

***Explaining WWHS Reconstitution***  
***By Emily Martin***

Reconstitution is a frightening word to teachers and administrators in Texas schools. According to Texas law, a school that has been rated as “academically unacceptable” (AU) for two consecutive years shall be reconstituted. That means the school is assigned a campus intervention team to develop and execute a plan for improvement, including reassessment of teachers to decide which are retained, reassigned, or terminated.

Woodrow Wilson High School is to be reconstituted because it was rated AU, academically unacceptable, by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for two consecutive years. Woodrow was rated AU in 2006 because of math scores on the TAKS. In 2007, it was again rated academically unacceptable because of science scores.

The ratings are applied to the entire group of students who took the test as well as to significant sub-groups. Sub-groups are based on ethnicity and economic disadvantage. A sub-group must comprise at least 10 percent of the total students to be measured. In 2006 there were three sub-groups that did not make the mark in math, that is, 45 percent passing the TAKS. However, all three groups improved their math scores in 2007, and only one did not exceed the 45 percent mark. In science, every group met the standard 40 percent passing rate in 2006, but in 2007, one group did not. Significantly, the group that missed was very small, only 44 students in total, just barely qualifying in size as a measurable subgroup.

As part of reconstitution, the historical performance data of teachers in core subjects—math, science, English/language arts, and social studies—are reviewed by both the district (DISD) and the school. The assessment is based on a cluster of performance data, including TAKS scores, end-of-semester ACP exam performance, and classroom effectiveness index (CEI). Those teachers who are agreed to have the lowest performance measurements over a number of years are subject to reassignment or termination.

Texas law directs that a principal of a reconstituted school is to be reassigned. Although it is possible that Principal Ruth Vail could be reassigned, the district can and does grant waivers, and the total picture for Woodrow seems to outweigh the AU designation. For example, in October 2007 TAKS scores for reading, social studies, and math, and science, out of 21 measurements (i.e., total group and four sub-groups for each of four subject areas, plus one state-developed alternative assessment for special education students), only *one* measurement was insufficient.

To address the problem areas of math and science, Woodrow has hired several additional math and science teachers and upgraded technology in classrooms. Master teachers routinely work with their departments to coach teachers toward higher classroom effectiveness, and free tutoring is available for math and science students. The math improvements went in after the 2006 scores, and every single student subgroup as well as the total group improved their scores the next year. Science score improvement is certain to follow.

Moreover, Woodrow is doing very well in reading and social studies. In both these TAKS tests, every student group exceeded the passing rate in 2007, and the majority of the groups showed significant improvement over 2006.

Furthermore, Woodrow meets the federal No Child Left Behind criteria of adequate yearly progress, or AYP. Just three years ago, Woodrow had four sub-groups that were not meeting the federal AYP standards in both math and reading. Today, all the groups are AYP.

In short, there are specific areas at Woodrow that need attention and are being addressed, yet the composite picture is one of genuine progress and achievement.

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