benefits, technology must be available to all. We can do this by improving coordination among service providers, the business community, volunteers, and community organizations. Furthermore, Houstonians will be living in a technological age and must become proficient in utilizing technology.

### **Implementation**

Achievement of these goals can best be done through local neighborhood initiatives and will require broad family, business and community participation. To prevent duplication of current efforts and programs, communication among

---

service providers must be improved. Electronic “highways” such as the Houston Education Resource Network (HERN) and others like it should be used to inventory and link community resources with local needs in order to promote cooperation, reduce duplication and encourage innovation.

Collaborative community efforts built around high school feeder systems can effectively address local needs. This concept is being advanced by HISD and community organizations. Additional volunteers must be recruited from churches, senior centers, businesses, educational institutions, and through the media. Also, better use of existing funds, finding new sources of funding, and distributing resources to non-traditional (underground) programs will be necessary. On the whole, implementation requires commitment from the entire community, not just teachers and parents.

### **Conclusion**

Education is the base from which we grow and interact with one another. Through all types of education, we learn to meet our basic needs, care for each other, respect our differences, support ourselves and our families. In other words, education is at the core of many issues that we face today, and we will face in the future: health, public safety, economy, and quality of life. Only by having a community that places a high priority on education and has the commitment and will to succeed can we achieve our vision for Houston.

### **Background**

The *Learning for Life* Focus Group was a result of the March 26, 1994, Kick-Off Forum. The Forum participants wanted to explore youth education. Lifelong learning was a concern and overriding theme derived from the ideas expressed at the larger forum.

After choosing Landon Short as the Steering Committee representative and John Cryer as the alternate, the focus group members decided to use the National Goals 2000 program as a guide to begin their work. The National Goals 2000 program consists of six national education goals developed by the nation’s 50 governors during the Bush administration; two more goals were added by the Clinton administration. The group identified priorities and formed subcommittees around these topics.

Subcommittee #1 was Ready to Learn and dealt mainly with early childhood issues. The vision statement for subcommittee number #1 says, “*Every child in Houston will have basic developmental needs met physically, socially, cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually within the community through partnerships among families, businesses, education and neighborhood resources.*”

Subcommittee #2 dealt with school age children and young adults with the added charge of preparing children to enter the workforce. The vision statement for Subcommittee #2 declares, “*The Houston community unites to provide an environment that encourages and supports lifelong*

---

*learning and develops educated, responsible citizens.”*

Subcommittee #3 dealt with adult literacy and continuing education. The vision statement for Subcommittee #3 says, *“To provide the opportunity for all people of diverse cultures in the Houston community to develop their full potential through learning for life.”*

Lastly, Subcommittee #4 dealt with technology and chose as their vision statement, *“Because the business of the future is knowledge, the evolving learning system will depend on technology to empower individuals to think, learn, and act with intelligence; to develop self-worth; and to conduct themselves with integrity and concern for others. Learner-based multimedia with access to global information networks will be accessible to all.”*

In August, the Focus Group presented a combined vision statement, goals, and the progress of the group to the Steering Committee. From this point, the group developed action plans for the goals. As one of the focus group members so aptly stated, “Now we get to do the fun stuff.”

During the action plan phase, some major concerns of the focus group included the lack of an inventory of existing resources and initiatives in Houston; the problem of illiteracy in Houston; the lack of funding and resources for the nontraditional forms of education; the issue of technology and interactive multimedia use in schools; teen recreation; and the question of “How do we prepare children to

become ready to learn?” These concerns were addressed in the actions that the subcommittees developed. Finally, the action plans in this report contain examples of a few of the resources and initiatives in Houston.

The group met the fourth Tuesday of each month in addition to interim meetings as decided by the group. The group consisted of about 25-30 people attending meetings with a core group of 10-15 persons. The group members were virtually unanimous in wanting to continue to participate in implementing their vision.

### **Priority Statement**

The Learning for Life focus group voted to use the must, should, could method of prioritizing the action plans. The goals and action plans are not in any prioritized order.

## Section 2: Goals and Actions

---

### *General Themes*

---

#### **Goal 1:**

*Communities pool resources to support the education of children, teenagers and their families.*

#### **Action 1.1: Make community facilities available for educational and recreational activities.**

Make community facilities such as school buildings, neighborhood learning centers, and libraries available to children and families for educational and recreational activities.

**Responsible party:** Neighborhood learning centers, parents, community facilities, community associations, school districts, principals, volunteers and school boards.

**Discussion:** This action requires a policy change and is already being done in some places. However, public facilities should, for example, have a standard approval sheet for the use of facilities explaining procedures and fees, if any. The community needs to be aware of these facilities.

**Funding:** User fees to pay for operation and maintenance of facilities or donation of space whenever possible.

**Priority:** Must

#### **Action 1.2: Foster effective, collaborative community efforts**

**in every high school feeder system.**

**Responsible party:** HISD, other school districts, Communities in Schools, Junior Achievement, TechPrep, Texas Scholars, Houston Business Promise, Ready to Learn, I Have a Dream, Teach for America, alternative schools, volunteers, cultural arts programs, health and human service agencies, businesses and corporations. Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts could be linked to feeder systems to tap into their experience, AmeriCorps (four in Houston) Vista projects could be expanded.

**Discussion:** A good example of a feeder system is the Tenneco and Jeff Davis project. Leadership should be represented in each feeder system.

**Priority:** Must

#### **Action 1.3: Establish training programs to develop community leaders.**

**Responsible party:** Leadership Houston Diversity Conference, school districts (by incorporating into curriculum), businesses (by establishing co-ops with schools), Community Development Corporations.

**Discussion:** A model is needed and the plan will be different for each neighborhood/ community. People do not know how the “system” works. Leaders in the community should be identified and contacted to gain commitment. Communities decide to act by supporting and

---

encouraging youth. The question is “Who will do the encouraging?” Empower the people and go into the community on a one-on-one basis. Where is the link?

Churches, ministers  
City Mayor (or appointee to coordinate)  
PTO  
Small town meetings  
School principals-Be careful to use principals as key individuals.

We still need the community and parents to act. However, the question is “How can we get the parents to react?” If parents get mad and demand change, then things will happen. Social workers and AmeriCorps volunteer teachers should be in inner city schools.

Make sure the action will include everyone, not just school students.

Community service/leadership should be part of the school curriculum. However, teachers may need additional information or training to include this in the classroom. Co-ops can provide role models and mentors to students.

The principles of the Secretary Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report should be considered.

**Priority:** Must/should

**Action 1.4: Mayor should make education a priority.**

Mayor should make education a priority by expanding the responsibilities of the Office of

the Education Liaison and the Houston READ Commission.

**Responsible party:** Mayor.

**Discussion:** Leadership doesn’t always come from the top, but the leader has a responsibility to provide support for community efforts. The Mayor should expand the education liaison’s responsibilities and hire a child/family advocate. The Planning & Development Department could be coordinator of this effort.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 1.5: Principals and law enforcement agencies should work together.**

**Responsible party:** School districts and law enforcement agencies.

**Discussion:** Programs like Soul Patrol and truancy checks by Harris County constables, like Victor Trevino, aid in bridging the gap between the community and law enforcers. Use well known members of the community as substitutes, hall monitors, mentors, etc. Parents can fulfill these roles also. Businesses should offer incentives to employees to attend school events (as with action plan from other focus group).

**Priority:** Should

**Action 1.6: Develop support for communities that need outside help.**

**Responsible party:** City, businesses, churches, create a steering committee on information infrastructure. Corporations “adopt a community”

---

program. Develop neighborhood councils.

**Discussion:** Communities should take initiative and charge of our their destiny. An example of such a community is the Windsor Village United Methodist Church Power Center. The educational center is working through the support of the community and businesses. Another take charge example is Austin High School students who boycotted the school to get resources. People do not realize the consequences of not sharing, or spreading the wealth.

Use electronic kiosks, connected city-wide through libraries, to provide information about development or change within communities. Revenue from private companies is available to help get technology to those who need it. Media can also be involved in disseminating information.

“Multi-media is one way to solve education needs.” Example of Harvard University.

Currently, all schools do not have the equipment to become connected.

-First step: everyone has local, autonomous machines (PC's).

-Second step: all machines are connected to one another.

Rockwell created a model by helping a school (teachers and students) connect to the information highway.

**Funding:** Form a coalition of local corporations/agencies to help. They

can also help with setting systems up and training teachers and students.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 1.7: Continue efforts of existing organizations.**

Encourage continuation of efforts by organizations such as Coalition for Educational Excellence, Texas Business and Education Coalition and the Greater Houston Partnership's Center for Houston's Future.

**Responsible party:** Need a City-level central contact (possibly add to role of education liaison) for coordination. Coalition for Educational Excellence, Greater Houston Partnership, Texas Center for University and School Partnerships (TCUSP), Houston Networks and other like organizations.

**Discussion:** Encourage leaders to collaborate on a common vision and agenda for their work. Establish steering committees modeled after Imagine Houston process and continue process through focus groups to provide link to community and ensure accountability. Leadership must come from the community.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 1.8: Provide each at-risk child at least one responsible adult mentor.**

**Responsible party:** Families, volunteers, counselors, social workers, corporations, businesses, and churches.

---

**Discussion:** Make sure at-risk youth who are not in the traditional public school system are included. “At-risk” means that they do not get enough attention/guidance at home.

Example of Seabrook--after-hours programs including multimedia, etc. Have social workers (all kinds) in schools because youth need someone who will listen and genuinely likes what they do.

Example of mentoring programs could be college students working side by side with instructors and/or internships. Fiesta stores could be tapped as potential mentors for job training. In some high schools co-op and apprenticeship programs are only chance for students to work with and experience other professions.

Develop a better tutoring/mentor volunteer program between community and businesses. Build family literacy programs.

**Funding:** Annual Citywide Fund campaign, add to funding agenda of City.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 1.9: Emphasize use of networks such as Internet and HERN as a resource guide.**

**Responsible party:** Colleges and universities, school districts, people who agree to work with group, vendors, PAL P.C.

**Discussion:** Houston Education Resource Network (HERN) will include lists of educational programs

and organizations, health and human services, cultural arts, etc. HERN will be an inventory/database for education programs. There should be a bulletin board process in place with low cost accessible information.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 1.10: Provide more student teachers in schools and apply this concept to career exploration.**

**Responsible party:** Colleges, universities, and school districts.

**Discussion:** Use a team approach--child, parent and school. Teachers are starting school earlier to ensure conference hours on Fridays for parents to come in to discuss child’s progress (example of 1 hour per family at Love Elementary). How can parents help children to learn? Learning to learn strategy-provide workshops, programs throughout community. However, the problem is who will do it?

**Priority:** Should/could

**Action 1.11: Inform the public on available programs.**

Distribute pamphlets, cards or use billboards in public places to inform the public on available programs.

**Responsible party:** *Imagine* Houston participants, community organizations, neighborhood associations.

**Discussion:** Joint effort with other focus groups to apply throughout Imagine Houston program. Examples

---

of marketing: Ninfas *Gracias* billboards and Mexico City’s billboards that stress the importance of the family. Effective marketing works through constant repetition. Materials need to be eye-catching and come from everywhere, even school classrooms. We have to keep in mind that the printed media only reaches a certain group.

**Priority:** Must/ should

## ***Goal 2:***

*The physical, intellectual and emotional needs of children, youth and adults are met.*

### **Action 2.1: Expand and promote programs that provide basic healthcare for children.**

Expand and promote programs that provide basic healthcare (including prenatal care) needed for children to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies and to maintain the mental alertness to be prepared to learn.

**Responsible party:** Healthy Start Program (D. Davilia is submitting legislation to Texas Legislature), Healthy Families Houston, Department of Health, medical centers.

**Discussion:** Educate parents on the importance of vaccinations.

Cannot force parents to get vaccinations because some parents fear hurting their children. When we say “healthy”, we are not only referring to vaccinations and routine check-ups, but also basic nutrition,

personal grooming, and proper clothing.

**Priority:** Must

### **Action 2.2: Distribute food to families at non-traditional locations.**

Food should be distributed to hungry children and families at non-traditional locations such as apartment complexes and recreation centers.

**Responsible party:** City Council, Mayor, churches, charities and supermarkets.

**Discussion:** Perhaps such programs could be offered as a “carrot” to draw parents and children to places where information is available. An example would be apartment complexes that offer food for hungry children. Diet is very important and many children who receive school lunches don’t eat them because they don’t like the food (variety, taste, preparation, etc.). Also, many school lunches are unhealthy and loaded with fat.

**Priority:** Must

### **Action 2.3: Social workers and counselors (psychologists) should be available to students.**

Social workers and counselors (psychologists) should be available to handle emotional problems. These services should be provided through health and human services agencies, not the schools.

**Responsible party:** Public schools, school superintendents, and Department of Health.

---

**Discussion:** Services should be provided on campus or near campus. Implement Practical Parenting Education (PPE) and use resource and referral parenting counseling phone lines. This will free teachers to teach. School superintendent should authorize counselors with Master of Science in Social Work degrees at school sites to counsel with families as needed and act as a liaison with homes. Many organizations and programs are in place that offer these kinds of services. The question is, “How can we access them?” Need remote network to gain access to get answers to small health problems.

**Priority:** Must

---

### ***Goal 3:***

*The media are responsible and active participants in the education process.*

#### **Action 3.1: Encourage TV stations to include more educational topics.**

Encourage TV stations to include more educational topics in their programming, and to downplay violence by conducting a letter writing campaign.

**Responsible party:** Students, parents and businesses in the community. Coalition for Educational Excellence, Greater Houston Partnership, parenting organizations like Avance Family Support and Education, Healthy Families Houston, Family Connection, Houston Area Association for Education of Young

Children, churches and Houston Federation of Teachers.

**Discussion:** Crime is cheap to report. How can we, the community, encourage TV stations to include more educational topics in programming and newscasts? They need to put the same energy that goes into crime reporting/drama into educational programming. Letter writing campaigns by children, families, and responsible agencies may help. Some communities in the Midwest have successfully pressured local stations to have “family friendly” newscasts that downplay violence. Family friendly articles in the newspapers (what’s working in other families?), and investigative reporting on education are steps in the right direction.

**Priority:** Must/should

#### **Action 3.2: Use entertainment to get “the message out.”**

**Responsible party:** Region IV Education Service Center (through infomercials), volunteer groups.

**Discussion:** Real life issues can be presented in school plays, comedies, TV shows, radio etc. Also, some talk show topics can be educational.

**Priority:** Should/could

#### **Action 3.3: Use television as an educational tool in schools.**

**Responsible party:** Public television, major networks, businesses, and school districts.

---

**Discussion:** Examples of television being used as an educational tool include Sharpstown High School where television is used to make announcements. Cornell University offers a free software program that allows users to communicate via two-way video. We must give the same energy to school age children and recognize that Sesame Street and Head Start are not a panacea.

**Priority:** Must/could

**Action 3.4: Hold a retreat for journalism schools and reporters to encourage positive reporting.**

Hold a retreat for journalism schools and reporters to produce a format that looks for exciting and relevant things about the community.

**Responsible party:** Universities, volunteer catalysts, educators

**Discussion:** We need to address reform in journalism schools.

**Priority:** Could

**Action 3.5: The City of Houston should give commendations to stations who provide family-oriented programming.**

**Responsible party:** Mayor's Education Liaison, State Commission on Children and Youth (contact Council Member Gracie Saenz), TV stations, Children at Risk, City Council and Mayor.

**Discussion:** How would TV stations react? Perhaps stations should be threatened with the loss of a license

for not showing family-oriented programs. Would that be a violation of free speech? Also, this is a moral issue. Families must decide what "family friendly programming" is. We need to change viewer's habits, not the media.

**Priority:** Should

## *Early Years*

---

### *Goal 4:*

*Parents are responsible and caring.*

**Action 4.1: Encourage current programs to take advantage of HISD's subscription to State funded parenting programs.**

Encourage current programs/agencies to take advantage of HISD's subscription to State funded parenting programs and to advocating teaching teens to wait until they are older to have children.

**Responsible party:** HISD, Texas State Board of Education, Parent/Teacher organizations, Practical Parenting Education, Teen Parent Initiatives (Department of Human Services, Neighborhood Centers, etc.), Region IV remote educators.

**Discussion:** Administrator/Community Liaison of each entity can push this. A major problem with this action is that schools implement the programs individually. These programs are successful elsewhere but training is required. There should be

---

collaboration among all groups because people don't know enough about the programs.

**Contact:** Jaime De La Isla--HISD

**Priority:** Must

**Action 4.2: Parents read to children (teach kids to love reading and become lifelong readers).**

**Responsible party:** Parents, schools, Houston Public Library Parent Reading Program, Houston READ Commission, adult and family literacy programs such as "Even Start," public TV.

**Discussion:** Need one-on-one sharing and interaction. We need to be realistic because we currently have single parent households that work more than one job. Education has changed; therefore, every school needs to attract every parent. Reading programs need marketing

**Contact:** Is Moritas Houston Public Library Parent Reading Program

**Priority:** Must

**Action 4.3: Make an inventory of current parenting education programs and distribute information about programs.**

**Responsible party:** Mental Health Association has such a list, Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas A&M Extension Agency.

**Discussion:** This inventory can be distributed through these venues:

Occupational (workplace) newsletters,  
E-mail  
Meetings  
Distribution of fliers  
Public service announcements--all channels, corporate funding  
Pocket of material to all new parents--distributed in hospitals

**Priority:** Must

---

**Priority:** Should

**Action 4.4: Parenting classes should be provided.**

Schools, health and human services agencies, and community organizations should provide parenting classes.

**Responsible party:** Child Protective Services, State legislature, school districts, parents as teachers, media and churches.

**Discussion:** Child Protective Services should be involved in educating parents as a preventative measure. Explain the written materials and take a more proactive role rather than reactive.

Train volunteers to explain information to recipients about parenting and services available.

Students should be required to take parenting classes. Currently these courses are electives. Require welfare recipients to go to parenting classes. Also, parenting classes should be taught in middle school.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 4.5: Educate parents on the importance of vaccinations.**

**Responsible party:** Focus groups, steering committee for Houston's information superhighway, Region IV remote training services, Health Department, media, social service agencies.

**Discussion:** Because we cannot force parents to get vaccinations, we must teach them that vaccinations are necessary and safe.

---

**Action 4.6: Quality, affordable childcare should be available to all, including quality recreation, education programs.**

**Responsible party:** Businesses, corporations, schools, apartment complexes, neighborhood associations, churches, recreation centers.

**Discussion:** Childcare has become a public issue. Therefore, such services should be provided through a collaboration of public and private entities. For example, the Neighborhood Center Program matches senior citizen volunteers with childcare facilities.

**Funding:** Childcare should be based on affordability. Those who can afford to pay will, and those who cannot pay will receive subsidies. Perhaps childcare services should be funded through taxes or fees based on income sliding scale. Also, school districts should search for State funds that may be available for daycare in schools. Perhaps daycare funding can be similar to State funding for schools (dollars per student).

**Priority:** Must

**Action 4.7: Solicit matching funds for Federal grants for education.**

**Responsible party:** Texas Education Agency, Head Start, Title IV, At-Risk funds, Title I (formerly Chapter I) through the schools, and school districts.

**Discussion:** The State has returned education funds to the Federal government because matching funds were not available. HISD was eligible for some of these funds, however, they decided not to use them because the school system was not prepared to offer programs all day (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.). San Antonio has successfully contributed funds in order to keep Federal dollars in their education system. Anyone can match these funds.

**Priority:** Could

## *The School Years (K-12)*

---

### *Goal 5:*

*Expectations of educational excellence are a priority in the Houston community.*

**Action 5.1: Develop and implement a quality Houston area after school, evening, weekend, holiday, vacation recreation program for teenagers.**

**Responsible party:** City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, YMCA, YWCA and any other organization interfacing with teenagers.

**Discussion:** This program focuses on teenagers because there is a lack of similar programs in the community. More specific examples are given in “A Case for Teen Recreation,” by

---

Ted Weisgal. It must be implemented through a collaboration of community resources, including teenagers. Also, parental (guardian, mentor, etc.) awareness of opportunities and expectations of their kids is very important and their participation will be required.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 5.2: Create an umbrella organization to coordinate ongoing programs.**

Create an umbrella organization to coordinate ongoing programs such as scouting, teen sports, Communities in Schools, I Have A Dream, Act-So, etc.

**Responsible party:** City, HISD, business and community leaders, public and private schools, religious organizations and churches. Any organization and institution interfacing with teenagers.

**Discussion:** An organization is needed to bring together community groups with a common goal (to provide education and recreation opportunities for teens) to coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 5.3: School districts will create a policy that sets maximum enrollment in schools.**

**Responsible party:** School Districts, Texas Education Agency.

**Discussion:** KERR (a small school) is an example. It allows students to work at their own pace.

**Priority:** Must/should

**Action 5.4: Develop effective site-based decision making programs at schools.**

**Responsible party:** School districts, principals, teachers, TechPrep, Techforce 2000, electronic infrastructure.

**Discussion:** Site-based decision making is already in place at HISD; however, some changes are needed. The purpose of site-based decision making is to let teachers teach kids. Now, some non-teaching responsibilities fall on the teacher (example of teachers cleaning rooms).

**Priority:** Must

**Action 5.5: School districts will provide training for teachers.**

School districts will provide training for teachers for continued improvement and development of their skills to instruct, motivate and prepare students for the future.

**Responsible party:** School districts, knowledgeable volunteers, role models.

**Discussion:** Include in school district budgets the cost of one hour of continuing education per week for all teachers. The Harris County Department of Education and other professional organizations offer continuing education conferences and seminars. Also, grants are available through schools for professional development.

**Priority:** Must

---

**Action 5.6: School districts will work toward a 90% success rate for the TAAS.**

**Responsible party:** School districts, parents, Communities in Schools(CIS), adopt a school mentoring projects, etc.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 5.7: School districts reevaluate curriculum to ensure that every student exits the school system with marketable skills and/or is college bound.**

**Responsible party:** School districts, school board, site-based decision making committees, State of Texas, parents.

**Discussion:** Review recommended high school graduation requirements. Look at all curriculums (including extracurricular programs) and consider them across all levels. Use resources such as TechPrep, State Board of Education, and Texas Scholars. Also, make programs such as Designing A Curriculum (DACUM) widely known by giving presentations at schools.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 5.8: The community will support input from Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report.**

**Responsible party:** Schools, parents, community organizations, universities, publishers, educators,

and developers of interactive and remote training developers.

**Discussion:** SCANS principles should be integrated into textbooks, subject matter and curriculum for students. Also, parents should be taught SCANS principles.

**Time frame:** This is a long range solution to the problem.

**Priority:** Should

---

**Goal 6:**

*Cultural awareness, appreciation, and respect is encouraged.*

**Action 6.1: All educational curriculums include activities and texts that promote awareness of, appreciation of, and respect for diverse cultures.**

**Responsible party:** Texas Education Agency, school districts, publishers, community and neighborhood education programs.

**Priority:** (Added after prioritization.)

---

## *Higher education*

---

### **Goal 7:**

*Higher education institutions actively reach out to the community.*

#### **Action 7.1: Higher education institutions should collaborate with elementary schools**

Higher education institutions should collaborate with elementary schools to encourage children to dream about going to college and technical institutes.

**Responsible party:** Higher education entities (may consult with coordinating boards, curriculum boards), elementary schools, Texas Scholars, Junior Achievement.

**Discussion:** Studies show that there is a big difference in lifetime earnings of those without a high school degree, those with a high school degree and those with a college diploma. Police, firemen, nurses, etc. go to elementary schools to talk about their jobs, but colleges and universities generally do not recruit young kids. Higher education institutions should reach out to elementary schools. Young kids need to feel comfortable with the idea of higher education. They need to know that anyone can get an advanced degree: Higher education is accessible. Colleges should host informational tours (get the kids on campus). Also, arts and science programs/fairs can be used to attract

kids to higher education. Anything visual will work.

**Priority:** Must/should

---

## **Goal 8:**

*Houston has excellent higher education programs that meet the community's needs.*

### **Action 8.1: Convene a planning group of higher education institutions and the community.**

Convene a planning group of higher education institutions and the community to answer questions about the role of education in Houston's future.

**Responsible party:**

University/college presidents and community leaders.

**Discussion:** A topic that might be discussed by such a group: Some State institutions should be relocated to Houston to be accessible to the community.

**Priority:** Could

### **Action 8.2: Educate students on the advantages of attending technical institutes.**

**Responsible party:** TechPrep, Texas legislature, schools, technical institutes and colleges.

**Discussion:** The public's negative perception of technical institutes needs to be changed. This could be done by building technical institutes into colleges and universities. They would cover areas such as high tech, electronics, and medicine. The University of Houston has a four year technical college program, however, the University is reluctant

to change the program into an institute because of the cost.

**Priority:** Could

### **Action 8.3: Provide a spectrum of opportunities through the education process.**

Provide a spectrum of opportunities from higher education to high school to middle school to elementary so that people have the opportunity to get an education at any point.

**Responsible party:** Universities, technical institutes, community colleges, grassroot organizations, businesses.

**Discussion:** Offer people many choices.

**Priority:** Should

### **Action 8.4: Provide a mechanism to aid in the collaboration of curriculums (articulation) and transfer of credits among schools.**

**Responsible party:** Higher education entities, "umbrella" organization (common interest groups) such as consortium of junior colleges that come together to share ideas.

**Discussion:** As environments change, communities need help adapting to the ongoing process of higher education.

**Priority:** Should/could

## ***The Rest of Our Lives***

---

## **Goal 9:**

---

*All people continually acquire knowledge and skills to enrich their lives and compete in a global economy.*

**Action 9.1: Increase programs and equitable distribution of funding for the functionally illiterate in the Houston community.**

**Responsible party:** All literacy providers, school principals, community/neighborhood organizations and churches.

**Discussion:** Look at underground school systems (those not supported by tax dollars) and ensure equitable funding and supportive transfers from one system to the other.

**Funding:** Money spent on prisons may be better spent on schools and education of students.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 9.2: Access to and equity in funding for activities that aid in transfer from welfare to work.**

Support access to and equity in funding for activities that aid in transfer from welfare to work and school to work with vocational opportunities in careers that are expected to grow.

**Responsible party:** Houston READ Commission, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), Houston Works, businesses, etc.

**Discussion:** School to Work Act does not provide funding for programs to help dropouts. Collaboration among all parts of the community is very important. Perhaps parents should receive free daycare services for their kids in return for their participation in literacy programs.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 9.3: Support all literacy projects in Houston such as AmeriCorps.**

**Responsible party:** Houston READ Commission and all literacy providers.

**Discussion:** Increase access to resources for persons interested in literacy programs.

**Action 9.4: Encourage growth of work-based and workplace literacy programs.**

**Responsible party:** Businesses, JTPA, Houston Works, Houston READ Commission and all literacy providers.

**Priority:** (Added after prioritization.)

**Action 9.5: Use TV as a medium to help solve illiteracy problems and promote awareness of the problem that faces Houston.**

**Responsible party:** Houston READ Commission, literacy providers, media, and corporations.

---

**Discussion:** Everyone has a TV that can be used as an information source.

**Funding:** Approach TV stations for public service announcements.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 9.6: Encourage and support programs that promote, enrich and enhance lifelong learning.**

**Responsible party:** Media, public/private learning entities such as Leisure Learning Unlimited Inc. and universities.

**Discussion:** All adults should be encouraged to continue their education (including recreation, arts, etc.) and be able to retrain for work in different industries. Education is a process that makes us whole, as an individual, through continuous lifelong learning.

**Priority:** (Added after prioritization.)

## *Technology*

### *Goal 10:*

*Everyone has access to tools needed to explore information needs, process it, and present it to others.*

**Action 10.1: Provide more computer usage throughout entire school process, currently, nothing is continuous.**

**Responsible party:** School, community, neighborhood education programs, colleges, universities, and businesses.

**Discussion:** Many students learn to use computers in elementary schools, but do not continue in middle and high school. This is largely due to the lack of equipment at the higher level schools. Therefore, continuity of computer usage should occur throughout feeder systems.

**Funding:** Search for computer grants for technical institutes, businesses, and schools.

**Priority:** Must

**Action 10.2: Businesses donate computers and pay for hookups in school districts and for other educational programs.**

**Responsible party:** Businesses, foundations, principals, school districts, parents, skilled facilitators, large computer associations.

**Time frame:** One year.

**Funding:** The initial process of finding matching grants through organizations like Junior Achievement and the Greater Houston Partnership should be facilitated by the City.

**Priority:** Should

**Action 10.3: Develop and improve electronic networks to help identify and match community resources with schools.**

---

**Responsible party:** Houston Education Resource Network (HERN), other electronic networks, the library system, Greater Houston Partnership, school districts.

**Funding:** Make sure Houston gets its fair share of State and Federal money for technology. We can impact State legislation through *Imagine* Houston.

**Priority:** Should



## Section 3: Appendices

---

