

# TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY

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News from the Texas Education Agency

## SB 6

# Textbook funding and adoption process gets overhauled

Texas lawmakers made substantial changes to the Texas textbook adoption process, including creating a per-student instructional materials allotment and eliminating the conforming and non-conforming materials list.

The changes, which are effective immediately, are contained in [Senate Bill 6](#), which was approved during the June special session.

While the new law retains the State Board of Education's review and adoption process, the board is now required to determine and report the percentage of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) covered within the submitted material. Instructional materials will no longer be placed on conforming and non-conforming lists based on the percentage of TEKS covered.

Reflecting the growing availability of electronic material, SB 6 changed all references to "textbooks" in the Texas Education Code to "instructional materials." It also requires all samples provided for review to be in an electronic format only, except for prekindergarten systems.

To ensure funding for instructional materials, even during tight budget times, the bill establishes an Instructional Materials Fund equal to 50 percent of the distribution of the Permanent School Fund (PSF). However, during the 2012-2013 biennium, the level will be set at 40 percent of the distribution of the PSF.

It then creates a per-student instructional materials allotment (IMA) and allows for adjustments for high enrollment growth. This funding allotment will be used for the purchase of instructional materials and technology, beginning Aug. 8. The previously existing technology allotment was abolished under this legislation.

Funds received through the new IMA can be used to purchase:

- Instructional materials from the SBOE list;
- Instructional materials from the commissioner's list;

- Instructional materials that are not on the SBOE list;
- Consumable materials;
- Supplemental instructional materials;
- State-developed open-source instructional materials;
- Technology equipment;
- Training for educators who are directly involved in student learning in the appropriate use of instructional materials and technological equipment;
- Salaries of employees providing technical support for technological equipment.

Materials from the board or commissioner's list will still be ordered through the Educational Materials System (EMAT), which has been revised to reflect the new changes.

Any unspent funds in a district's allotment account may be carried over to the next biennium.

All these changes to the funding system will allow the state and districts to know how much money is available for the purchase of instructional materials and other approved expenditures before an order is placed. Under the previous system, materials were adopted before

the legislature had an opportunity to determine how much funding would be available.

The law also requires districts to prioritize their instructional material purchases to address assessment and accountability requirements. The highest priority must be given to foundation curriculum subjects, which have had substantial TEKS revisions and are tied to state tests.

Under this law, districts may sell or dispose of instructional materials that are out-of-adoption or, after notifying the commissioner, sell or dispose of materials that are still in adoption but are no longer needed. However, materials for the blind and visually handicapped remain the property of the state and should be returned to the redistribution center when no longer in use.

*See Supplemental Science story, page 3.*



## TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

# Revised technology applications curriculum approved

The State Board of Education gave final approval to revised curriculum standards for six additional high school technology applications courses that include Fundamentals of Computer Science; Computer Science I, II, III; Discrete Mathematics; and Web Game Development.

The board previously approved updates to the technology applications Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for kindergarten through eighth grade, as well as 13 high school courses at its April meeting, but delayed adopting standards for six high school courses so they could consider input received during the public comment period.

With approval of these six courses, the number of high school level technology applications courses increases from the **current eight** to a total of 19.

To provide additional flexibility for school districts, the board also adjusted the amount of credit that can be awarded for the Fundamentals of Computer Science course, allowing one-half to one credit for successful completion of either a semester-long or year-long course.

All of the technology applications TEKS are organized around six strands: creativity and innovation; communications and collaboration; research and information fluency; critical thinking, problem solving and decision making; digital citizenship; and technology operations and concepts.

The new curriculum standards will be implemented in the 2012-2013 school year. They will replace standards that have been in use in Texas classrooms since 1998.

The complete list of high school courses for which new curriculum standards were approved are:

- Computer Science I (one-half to one credit)
- Computer Science II (one credit)
- Computer Science III (one credit)
- Digital Art and Animation (one credit)
- Digital Communications in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (one credit)
- Digital Design and Media Production (one credit)
- Digital Forensics (one-half to one credit)
- Digital Video and Audio Design (one credit)
- Discrete Mathematics (one-half to one credit)
- Fundamentals of Computer Science (one-half to one credit)
- Game Programming and Design (one-half to one credit)
- Independent Study in Technology Applications (one-half to one credit)
- Independent Study in Evolving/Emerging Technologies (one-half to one credit)
- Mobile Application Development (one-half to one credit)
- Robotics Programming and Design (one-half to one credit)
- Web Communications (one-half credit)
- Web Design (one credit)
- Web Game Development (one credit)
- 3-D Modeling and Animation (one credit)

More information about the curriculum standards update is available at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148&menu\\_id=720&menu\\_id2=785](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148&menu_id=720&menu_id2=785).

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

# Gov. Perry appoints Cargill as chair of State Board of Education

Gov. Rick Perry on July 1 appointed Barbara Cargill, R-The



Woodlands, as the new chair of the State Board of Education.

Cargill, a science educator, will serve in this leadership role through Feb. 1, 2013. She replaces Gail Lowe, R-Lampasas, whose term as chair ended when the Senate did not act to confirm her.

Cargill is founder and director of Wonders of the Woodlands (WOW) Science

Camp. A former teacher in the Garland and Hurst-Eules-Bedford school districts, Cargill received a bachelor's degree from Baylor University and a master's degree in science education from Texas Woman's University.

"I am very honored to have been appointed chair of the board by Gov. Perry," she said in opening remarks at the July board meeting. "I certainly appreciate his support and his confidence in me. I firmly believe in the work this board does and in the positive way we can influence the teaching and learning that takes place in the classrooms."

She added, "I will lead this board with fairness and respect just as my wonderful predecessor did."



## NEW CONTENT

## Project Share adds astronomy content from UT's McDonald Observatory

Project Share, the Texas Education Agency's online learning community, has expanded to include news from the galaxies. StarDate, the public education and outreach arm of The University of Texas McDonald Observatory, in June agreed to contribute video, podcasts, scripts and photos of astronomy and space exploration to Project Share.

StarDate's information supplements the project's existing content repository, which includes 150 years of articles from The New York Times Knowledge Network, as well as material from Texas Education on iTunes U and the PBS Digital Learning Library.

"We're glad to be a part of the New York Times Knowledge Network," said Sandra Preston, assistant director for education and outreach at the McDonald Observatory. "We began broadcasting StarDate 34 years ago to fulfill one of our core missions, improving science literacy. Now the *New York Times* and the Texas Education Agency are helping us bring that content to Texas teachers in a new and exciting way. We know Texas teachers will find lots of creative ways to use our material in their classrooms."



*A nearly full Moon shines at sunset over the dome of the 107-inch Harlan J. Smith Telescope at McDonald Observatory. Photo courtesy of Frank Cianciolo/ McDonald Observatory.*

More than 346,000 Texas educators have access to Project Share since its launch in August 2010. Project Share provides both online professional development for educators and content that they can use in their classrooms.

## INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

## State Board approves supplemental science materials

Texas educators in August can select from 92 online products to cover all new or revised science Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

The supplemental science materials were approved July 22 by the State Board of Education.

Districts may begin ordering this material as of Aug. 8 and, because the material is all electronic, it will be available for use when school opens.

The materials are available for grades 5-8, as well as biology, chemistry, physics and Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC).

The board's action is ground breaking on several fronts. It is the first time that an adoption has been done on such a compressed time schedule, with the final samples of the material arriving in April, being reviewed by educator panels in June, and adopted by the board in July.

While the board has adopted many instructional material products that were online or in some electronic format before, it is the first time an entire adoption has been in an electronic format.

It is also the first time that an adoption has consisted solely of supplemental materials, rather than consisting of comprehensive

textbooks. The board took this unique action in response to the state's budget crisis. The purchase of new comprehensive kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade science materials was estimated to cost \$347 million. But by agreeing to purchase only supplemental materials that contain just the new or revised curriculum standards that were approved by the board in 2009 and buying material only for selected grades and subjects, the price tag dropped to \$60 million. The new materials will be used in conjunction with science textbooks that are already in classrooms.

Educators have nine to 14 different products to choose from at each grade level or subject. The list of [approved materials](#) is available on the Texas Education Agency website.

The products were all approved contingent on the publishers correcting errors identified by the publishers themselves or the educator textbook review panels. On one product in which the publisher disputed that eight passages were errors, the board directed the commissioner of education to work with the publisher to find mutually acceptable language for the passage.

The board also adopted new Career and Technical Education instructional materials under the [Midcycle 2011 Proclamation](#).





# Bill Summaries from the 2011 Legislative Session

More than 700 education-related bills were filed during the 2011 legislative session, but the looming budget deficit kept the conversation centered around school finance and cuts. By the end of the First Called Session, approximately 100 education-related bills were left standing. The following bills were approved by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature during either the regular or special session and have now become law. Most have an effective date of Sept. 1, 2011. Links to the full bill text are provided. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but a sampling of bills we felt would be of interest to a variety of people involved in education. Some of the bills directly impact school districts, while others are directives for the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education. For more detailed descriptions of each bill, go to the [Texas Legislature Online](#).

BILL	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#">HB 1</a>	Pitts/Ogden	Appropriations bill for the 2012-2013 biennium.
<a href="#">HB 4</a>	Pitts/Patrick, Diane	Supplemental appropriations. Appropriates \$550 million to the Foundation School Program for 2010-2011 settle-up payments; \$184 million for instructional materials; \$8.75 million each year for supplemental services.
<a href="#">HB 359</a>	Allen/Lucio	Allows a school district to adopt a policy allowing the use of corporal punishment unless a student's parent or guardian provides a written, signed statement each year prohibiting its use.
<a href="#">HB 398/SB 1042</a>	Jackson, Jim/ Hegar	Prohibits any contractor or subcontractor from allowing an employee to provide services at a school if the employee has been convicted of certain felony and misdemeanor offenses.
<a href="#">HB 675</a>	Lucio III/Lucio	Prohibits school districts from using football helmets that are 16 years or older in the district's football program; requires districts to recondition helmets that are 10 years old or older at least once every two years.
<a href="#">HB 692</a>	Farias/ Van de Putte	Mandates that the SBOE allow a student who is unable to participate in physical activity due to disability or illness to substitute one academic elective credit. <i>*See story, page 7.</i>
<a href="#">HB 742</a>	Hunter/Hinojosa	Requires school districts to request food allergy information upon a student's enrollment.
<a href="#">HB 968</a>	Strama/Watson	Requires a school district to place a student in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) if a student receives deferred adjudication for the felony offense of aggravated robbery, or a court finds that the student engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct defined as a felony offense of aggravated robbery.
<a href="#">HB 1224</a>	Reynolds/Huffman	Allows a school district to expel a student who breaches computer security.
<a href="#">HB 1334</a>	Allen/Davis, Wendy	Prohibits a school district from terminating an educator whose certificate or permit has expired if the person has completed the renewal requirements and has submitted the renewal request to State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) prior to the expiration date.
<a href="#">HB 1335</a>	Allen/Van de Putte	Requires that each district develop a process for teachers who instruct students with disabilities in a regular classroom setting to request a review of the student's individualized education plan.
<a href="#">HB 1386</a>	Coleman/Ellis	Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to provide a list of recommended mental health intervention and suicide prevention programs for use in schools.
<a href="#">HB 1610</a>	Gonzales, Larry/ Patrick, Dan	Requires the superintendent to complete an investigation based on reasonable cause that an educator may have been engaged in an improper relationship with a student, despite the educator's resignation before the completion of the investigation.



<b>BILL</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>HB 1682</b>	Weber/Jackson, Mike	Prohibits trustees or school employees from coercing or requiring an employee to make a contribution to a charitable organization or attend a meeting for the purpose of soliciting contributions.
<b>HB 1907</b>	Madden/Whitmire	Requires law enforcement to orally notify the superintendent of a student's arrest within 24 hours or before the next school day, whichever is earlier; requires the superintendent or designee to notify all instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with the student.
<b>HB 1942</b>	Patrick, Diane/Van de Putte	Related to bullying in public schools.
<b>HB 2038</b>	Price/Deuell	New chapter added to the education code relating to the prevention, treatment, and management of concussions affecting students participating in interscholastic athletics.
<b>HB 2135</b>	Hochberg/Patrick, Dan	Students in grades 3-8 who take courses for high school credit must take the End Of Course exam and are not required to also take the grade-level STAAR test for the related content area.
<b>SB 1</b>	Duncan/Shapiro	Fiscal matters bill. <i>*See story, page 8.</i>
<b>SB 6</b>	Shapiro/Eissler	Redefines textbook as "instructional materials" and creates a new system to acquire them. <i>*See story, page 1.</i>
<b>SB 8</b>	Shapiro/Eissler	A comprehensive mandate relief bill, that provides districts with flexibility in the management and operation of public schools in the district; allows districts to furlough teachers, reduce contract termination notifications, and minimum salary requirements. <i>*See story, page 6.</i>
<b>SB 27</b>	Zaffirini/Branch	Requires school boards to adopt and administer a policy for the care of students with food allergies who are at risk of anaphylaxis.
<b>SB 49</b>	Zaffirini/Guillen	Requires a school district to provide written notice to the parents of a student removed to a DAEP regarding the district's obligation to provide the student with an opportunity to complete coursework required for graduation.
<b>SB 226</b>	Nelson/Smith, Todd	Requires school districts to provide individual student performance results on FITNESSGRAM to TEA.
<b>SB 290</b>	Watson/Hernandez, Luna	Requires personal financial literacy instruction to be incorporated into math Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for grades K-8.
<b>SB 652</b>	Hegar/Bonnen	Subjects regional educational service centers (ESCs) to the sunset review process in 2013.
<b>SB 1094</b>	Rodriguez/Strama	Requires the State Board Of Education to develop and deliver high school equivalency exams and provide for online administration of those exams.
<b>SB 1383</b>	Shapiro/Eissler	Requires TEA to establish and implement a new appraisal and professional development system for principals and requires the commissioner to establish school leadership standards.
<b>SB 1618</b>	Seliger/Craddick	Requires school districts to submit reports to TEA in electronic format only. TEA will prescribe the required electronic format.
<b>SB 1620</b>	Duncan/Aycock	Requires the SBOE to establish a process to review Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) courses that may be approved to satisfy the fourth year of math and science requirements for the Recommended High School Program.
<b>SB 1788</b>	Patrick, Dan/Huberty	Requires TEA to develop and post on the agency's website a model form for an individualized education program (IEP).



**SB 8 AND TEACHER-RELATED BILLS****Substantial changes to laws dealing with teacher contracts, salaries**

Texas legislators made substantial changes to laws governing educator contracts and pay this year.

While several bills passed and will go into law Sept. 1, the greatest number of changes to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code occurred with the passage of SB 8 in the June special session.

SB 8 authored by Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, provides more flexibility for school districts when dealing with financial exigencies, teacher contracts and salaries.

SB 8 allows districts to furlough employees for up to six non-instructional days and to reduce those employees' salaries proportionately each year that the district's state and local funding per student is reduced below the 2010-11 funding levels.

A district that implements furlough days must use the following process:

- include professional staff in developing a plan;
- hold a public meeting during which staff and the public must be allowed to comment on the plan.

During the public meeting, the local board must:

- present all options that were considered in managing the district's funds;
- present how the plan will help save jobs; and
- provide information about the local option residence home-stead exemption.

The furlough provisions must require that all contract employees be furloughed for the same number of days; salary reductions must be equally distributed over the contract period; work days will not increase and educators may not use paid leave for furlough days. Furloughs will also not affect calculations for teacher retirement.

When implementing a widespread salary reduction plan, the district must also reduce the salary of each district administrator or professional employee by the same percentage as teacher salaries.

Other provisions of the approved bill include:

- Requires the commissioner of education to adopt minimum standards for a district to declare a financial exigency.
- Allows a school board to amend the terms of a superintendent's contract when a financial exigency is declared and a reduction in force is initiated. Allows the superintendent to resign without penalty.
- Reductions of continuing contract employees can be based on performance appraisals instead of seniority.
- Moves the deadline for providing notice of nonrenewal for probationary and term contract employees from 45 days to 10 days before the last day of instruction.
- Provides districts with an option to suspend employees without pay for good cause pending the employee's termination.
- If mid-year terminations, based on financial exigencies, are initiated, local boards have authority to determine if they will

hear cases or if a local hearing examiner will be used.

- Any employee whose certificate is void, may not be employed in any position in a school district that requires a contract under Texas Education Code Chapter 21.
- Before a school district may employ a candidate for an initial teaching certificate as the teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of supervised field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities.
- Requires the commissioner to study the minimum salary schedule and to make recommendations to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature.

Other teacher-related bills that passed during the regular session and were signed by the governor are listed below:

**HB 1334** – effective immediately - provides that a district can't terminate an educator whose certificate has expired if the educator has made application for renewal. The amended TEC provision (§21.0031) applies only to Chapter 21 educator contracts.

**HB 1386** - effective immediately - requires that schools use a licensed professional to provide marriage and family therapy services in schools. SBEC does not license these professionals. This requirement does not apply to persons employed by a district prior to Sept. 1, 2012.

**HB 1610** – effective Sept. 1 - this bill requires that a superintendent complete an investigation based on reasonable cause that an educator may have engaged in misconduct required to be reported to SBEC pursuant to TEC §21.006, despite the educator's resignation before the completion of the investigation. In addition, language was added clarifying the crime of improper relationship between educator and student (Penal Code §21.12).

**SB 54** - effective Sept. 1 - adds new TEC §21.0485 requiring educator preparation program training to obtain a certificate to teach students with visual impairments. This will mean that an educator will not be able to obtain that certification through the certification by examination route.

**SB 866** - effective immediately - would require dyslexia training in university educator preparation programs (alternative certification programs are excluded) and in required educator continuing professional education.

**SB 867** – effective Sept. 1 - requires licensing agencies to make accommodations on licensing exams for persons with dyslexia. The SBEC test contractor already provides these accommodations.





## HB 336

### School board members in metropolitan districts must post campaign finance reports

Effective Sept. 1, metropolitan schools districts will have to post on the Internet the campaign finance reports of members and candidates for the office of school board trustee.

HB 336 by Rep. Marisa Marquez, D-El Paso, would require school districts located either wholly or partly in a city with a population of 500,000 or more, and with a student enrollment of more than 15,000, to post on their external websites the campaign finance reports for school board trustees and candidates for school board positions. The bill also requires posting of specific-purpose committees that support, oppose or assist school board candidates.

These school districts may remove portions of each political contributor's address to show only the city, state, and zip code,

but the removed information must remain available on the reports maintained in the school districts' offices.

The campaign finance reports must be posted online no later than the fifth business day after the date the report is filed with the school district.

While the Texas Ethics Commission reports that the bill's requirements would impact only 16 school districts that meet the criteria, staff at the Texas Education Agency are reviewing city boundary maps and how they relate to local school districts to determine if more districts are affected.

The bill takes effect on Sept. 1, but the posting provisions apply only to the posting of campaign finance reports that are required to be filed on or after Jan. 1, 2012.

## HB 359

### Parents can prohibit the use of corporal punishment with written statement

Efforts to ban all use of corporal punishment in schools failed during the recent legislative session but a bill that did pass gives parents more say over punishment for their child.

Parents can now prohibit educators from using corporal punishment if they provide a written statement.

Under House Bill 359, by Rep. Alma A. Allen, D-Houston, parents can provide a written signed statement each school year to their local school district prohibiting the use of corporal punishment as a discipline for their student.

The policy applies to any district that has a local policy establishing corporal punishment as a permitted method of student

discipline.

The parent or guardian of the student may also revoke the permission in writing at any time during the school year.

The bill provides exceptions from certain provisions of Chapter 37 if the student was in the sixth or a lower grade level.

Other aspects of the bill include requiring a district to report the use of restraint on non-special education students by law enforcement while on school property or during a school-sponsored event or school-related activity.

Provisions of the bill are effective with the 2011-12 school year.

## HB 692

### Law allows students with physical disability, illness to exempt P.E. requirements

By law, students are required to earn a certain number of credits in certain subjects to graduate from high school. Physical education is one those courses.

Regardless of which graduation plan a student is on, he or she must earn one credit of physical education to satisfy the state's graduation requirements. However, new legislation will give students with a physical disability or illness the ability to opt out of that requirement beginning this fall.

House Bill 692 allows a student who is unable to participate in physical activity due to a disability or illness to substitute one credit in English language arts, math, science, or social studies or one academic elective for the physical education credit required.

The State Board of Education is expected to adopt rules allowing for the substitution at a future meeting. The rules must

provide that the determination regarding a student's ability to participate in physical activity is made by:

- the student's admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee, if the student receives special education services;
- the Section 504 committee established under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if the student is covered by Section 504; or
- a committee established by the school district and that includes persons with appropriate knowledge regarding a student if the student does not receive special education services and is not covered under Section 504.

Prior to HB 692, the SBOE did not have authority to exempt a student from the statutorily required physical education credit for graduation.





SB 1

# School finance Q & A provides some guidance

Public school funding dominated the state’s budget debate during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature. Ultimately by the end of the special session, lawmakers passed a school finance plan that saw a modest increase in overall funding but underfunded existing Foundation School Program formulas by \$4 billion.

This will result in about a 6 percent funding reduction to districts for the 2011-2012 school year. The funding cuts will vary for districts the second year of the biennium.

**Q:** *Many funding plans were proposed during the regular and special legislative session. In a nutshell, what actually passed?*

**A:** There were two formula adjustments adopted that reduced Foundation School Program entitlements by approximately \$2 billion per year. These changes include a regular program adjustment factor (RPAF), which reduces regular program funds, and a reduction to the funds that school districts currently receive for the 2006 tax rate reduction, often called “target revenue”. The RPAF is set at 0.9239 for the 2011–20102 school year and at 0.98 for the 2012–2013 school year. In the 2012-2013 school year, most of the reductions are in the target revenue formula (see below).

**Q:** *How was target revenue changed?*

**A:** Target revenue is associated with the hold harmless funding that school districts receive for tax rate reduction as authorized in Section 42.2516, Education Code. During the first year of the biennium, the 2011–2012 school year, there will be no changes to this funding. During the second year of the biennium, the 2012–2013 school year, the hold harmless funding will be reduced by 7.65 percent.

**Q:** *The first year of the biennium, there is a six percent funding reduction to districts. What happens to funding in the second year?*

**A:** The reduction of funds in the first year is related to the application of the RPAF only. During the second year of the biennium, both the RPAF and the reduction to hold harmless funding will be applied.

**Q:** *A companion bill to the budget referred to as the fiscal matters bill adjusted funding formulas to meet available revenue. What are some of the key items it changed?*

**A:** Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) was a fiscal matters bill that made the changes described above to the FSP formulas. The bill provides that the target revenue system would be repealed effective Sept. 1, 2016, and states the intention of the legislature to reduce funding delivered by that mechanism each year between FY 2014 and FY 2018. SB 1 also authorized changes to the minimum salary

schedule and indirect cost allotments, as well as provisions to allow charter schools to participate in the Permanent School Fund Bond Guarantee program.



**Q:** *Is it true that this is the first time the Foundation School Program hasn’t been fully funded since its creation in the landmark 1949 Gilmer-Aikin legislation?*

**A:** This is the first time that FSP formulas have been permanently reduced since the Gilmer-Aikin Act of 1949. Although enrollment growth was actually funded, it was funded at a lower rate per student than school districts received in the 2010–2011 school year.

**Q:** *A number of competitive grant programs were eliminated or reduced. How much money was lost in that area? Is this reduction on top of the \$4 billion?*

**A:** Approximately \$1.4 billion in general revenue was reduced from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The cuts included cuts to grant programs as well as cuts to regional education service centers and the Windham school district.

**Q:** *Does any money remain for pre-kindergarten programs?*

**A:** Although grant funding for pre-kindergarten programs was not appropriated, the FSP continues to pay for half-day funding for eligible pre-kindergarten students. School districts may also charge parents for tuition for pre-kindergarten programs under certain circumstances. See the Prekindergarten Tuition webpage at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=7515> for more details.

**Q:** *Was the minimum salary schedule changed? If so, how?*

**A:** SB 1 modified the salary factors of the minimum salary schedule to make technical corrections to the factors so that they accurately reflect the existing minimum salary schedule. SB 8 repealed the provision that required school districts to continue paying its employees who are subject to the minimum salary schedule at least as much as they earned in the 2010–2011 school year.

**Q:** *Did legislation that would allow salary reductions and employee furloughs ultimately pass? Will districts need to get TEA approval before they could implement these changes?*

**A:** Senate Bill 8 authorized school districts to furlough employees for up to six days, with proportionate reductions in salary. Districts considering furloughs have to conduct a public hearing, consider other options and adopt a local procedure for implementing any furloughs. Agency approval for a furlough is not required.



## STATE RATINGS

## Strengthened accountability will keep Texas schools on path to excellence

The Texas Education Agency released accountability ratings on July 29 for 8,526 public schools and 1,228 districts. The ratings are based on high school completion rates, dropout rates and passing rates on the state test, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Increasing standards and the elimination of the Texas Projection Measure (TPM) resulted in fewer schools and districts earning an Exemplary accountability rating in 2011.

Although this is the last year of the TAKS-based accountability system, there are a number of changes that have increased its rigor and impacted ratings in preparation for the new rating system that will begin in 2013.

“Each year, we raise the bar to push our schools to keep growing and improving. These changes will help prepare schools and districts for the new accountability system in 2013, which will be based on the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) and are also in response to House Bill 3 passed by the Texas legislature in 2009,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

Changes to the system include:

- The elimination of the TPM, which was used for the 2009 and 2010 ratings.
- The inclusion of additional results for more than 119,000 students receiving special education services who were tested on the TAKS-Modified and TAKS-Alternate assessments.
- The inclusion of a measure for English language learners based on TAKS passing standards and progress on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) reading, an assessment that measures a student’s English reading proficiency and progress.
- Increasing the TAKS indicator standards for the Academically Acceptable rating by five points each for mathematics and science.
- Adding a new commended performance indicator for the Recognized and Exemplary rating categories.
- Increasing the rigor of the annual dropout rate for grades 7-8 from 1.8 percent to 1.6 percent.

The TPM was eliminated as a result of public opposition to the use of the measure, including a unanimous vote against further use of test score projections on House Bill 500.

Because of this change to the system and the others listed above, the number of Exemplary districts fell from 241 in 2010 to 61 this year while the number of campuses earning the highest rating dropped from 2,637 in 2010 to 1,224 today.

Those that earned the highest rating had passing rates on the TAKS of 90 percent or higher, a high school completion rate of 95 percent or better, at least 25 percent of students at the Commended Performance level, at least 60 percent of ELL students meeting progress criteria, and a grade 7-8 annual dropout

rate of 1.6 percent or less.

“Communities should be very proud of these high performing schools and districts that are meeting these rigorous standards,” Scott said.

Conversely, the number of districts with the state’s lowest rating, Academically Unacceptable, increased from 37 last year to 88 in 2011. The number of Academically Unacceptable campuses increased from 104 to 569. Although an increase, only about 7 percent of the districts and campuses in the state received this rating.

The [requirements for each rating category](#) can be found in the 2011 Accountability Manual.

The 2008 ratings were the last ratings issued prior to the two-year inclusion of TPM in 2009 and 2010. When the 2008 and 2011 ratings are compared, an increase is seen in the number of districts and campuses that earned an Exemplary or Recognized rating, even though the ratings criteria has increased significantly during that time. For example, 43 districts were rated Exemplary in 2008 compared to 61 in 2011.

This year, the most common reason that a district or campus earned the lowest rating was due to TAKS mathematics only with the second most common reason being a combination of mathematics and science.

Below are the number of districts or campuses that earned a rating in either the standard or alternative education accountability procedures rating systems and the percent it represents of the total.

2011 Ratings Category	Districts	Campuses
<b>Exemplary</b>	61 (5.0%)	1,224 (14.4%)
<b>Recognized</b>	422 (34.4%)	2,825 (33.1%)
<b>Academically Acceptable</b>	655 (53.3%)	3,285 (38.5%)
<b>Academically Unacceptable</b>	88 (7.2%)	569 (6.7%)
<b>Not Rated</b>	2 (0.2%)	623 (7.3%)

### KEY RESOURCES:

Accountability ratings: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2011/index.html>

Accountability manual: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2011/manual/index.html>

Completion and dropout rates: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acc-tres/dropcomp\\_index.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acc-tres/dropcomp_index.html)



## STATE ASSESSMENTS

## Texas students show dramatic academic growth during TAKS era

In this last full year of TAKS testing, passing rates on every single Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test at every grade improved dramatically since 2003 when the exams were first given.

This substantial improvement occurred even as the passing requirements increased over the life of the testing program and as results on TAKS (Accommodated), a test given to some special education students, were included in the calculations in later years.

This year, passing rates on 23 of the 27 subject area tests given in English were in the 80 to 99 percent range.

“We’re very proud of the academic growth Texas students have shown during the TAKS era. TAKS, along with increasing curriculum standards and a focus on college readiness, pushed our students to new performance levels,” Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said.

The 2010-2011 school year marks the last full year of TAKS testing. Beginning next school year, students in grades 3-9 will take the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™). Following the Texas tradition of continually increasing academic standards, STAAR will be a more rigorous testing program than its predecessor.

Students currently in ninth, 10th and 11th grades will continue to take TAKS to meet their graduation requirements. Subsequent classes must pass STAAR end-of-course exams to fulfill their graduation requirements.

### HIGH SCHOOL

Ninety-two percent of the students in the Class of 2011 have passed all four exit-level exams, meeting one of the major graduation requirements. This compares to an 89 percent passing rate for the Class of 2005, which was the first class required to pass TAKS exit-level tests to graduate.

The cumulative passing rate on the English language arts test is 97 percent for this year’s seniors. The math passing rate is 94 percent. The passing rate on the social studies test is 99 percent and 96 percent on the science TAKS.

High school juniors this year earned passing rates of 90 percent or higher on each of the four parts of the exit-level exam. Ninety-nine percent of the students passed the exit-level social studies test, up from 78 percent in 2003. Ninety-five percent of the students passed the exit-level English language arts test, compared to 61 percent when the test was first given.

Math passing rates more than doubled during this time period, rising from 44 percent in 2003 to 90 percent this year. Similar improvement was seen on the exit-level science exam where rates rose from 47 percent to 91 percent.

Students must pass all four parts of the exit-level exam, along with their courses, to receive a diploma from a Texas public school. Eighty-four percent of the students in the Class of 2012

have passed all tests taken. Students who failed any of the tests have four more opportunities to take the tests before graduation.

Scores for 10th grade showed strong growth during the TAKS period as well. Passing rates from English language arts rose from 66 percent to 91 percent during the nine-year period. The math passing rate rose from 48 to 74 percent, while science rates climbed from 42 percent to 76 percent. In 2003, social studies passing rates were 71 percent but by 2011 had reached 93 percent.

Passing rates on the ninth-grade reading test rose from 66 percent in 2003 to 89 percent in 2011. However, that was a three-percent decline from the 2010 passing rate. Math rates rose from 44 percent to 70 percent in 2011, a rate unchanged from 2010.

### GRADES 6-8

Eighth-grade math passing rates rose to 80 percent this year, up from 51 percent in 2003. Reading rates improved from 77 percent to 89 over the nine years. Social studies rates jumped from 77 percent to 95 percent during this period. Passing rates on the eighth-grade science exam, which has been given since 2006, increased from 52 percent to 79 percent. Under the state’s Student Success Initiative, students must pass the reading and math tests to be promoted to ninth grade.

At seventh grade, reading scores improved from 72 percent to 86 percent from 2003 to 2011. Math scores increased 30 percentage points to 81 percent while writing scores increased from 76 percent to 94 percent during this period. The math and reading passing rates were unchanged from 2010 levels, while writing dropped one point.

Passing rates on the sixth-grade reading TAKS increased from 71 percent to 84 percent between 2003 and 2011. Math rates improved to 83 percent, a 23-percentage-point gain during this era.

### GRADES 3-5

Students must pass the fifth grade reading and math TAKS in order to be promoted to sixth grade and the vast majority of students did so on the first try. Eighty-six percent passed math, up from 65 percent in 2003. Reading rates rose from 67 percent to 87 percent during this period. Passing rates on the fifth-grade science test showed huge gains rising to 87 percent this year, compared to 39 percent when the test was first given. Students in both fifth and eighth grades who did not pass the math or reading test have one more testing opportunity before the next school year begins to pass the tests.

Fourth-grade students earned passing rates of 85 percent in reading, 88 percent in math and 90 percent in writing. This compares to 2003 passing rates of 76 percent, 70 percent and 78 percent, respectively.

At third grade, math passing rates rose from 74 percent in 2003 to 87 percent in 2011, which is one percentage point higher



**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND****Sixty-six percent of Texas schools meet AYP**

Almost 5,600 Texas schools met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for the federal school rating system this year. This represents 66 percent of all Texas campuses.

Schools and districts must have 80 percent or more of their students in grades 3-8 and 10 pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading or English language arts test and 75 percent must pass the TAKS math test to meet AYP. They also must achieve a 90 percent attendance rate or a 75 percent graduation rate, depending on the grade levels they serve. This year, 5,597 schools met AYP standards.

AYP standards for 2011 are similar to the standards required to achieve a Recognized rating in the state accountability system. The state ratings were issued July 29.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, the standards must reach 100 percent passing on both reading and mathematics assessments by 2014 which requires a substantial increase in ratings standards each year in order to meet this requirement.

In 2010, 73 percent of the Texas students were required to pass the reading/ELA test, while a 67 percent passing rate was needed on the math test in order to meet AYP. Seventy-eight percent of the schools met the standards under those criteria and benefited from the use of the Texas Projection Measure, which is not available to them this year.

“Statewide, our passing rates on the TAKS test largely held steady this year. Those results coupled with the elimination of Texas Projection Measure and rising federal standards caused fewer Texas schools to meet AYP this year,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

As a result, 50 percent of the Texas school districts meet AYP

in 2011, compared to 78 percent the previous year.

The most common reason that a Texas school missed AYP targets was because their students did not achieve both the required math and reading passing rates. Missing the math performance requirements alone was the second most common reason that a school received a missed AYP label. This is consistent with the 2011 state ratings in which math performance was the most common reason that a school achieved an Academically Unacceptable rating in that system.

Under the federal system, schools or districts that receive a missed AYP designation for two or more years and receive Title I funds, which are federal funds targeted to serve low income students, face sanctions.

If a Title I school misses AYP for two or more years for the same indicator, it moves into the School Improvement Program. The school improvement categories range from Stage 1, which means a campus or district has missed targets for two years, to Stage 5, which means they have missed targets for six or more years. The sanctions and interventions increase at each stage.

The preliminary AYP results show 249 districts and 242 schools at some level of school improvement intervention.

At Stage 1, school officials must approve a campus improvement plan and give students the option of transferring to another school. By Stage 5, the school must implement a major restructuring.

Details about the possible sanctions and interventions are available at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4459&menu\\_id=798](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4459&menu_id=798). AYP evaluations for each district and campus can be found at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/2011/index.html>.

**TAKS SCORES *continued***

than 2010 rates. Passing rates on the reading test rose from 81 percent in 2003 to 89 percent this year, which is a three-percentage point decline over 2010 results. Students are no longer required to pass the reading test to be promoted to fourth grade.

**GRADES 3-5, SPANISH**

The passing rate on the fifth-grade reading test was 76 percent, up from 51 percent in 2003. The math passing rate was 49 percent, up from 37 percent. Passing rates on the fifth-grade science test reached 57 percent, up from six percent.

While the math and science results are low, the 2011 results represent the largest one-year gains on any TAKS tests this year. The science passing results are six-percentage points higher than 2010 results, while the math results are five percentage points higher than last year's results.

Eighty-three percent of the fourth-grade students passed the reading test in Spanish, up from 59 percent in 2003. Seventy-four percent passed the Spanish math TAKS, compared to 48 percent nine years ago. Ninety-three percent passed the fourth-grade Spanish writing exam in contrast to 82 percent in 2003. Compared to 2010 rates, the math rates are two percent higher, the writing score is one percentage point lower and the reading rates are unchanged.

At third grade, 86 percent of the students who took the Spanish reading test passed it, compared to 67 percent in 2003. The math scores rose 20 percentage points to 77 percent during this period. This represents a four-percentage-point increase over 2010 results on the math test and a one-percentage point increase on the reading test.

Summaries of the [results](#) are available on the TEA website.



## GRADUATION RATES

## Class of 2010 on-time graduation rates soared to a new high

The Texas high school on-time graduation rate for the Class of 2010 soared to 84.3 percent, the highest rate posted during the TAKS-testing era and an increase of 3.7 percentage points over the previous year.

Each of the state's four major ethnic groups showed strong gains. Rates for African-American and Hispanic students increased five percentage points or more over the past year.

Graduation rates for African-American students rose from 73.8 percent for the Class of 2009 to 78.8 percent for the Class of 2010. Hispanic students' graduation rates were 73.5 percent in 2009, climbing to 78.8 percent for the Class of 2010.

Graduation rates for white and Asian students surpassed the 90 percent mark with the rate for white students at 91.6 percent while Asian/Pacific Islander students earned the highest rate at 93.8 percent.

"Our students are staying in school, accepting the challenge and meeting high achievement goals. It's clear that our dedicated educators are providing students a strong foundation on which to build their future. We will continue to provide the tools necessary

to maintain this outstanding progress," said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

Graduation rates for individual Texas districts are available at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp\\_index.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp_index.html).

Reports that track the Class of 2010 for each Texas high school from its freshman year through senior year can be found at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/completion/script/2010/campus.html>.

## IN OTHER ACTION

### Summaries of State Board actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met July 20-22. Summaries of actions taken by the State Board of Education can be found on the Texas Education Agency's website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=5161>

## SBOE

## Board member Mary Helen Berlanga honored with Spanish Royal Order

Mary Helen Berlanga, a 28 year member of the State Board of Education, has long been an advocate for Texas history.

She fought to ensure that the recently revised social studies curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, included contributions of blacks, Hispanics and Spanish explorers.

For her efforts, the Consul of Spain recognized her with the Royal Order of Isabel la Católica at a ceremony held at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel-Marina Tower on July 29.

The Royal Order, created in 1815 by King Ferdinand VII of Spain in honor of Queen Isabella I of Castile, is awarded to individuals for contributions that benefit the country of Spain. It is the highest honor an individual outside of Spain can receive.

Fernando Moral-Iglesias, honorary consul of Spain in South Texas, said the honor recognizes those like Berlanga who promote the history of

Texas and its roots from Spain, according to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

"We feel that the history of Texas is very rich with Spanish roots and Mrs. Berlanga has been particularly vocal on the board to highlight that history," said Miguel A. Fdez. de Mazarambroz, consul general of Spain in the Southwest.

"Whether we're talking about, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, the first European to explore North America's southwest area, or Hernando De Soto, who explored Central America, there is a lot to be said about those explorers," Berlanga said. "They came into the U.S. and certainly influenced us."

Moral-Iglesias said Berlanga's efforts have kept Spain's influences alive in history.

"She fought to maintain the history and Spain recognized that," Moral-Iglesias said.



*Mary Helen Berlanga was awarded the Royal Order by the honorary consul of Spain Fernando Moral-Iglesias.*



## TEXAS STUDENT DATA SYSTEM

## New state-sponsored Student Information System under development

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) in June completed the process of procuring a state-sponsored Student Information System that will reduce administrative costs and improve educational resources for school districts across the Lone Star state. After an intensive process of competitive bidding and contract negotiation, the state obtained a solution that leverages its formidable buying power and provides direct benefits to educators.

“The new state-sponsored Student Information System will ease the reporting burden on school districts, and it couldn’t come at a better time,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott. “The project could potentially save millions of dollars for school districts, resulting in more resources available to our classroom teachers.”

This announcement marks the first major milestone in the multi-year Texas Student Data System (TSDS) initiative to streamline state data standards and to provide more useful tools to frontline educators and administrators. The state-sponsored Student Information System works by better organizing and managing student data at the school level, including attendance, grades, discipline, course history, and test scores. The system will greatly reduce the cost and burden to school districts and provide a much more robust set of features. These features will be available to schools along with more streamlined integration to TEA, which will cut the time and resource costs that districts face when reporting data to TEA.

“We have worked closely with our partners at the school districts and Regional Education Service Centers throughout this process,” said Brian Rawson, director of Statewide Data Initiatives at TEA. “Collaboration has been our top priority, and we really want to provide a solution that has the greatest benefit to our teachers and students.” The extensive process of collaboration involved 10 different evaluation teams, 32 people, five Education Service

Centers, and 36 school districts.

The structure of the program respects Texas’s tradition of local control regarding educational matters. The choice to adopt the new state-sponsored system will be made by each school district, based on an individual assessment of the benefits offered. Initial feedback from stakeholders and TEA advisors has been very positive, and swift adoption is expected, Rawson said.

The new information system builds upon two established software

products that have already proven themselves through numerous successful implementations across Texas. In order to drive additional competition and to meet the diverse needs of Texas educators, two contracts were awarded by the state: one to Skyward, Inc., and one to the Texas Computer Cooperative (TCC). Skyward is a commercial offering that is already serving nearly 900,000 Texas students. The TCC software, TxEIS, is developed by the Region 20 Education Service Center in cooperation with 18 other ESC’s across the state and is already serving 921,000 Texas students. Both received high marks from an extensive panel of independent evaluators and progressed to the final round of negotiations.

There is no direct cost to the state from this effort, and all of the work done so far has been funded through federal and private foundation grants. When implementation is completed, each district that joins the program can expect to reduce its already budgeted costs for similar systems. The overall savings will depend on the level of district adoption, but the subscription-based pricing negotiated by TEA can immediately lower costs for districts.

“At the end of the day, this is about making a difference for our students,” said Rawson. “By improving information technology and reducing administrative costs, we can free our schools up to do what they do best – teach the next generation of Texans.”



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