TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
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Michael Williams
Commissioner

March 10, 2014

To the Administrator Addressed:

Subject: Clarifying Revision to Online School FIRST Application

As you know, each school year the Texas Education Agency issues each school district a financial accountability rating through the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (School FIRST), as required by law. The rating for a particular school year is based on the financial data for the prior year, as specified in Texas Administrative Code rules. For example, the school year 2012–2013 rating is based on the financial data for 2011–2012.

One of the ways in which a school district can view its rating for a particular year is through the online School FIRST application, part of which can be accessed from the FIRST web page. During a comprehensive review of our web pages, we recently became aware that the labeling of the year options in the "FIRST Rating for Fiscal Year" field of that application was causing confusion. In the application, to view the rating for a particular year (for example, school year 2012–2013), a user had to select the prior year (2011–2012) in the "FIRST Rating for Fiscal Year" field. To eliminate confusion, we have revised the application so that users who wish to view the rating for a particular school year can choose that school year in the "FIRST Rating for Fiscal Year" field instead of the prior year (the year from which financial data are being drawn). Also, we have changed the label for the field to read "Rating Year."

These changes are for clarification only and do not substantively change School FIRST or any ratings under that system. We hope that the changes will make the School FIRST web pages and application easier to use and understand.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Financial Accountability Division at (512) 463-9238 or financialaccountability@tea.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

Belinda Dyer, Director
Financial Accountability
Office of School Finance

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