

Repurpose.

It started off as just a word in a headline in the Austin American Statesman this morning that caught my attention. Of course, I went to find out if it even exists - and once again, found that no, in the Oxford English dictionary, it doesn't. But wait - it does appear in the American Heritage dictionary, so I guess all is not lost. As the British might say, "those colonials have killed the language again"!

After the initial amusement, I went on to read the article - a discussion on the "repurposing" (let's make a verb like "Googling"!) of Johnston High School in Austin.

A quick piece of background would probably help. Johnston High School was closed this spring because of low performance. The school was not at an acceptable level on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (affectionately known as the TAKS test) and had a high dropout rate.

But here's where things get a tad humorous - in a sad way. What's the solution to this dilemma? Close the school. Yes, close the school. Or at least that's what the state has declared.

Now, maybe it's just me, and maybe it's just my upbringing in a totally different educational system, but I still don't see how closing a school (the home of education), will actually HELP a student. Maybe that's an oversight on my part, but the absence of a school certainly can't make life any better.

Today's article describes the "repurposing" of Johnston High School. So here's what is going to be done. Johnston will re-open under a new name with a new principal. Students will be solicited to enroll at the school. The state law says that 50% of former Johnston students must be re-assigned to a new school ... which, amazingly enough, now exists with a shiny new name. Who will re-apply? I have no doubt that it will be students that would naturally be in the neighbourhood locale of Johnston in the first place! Isn't that the reason behind having multiple high schools in various geographic regions?

## Repurpose? | Allan Besselink

Written by Allan Besselink  
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Better yet, they now want to open TWO schools - "possibly a technology-centered high school and a separate high school that allows students to earn college credits". I think I've missed something here. They haven't been able to get the TAKS scores up and continue to have a high dropout rate, but we're going to address it with a technology- and college-focused curriculum?

Wait, it gets better.

State law mandates that 75% of Johnston teachers must be re-assigned to other schools. But state Education Commissioner Robert Scott has told the school district that he will "allow school leaders to make exceptions for particularly successful teachers". Oh, and we're giving them a pay raise too.

Am I the only one that sees the irony in all of this?

Either I have become a cynic, or I need to repurpose my thought process.