

Regional and District Level Report

*A Report to the 84th Texas Legislature from the Texas Education Agency
Submitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House,
and Members of the Eighty-fourth Texas Legislature.*



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • www.tea.state.tx.us

Michael L. Williams
Commissioner

December 1, 2014

The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor of Texas
The Honorable Joe Straus, Speaker of the House
Members of the 83rd Texas Legislature

I am pleased to provide to the 84th Texas Legislature the Regional and District Level Report which was prepared in response to Section 39.333 of the Texas Education Code. This report contains a summary of exceptions to the maximum class-size requirements, the number of classes at each campus that are taught by individuals who are not certified in the content areas of their respective classes, an evaluation of accelerated instruction programs offered under Section 28.006, a summary of the exemptions and waivers granted to school districts under Section 7.056 and Section 39.232, and a summary of services offered by regional education service centers.

This report is now transmitted to you as required by state law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title of the Commissioner of Education.

Michael Williams
Commissioner of Education

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Introduction

The following report is prepared by the Texas Education Agency in response to Section 39.333 of the Texas Education Code. The report includes regional and district level information for the two preceding school years (i.e., 2012-2013 and 2013-2014) on the following five subjects.

Student-Teacher Ratios and Class Size Limitations

TEC §39.333(1) requires (i) a review of the number of campuses and classes at each campus granted an exemption from student-teacher ratio requirements per TEC §25.112, and (ii) for each campus granted an exemption from TEC §25.112, a statement of whether the campus has been awarded a distinction designation under Subchapter G or has been identified as an unacceptable campus under Subchapter E.

Classes Taught by Uncertified Teachers

TEC §39.333(5) requires a review of the number of classes at each school campus currently taught by individuals not certified in the content areas of their respective classes.

Accelerated Instruction Programs

TEC §39.333(4) requires an evaluation of accelerated instruction programs offered under TEC §28.006, which refers to accelerated reading programs for kindergarten through grade 2 (K – 2) and grade 7. TEC §39.333 also requires an assessment of the quality of such programs and the performance of students enrolled.

Exemptions and Waivers

TEC §39.333(2) requires (i) a summary of exemptions and waivers granted to campuses and school districts under §7.056 and §39.232, and (ii) a review of the effectiveness of each campus or district following deregulation.

Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs)

TEC §39.333(3) requires an evaluation of the performance of the system of regional education service centers based upon (i) the indicators adopted under Section 8.101, and (ii) client satisfaction with services provided under Subchapter B, Chapter 8.



Student-Teacher Ratios and Class Size Limitations

Overview

TEC §25.111 and TEC §25.112 prescribe student-teacher ratios and class size limitations on school districts. TEC §39.333(1) requires (i) a review of the number of campuses and classes at each campus granted an exemption from TEC §25.112, and (ii) for each campus granted an exemption from TEC §25.112, a statement of whether the campus has been awarded a distinction designation under Subchapter G or has been identified as an unacceptable campus under Subchapter E. However, no state accountability ratings were assigned in 2012 due to changes in the new accountability system and the 2013 rating labels were *Met Standard*, *Met Alternative Standard*, *Improvement Required*, and *Not Rated*. As there were no distinction designations or campuses identified as unacceptable, this requirement of TEC §39.333 cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, the section only reviews the number of campuses granted class size exemptions (i.e., waivers).

TEC §25.111 states, “Except as provided by Section 25.112, each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers ... to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance.” TEC §25.112 states, “Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.”¹ Therefore, school districts must maintain a 22:1 student-teacher ratio for all kindergarten through grade 4 (K – 4) classes. Per TEC §12.104, charter schools are not subject to student-teacher ratio requirements or class size limitations.

Student-teacher ratio and class size average data is not available for the 2013-2014 school year, therefore the section only includes an analysis on 2012-2013.

Student-Teacher Ratios²

The statewide student-teacher ratio for 2012-2013 was 15.5 (i.e., 15.5 students to one teacher). According to the data, the statewide student-teacher ratio remained relatively constant between 2002-2003 and 2010-2011. Between 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, the statewide student-teacher ratio increased 5%. Between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, the statewide student-teacher ratio increased slightly by 0.6%.

¹ Please see TEC §25.111 and TEC §25.112.

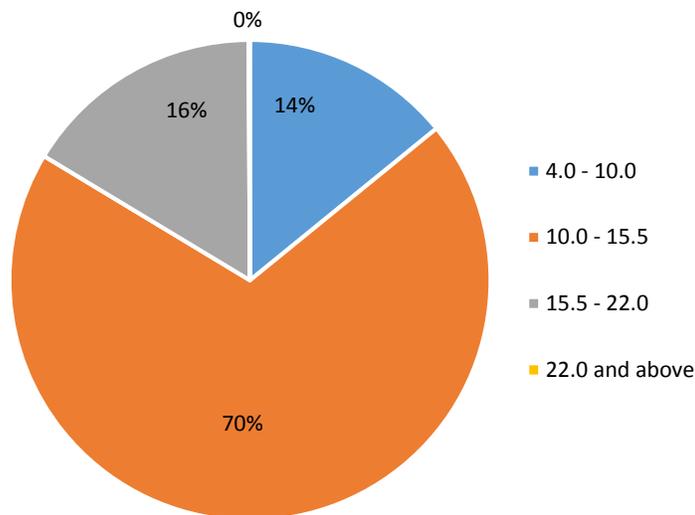
² In this report, teacher data is presented by Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) instead of headcounts. While headcount is the actual number of teachers, FTE is the percentage of a teacher’s day spent teaching. For example, an individual spending half a day in the classroom teaching and the other half as school counselor would be considered 0.5 teacher FTE.

Figure 1: Statewide Student-Teacher Ratios (2002-2003 and 2009-2010 to 2012-2013)^{3,4}

School Year	Student-Teacher Ratio
2002-2003	14.7
2009-2010	14.5
2010-2011	14.7
2011-2012	15.4
2012-2013	15.5

The district-level analysis on student-teacher ratios indicated 14 or 1.14% of districts reported ratios greater than the student-teacher ratio requirement of 22.0. Additionally, 257 or 21% of districts reported ratios greater than the statewide student-teacher ratio of 15.5. However, the data includes observations of open-enrollment charter schools, which have no student-teacher ratio requirements per TEC §12.104. Therefore, these observations were excluded so only schools with student-teacher ratio requirements were analyzed. After excluding open-enrollment charter schools from the analysis, the number of districts reporting a student-teacher ratio greater than 22.0 decreases to 1 or 0.10% of districts. The number of districts reporting ratios greater than the statewide student-teacher ratio of 15.5 decreases to 168 or 16% of districts. The figure below presents the percentage of districts reporting student-teacher ratios for the following four ranges: 4.0 to 10.0, 10.0 to 15.5, 15.5 to 22.0, and 22.0 and above. As Figure 2 shows, the majority of districts (i.e., 70%) reported student-teacher ratios between 10.0 and 15.5 for the 2012-2013 school year.

Figure 2: District-Level Student-Teacher Ratios Excludes Open-Enrollment Charter Schools (2012-2013)



³ Data sources: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) State Data Downloads.

⁴ The statewide student-teacher ratios reported in this section were obtained from AEIS and TAPR reports. These reports do not distinguish between statewide student-teacher ratios for school districts and charter schools. Therefore, the statewide student-teacher ratios reported in Figure 1 include charter schools even though charter schools are not subject to student-teacher ratio requirements per TEC §12.104.

Class Size Averages

In 2012-2013, the statewide class size averages for grades K – 4 were all below 22, satisfying the student-teacher ratio requirement of 22.0 per TEC §25.112 . Over a three year period, from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013, class size averages for grades K – 4 all increased more than 2.0%. Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade reported the highest percentage increases (i.e., 3.2% for all three grade levels). There are no class size average limitations for grades 5 and 6, and grades 9 through 12 (secondary).⁵ However, the statewide class size averages for these grades were all less than 22. From 2010-2011 to 2012-2013, the statewide class size average for grade 5 stayed the same while the grade 6 average increased almost 2.0%. Over the same time period, secondary classes reported small increases in class size averages, all less than 1.0%.

Figure 3: Statewide Class Size Averages
(2010-2011 to 2012-2013)^{6,7}

Grade Level or Subject	2010-2011	2012-2013	Percentage Increase or Decrease Over 3 Year Period
K - 4			
Kindergarten	19.0	19.6	3.2%
1 st Grade	18.9	19.5	3.2%
2 nd Grade	18.8	19.4	3.2%
3 rd Grade	18.8	19.3	2.7%
4 th Grade	19.0	19.5	2.6%
5 th Grade	21.4	21.4	0.0%
6 th Grade	20.7	21.1	1.9%
Secondary			
Math	17.9	18.0	0.6%
Science	19.0	19.0	0.0%
Social Studies	19.6	19.7	0.5%
English/LA	17.3	17.4	0.6%
Foreign Lang.	19.0	19.0	0.0%

The district-level analysis on grades K – 4 indicated between 6.1% and 8.4% of districts reported class size averages greater than 22 depending upon the grade level observed. However, the data includes observations of open-enrollment charter schools, which have no class size limitations per TEC §12.104. Therefore, these observations were excluded so only schools with class size limitations were analyzed. After excluding open-enrollment charter

⁵ Secondary classes are considered to be grades 9 – 12 according to the TAPR Glossary. (Glossary for the TAPR 2012-2013, p. 20 (<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/tapr/2013/glossary.pdf>.)

⁶ Data source: TAPR.

⁷ The statewide class size averages reported in this section were obtained from TAPR reports. The TAPR reports do not distinguish between statewide class size averages for school districts and charter schools. Therefore, the statewide class size averages reported in Figure 3 include charter schools even though charter schools are not subject to class size limitations per TEC §12.104.

schools from the analysis, the percentage of districts reporting class size averages greater than 22 for grades K – 4 decreases to between 2.7% and 5.5% depending upon grade level observed. Using the same methodology, approximately 15% of districts reported class size averages greater than 22 for grades 5 and 6.⁸ For secondary subjects, between 1.7% and 9.1% of districts reported class size averages greater than 22 depending upon the subject observed.⁹

**Figure 4: Districts with Class Size Averages Greater Than 22
Excludes Open-Enrollment Charter Schools
(2012-2013)¹⁰**

Grade Level or Subject	Number of Districts with Class Size Averages Greater than 22	Number of Districts Observed ¹¹	Percentage of Districts with Class Size Averages Greater than 22
K - 4			
Kindergarten	60	1,098	5.5%
1 st Grade	40	1,121	3.6%
2 nd Grade	34	1,123	3.0%
3 rd Grade	30	1,118	2.7%
4 th Grade	62	1,125	5.5%
5 th Grade	172	1,111	15.5%
6 th Grade	171	1,110	15.4%
Secondary			
Math	38	1,153	3.3%
Science	71	1,147	6.2%
Social Studies	104	1,145	9.1%
English/LA	20	1,151	1.7%
Foreign Lang.	83	1,065	7.8%

Class Size Waivers

This section includes class size waiver data for school districts in and out of compliance with TEC §25.111 and TEC §25.112, both of which prescribe student-teacher ratios and class size limitations for public schools. More specifically, TEC §25.112 states, “a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.”¹² For schools unable to comply with the required student-teacher ratio of 22.0, they may apply to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for a class size waiver. However, the Commissioner of

⁸ When open-enrollment charters are included, approximately 19% of districts report class size averages greater than 22 for grade 5 and 6 in the 2012-2013 school year.

⁹ When open-enrollment charters are included, between 4% and 11% of districts report class size averages greater than 22 depending upon the secondary subject observed in the 2012-2013 school year.

¹⁰ Data source: TAPR.

¹¹ The number of districts observed changes between grade levels for several reasons (e.g., a district only serves high school students).

¹² Please see TEC §25.111 and TEC §25.112.

Education may only grant a class size waiver in cases of undue hardship and if the campus received a minimum academic performance rating. School districts must select at least one of the four undue hardship criteria when applying for a class size waiver. The four hardships include:

- 1) unable to employ qualified teachers;
- 2) unable to provide educational facilities;
- 3) financial hardship (i.e., a district which has budgeted for a class size ratio of 22:1 in grades K – 4 but has a campus (or campuses) with enrollment increases or shifts); or
- 4) unanticipated growth in student enrollment.

Approximately 277 and 256 school districts **applied** for class size waivers in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, respectively. However, not all class size waivers were approved by TEA due to waivers being withdrawn, duplicative, or denied. A class size waiver is denied when a school district or campus has not met the minimum academic performance rating.¹³ Figure 5 includes the number of class size waivers **approved** by TEA during the four preceding school years.

**Figure 5: Number of Approved Class Size Waivers
(2010-2011 to 2013-2014)**

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Districts	169	312	259	235
Campuses	626	1,734	1,514	1,286
K – 4 Classes				
Kindergarten	537	1,610	1,389	1,070
1 st Grade	438	1,638	1,416	1,299
2 nd Grade	393	1,662	1,358	1,108
3 rd Grade	400	1,806	1,420	1,215
4 th Grade	470	1,898	1,564	1,218
Total K – 4 Classes	2,238	8,614	7,147	5,910
Most Commonly Cited Hardship	Unanticipated Growth	Financial Hardship ¹⁴	Financial Hardship	Unanticipated Growth

As shown in Figure 5, over the two preceding school years, the number of approved class size waivers for districts and campuses decreased. Between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, the number of class size waivers for districts and campuses decreased 17% and 13%, respectively, while the number for total K – 4 classes decreased 17%. Between

¹³ In 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, school districts, charter schools, and campuses received performance ratings of either Met Standard, Met Alternative Standard, or Improvement Required. If a school district or campus received an Improvement Required performance rating, the class size waiver was denied.

¹⁴ 2011-2012 was the first year that the financial hardship criteria was available as a selection for a class size waiver.

2012-2013 and 2013-2014, the number of class size waivers for districts and campuses decreased 9% and 15%, respectively, while the number for total K – 4 classes decreased 17%.

The decreases in class size waivers over the two preceding school years were small in comparison with significant increases between school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012: 85% and 177% for districts and campuses, respectively, and 285% for total K – 4 classes. In 2011-2012, financial hardship was the most commonly cited hardship for class size waivers.

Although there were decreases in class size waivers over the two preceding school years, the total number of class size waivers for grades K – 4 in 2013-2014 is significantly higher than in 2010-2011. The number of approved class size waivers in 2013-2014 was 164% higher than in 2010-2011. In 2010-2011, the most commonly cited hardship for class size waivers was unanticipated growth. In 2013-2014, unanticipated growth was again the most commonly cited hardship.

Agency Contact Person(s)

For information on **general state waivers**, please contact Sally Partridge, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation and School Improvement, or Leah Martin at (512) 463-5899 or accred@tea.state.tx.us.



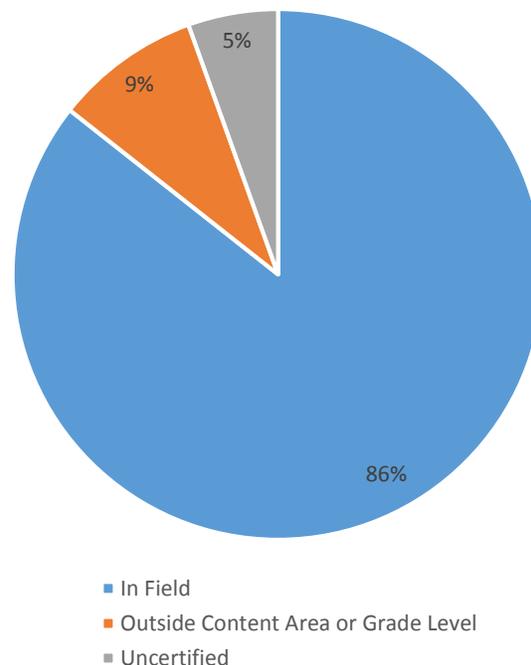
Classes Taught by Uncertified Teachers

Overview

TEC §39.333(5) requires a review of the number of classes at each school campus currently taught by individuals not certified in the content areas of their respective classes. The section provides information on the number of teachers (i) not certified in the content area or grade level of their respective classes and (ii) uncertified, but teaching with some other credential. As previously mentioned, this report utilizes teacher full-time equivalent (FTE) counts instead of teacher headcounts. Teacher FTE counts are based on the percentage of an individual's day spent teaching.

In 2012-2013, 86% of teacher FTEs in Texas were teaching in an appropriate field and grade level (i.e., in field), 9% were teaching outside the content area or grade level of their certification, and 5% were uncertified. Data for 2013-2014 was not available at the time of this report.

Figure 6: Certified Teacher Placement Excludes Open-Enrollment Charter Schools (2012-2013)



Description of Data Variables

The teacher placement data is a combination of PEIMS and certification data, commonly referred to as Who Is Teaching data, and includes the following primary columns.¹⁵

1. **Total FTEs.** The aggregate number of teacher FTEs by campus that are (i) in field and (ii) out of field.
2. **In field.** The number of teacher FTEs by campus assigned to an appropriate field and grade level based on the teacher's certification.
3. **Out of field.** The number of teacher FTEs (i) not certified in the appropriate field and/or grade level, or (ii) have no standard or lifetime teaching certificate at all.
4. **Uncertified.** The number of teacher FTEs with no standard or lifetime teaching certificate. The Uncertified column is a subgroup of the Out of Field column.

The number of teacher FTEs not certified in the content area and/or grade level of their respective classes is determined by subtracting the "Uncertified" column from the "Out of Field" column. The result of this calculation equals the number of teacher FTEs described as "Outside Content Area or Grade Level" in this section. The remainder of the section reviews teacher FTE data broken down into three categories: In Field, Outside Content Area or Grade Level, and Uncertified.¹⁶

Removal of Open-Enrollment Charter Campuses from Data Analysis

The 2012-2013 Who Is Teaching data included 8,094 campus observations which accounts for 94% of all campuses in Texas.^{17,18} These observations had a combined total of 299,941 teacher FTEs. Open-enrollment charter schools, which are not subject to most teacher certification requirements, are included in the Who Is Teaching data.¹⁹ Therefore, observations on open-enrollment charter campuses were not included in the data analysis and only traditional ISD campuses were evaluated. The teacher placement evaluation for traditional ISD campuses included 7,561 campus observations (i.e., 88% of all campuses in Texas) and 290,518 teacher FTEs according to the Who Is Teaching data. For the remainder of the section, the 2012-2013 Who Is Teaching data for traditional ISD campuses only is referred to as the "2012-2013 data collection."

¹⁵ The teacher placement data is maintained by the Accountability and Data Reporting Division of TEA.

¹⁶ Teacher FTE counts for individuals considered Outside Content Area or Grade Level should not be confused with teacher FTE counts for those Out of Field (i.e., one of the columns in the data collection). The Out of Field teacher FTE count is made up of two subgroups: (i) teachers not certified in an appropriate field and grade level and (ii) teachers with no standard or lifetime teaching certificate at all.

¹⁷ Data for 16,449 teacher FTEs had already been excluded from the raw data collection for the following reasons.

- (a) Teachers assigned to subjects in the "Other" and "Not Applicable" categories were not included in the data because these subjects do not require certification. Examples include study hall, tutorials, and locally developed courses.
- (b) For teachers assigned to both subjects which do and do not require certification, only the observations when the teacher is assigned to the "Other" and "Not Applicable" subject(s) is excluded from the data.

¹⁸ There were 8,842 campus observations in the raw data. However, 748 campus observations were deleted for various reasons including: (i) two campus observations were excluded because teacher FTE data was blank, (ii) 378 campus observations were deleted because of duplication, (iii) 151 campus observations were deleted because the campus name was either "District Administration" or "Shared Service Arrangements," and (iv) 217 campus observations were deleted because there was a negative teacher FTE count for teachers "Outside Content Area or Grade Level."

¹⁹ Although open-enrollment charter schools are not required to follow all teacher certification requirements, they must follow the certification requirements for teachers in special education and bilingual positions. Please see TEC Chapter 12, Subchapters C and D for more information (<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.051>).

Figure 7: Campus and Teacher FTE Observations
(2012-2013)

	Number of Campuses	Percent of Total Texas Public School Campuses (Per PEIMS) ²⁰	Teacher FTEs
Open-Enrollment Charter Campuses	533	6%	9,423
Traditional ISD Campuses	7,561	88%	290,518
All Campuses	8,094	94%	299,941

Teachers Outside Content Area or Grade Level

According to the 2012-2013 data collection, 25,769 teacher FTEs out of 290,518 observed were outside the content area or grade level of their respective classes. Therefore, approximately 9% of teacher FTEs at traditional ISD campuses were teaching outside their field during the 2012-2013 school year. Approximately 90% of campuses observed reported 20% or less of their teacher FTEs were outside their field. Only 1% of campuses reported that 40% or more of their teacher FTEs were outside their field. The teacher FTEs reportedly outside their content area or grade level appear to be concentrated at a relatively small number of campuses. According to the 2012-2013 data collection, over half of the teacher FTEs outside their field were located at only 15% of campuses observed.²¹ Additionally, the 100 campuses reporting the highest percentage of teacher FTEs outside their content area or grade level appear to be exceptionally small in size. In fact, approximately 70% of the 100 campuses reported less than 10 total teacher FTEs.²²

Uncertified Teachers

According to the 2012-2013 data collection, 13,462 teacher FTEs out of 290,518 observed were uncertified. Therefore, approximately 5% of teacher FTEs at traditional ISD campuses were uncertified during the 2012-2013 school year. Approximately 90% of the campuses observed reported 10% or less of their teacher FTEs were uncertified. Less than 0.5% of campuses (i.e., 7) reported that 40% or more of their teacher FTEs were uncertified. The uncertified teacher FTEs appear to be concentrated at a relatively small number of campuses. According to the 2012-2013 data collection, over half of all uncertified teacher FTEs were located at only 15% of campuses observed.²³

²⁰ According to the 2012-2013 PEIMS Enrollment data, there were 1,228 school districts and charter schools with 8,572 campuses.

²¹ In 2012-2013, approximately 55% of teacher FTEs outside their content area or grade level at traditional ISD campuses (14,227 / 25,769 = 55%) were located at 15% of campuses observed (1,134 / 7,561 = 15%).

²² In addition, the top 10 campuses with the highest percentage of teacher FTEs outside their content area or grade level reported less than 3 total teacher FTEs.

²³ In 2012-2013, approximately 55% of uncertified teacher FTEs at traditional ISD campuses (7,471 / 13,462 = 55%) were located at 15% of campuses observed (1,134 / 7,561 = 15%).

Agency Contact Person(s)

For information on teacher placement, please contact Mike Ramsay at mike.ramsay@tea.state.tx.us.

Accelerated Instruction Programs

Overview

Several state statutes require additional instructional support (i.e., accelerated instruction) for students who exhibit academic difficulties or fail to meet the passing standard on a state assessment.²⁴ TEC §39.333(4) requires an evaluation of accelerated instruction programs offered under TEC §28.006, which refers to accelerated reading programs for kindergarten through grade 2 (K – 2) and grade 7. TEC §39.333 also requires an assessment of the quality of such programs and the performance of students enrolled. However, no data is available to assess the quality of the programs or the performance of students. Instead, this section presents information on accelerated instruction programs currently in place for various student populations enrolled in the Texas Public School System. This section provides information on the products and services utilized by schools to assist students requiring additional instructional support in addition to the number of educators and other participants trained to implement and support these programs. Accelerated instruction programs reviewed in this section include the following:

- (a) [Accelerated Reading Instruction for K – 2 Students \(TEC §28.006\)](#)
- (b) [Accelerated Reading Instruction for Middle School Students \(TEC §28.006\)](#)
- (c) [Accelerated Instruction for High School Students \(TEC §§28.0217, 29.081, and 39.025\(b-1\)\)](#)
- (d) [Accelerated Instruction for Students At-Risk of Dropping Out \(TEC §29.081\)](#)
- (e) [Accelerated Instruction Under the Student Success Initiative \(TEC §28.0211\)](#)

Accelerated instruction policies are designed to give schools flexibility in determining the appropriate form, content and timing of instruction.²⁵ The policies also provide discretion for districts to determine how best to improve student performance based on individual student’s needs.

Accelerated Reading Instruction for K – 2 Students

TEC, Section 28.006 requires school districts to administer reading instruments to students in K-2 to assess their reading development and comprehension. The statute further requires that a school district implement an accelerated reading instruction program for students who are determined, on the basis of their reading instrument results, to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties. In the case of a student in special education who does not perform

²⁴ The term “accelerated instruction” is not defined in statute. (Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

²⁵ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

*satisfactorily on a reading diagnostic instrument, the student's admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee must determine the manner in which the student will participate in an accelerated reading instruction program.*²⁶

According to TEC §28.006, school districts must provide “accelerated (intensive) reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 2 who may be at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, based on the results of a reading diagnostic instrument.”²⁷ The reading diagnostic instrument utilized may be chosen from the *Commissioner's List of Reading Instruments for Texas Public Schools and Charter Schools* (“Commissioner's List”) which is available on the TEA website. There are several reading diagnostic instruments for school districts and charter schools to choose from for each grade level requiring an assessment. For example, in 2014-2015, the Commissioner's List included the following English language reading diagnostic instruments for kindergarten.²⁸

- **Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)**
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Next (DIBELS Next)
- easyCBM
- Istation's Indicators of Progress, Early Reading (ISIP-ER)
- mCLASS: Reading 3D – Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC)
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
- Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Inventory (PAPI-E)
- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)
- Reading Analysis and Prescription System (RAPS 360)
- Woodcock Johnson Diagnostic Reading Battery (WJ III DRB)

The Commissioner's List for 2014-2018 also included the following Spanish language reading diagnostic instruments for kindergarten.²⁹

- **El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas LEE)**
- Indicadores Dinamicos Del Exito en la Lectura Solution (IDEL)
- Istation's Indicators of Progress, Española (ISIP Español)
- Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Inventory - Spanish (PAPI-S)

The TPRI and its Spanish counterpart, Tejas LEE, are the most widely used reading diagnostic instruments according to TEA data. The TPRI and Tejas LEE were developed as part of the Governor's Reading Initiative which began in

²⁶ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

²⁷ Texas Association of School Administrators and Texas Association of School Boards, “Report on School District Mandates: Cost Drivers in Public Education,” dated January 2013, p. 5.

²⁸ Texas Education Agency, “2014-2018 Commissioner's List of Reading Instruments for Texas Public Schools and Charter Schools,” p. 2 (http://tea.texas.gov/uploadedFiles/Curriculum/English_-_Language_Arts/attachments/Commissioner%27s%20List%20of%20Reading%20Instruments%202014-2015.pdf).

²⁹ Texas Education Agency, “2014-2018 Commissioner's List of Reading Instruments for Texas Public Schools and Charter Schools,” p. 3 (http://tea.texas.gov/uploadedFiles/Curriculum/English_-_Language_Arts/attachments/Commissioner%27s%20List%20of%20Reading%20Instruments%202014-2015.pdf).

1997.³⁰ The initiative required that research-based diagnostic reading assessments be developed and disseminated in K – 2 in order to measure students’ reading proficiency.³¹ The reading diagnostic instruments are meant to identify struggling students in K – 2 before they become vulnerable to failing the Grade 3 [STAAR].³²

In 2009, the TPRI was available at no cost and used by about 75% of school districts and charter schools for K – 3.^{33,34} According to the last data submission by schools to TEA in 2012-2013, the percentage of schools using TPRI dropped to 50%.³⁵ Today TPRI and Tejas LEE continue to be available to schools at no cost. If a school district or open-enrollment charter school uses a different instrument on the Commissioner’s List (i.e., other than TPRI or Tejas Lee), it is reimbursed \$5 per student every four years.³⁶ Although TPRI and Tejas LEE are available at no cost, school districts and charter schools do not receive state funding to train teachers on how to administer the instruments or how to apply students’ results to accelerated instruction programs. However, several education service centers (ESCs) around Texas provide training to teachers, diagnosticians, administrators, counselors, and others in TPRI and Tejas LEE. In addition, the majority of ESCs provide trainings related to dyslexia and other reading disorders for most grade levels. The number of participants trained at the ESCs in reading diagnostic related services over the two preceding school years is presented in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Number of Participants Trained by ESCs for Reading Diagnostic Programs (2012-13 and 2013-14)

Program	Grade Level Served	Number of Participants Trained ³⁷
TPRI	K – 2	989
Tejas Lee	K – 2	177
Dyslexia Programs	K – 12	12,072
Other Reading Diagnostic Programs	K – 12	3,686
Total		16,924

³⁰ Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” pp. 3 and 7.

³¹ Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” p. 3.

³² The cited document states “the Grade 3 TAKS” which is now known as “STAAR.” (Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” p. 6.)

³³ Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” p. 6.

³⁴ There is no usage data for Tejas Lee.

³⁵ According to TEA staff, the 50% figure is only representative of those school districts and charter schools that submitted their choice of reading diagnostic instrument.

³⁶ Texas Education Agency, “Reading Instrument Reimbursement Information,” pp. 1 – 3

(<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769807890&libID=25769807892>).

³⁷ Participants trained at the ESCs in reading diagnostics include, but are not limited to, teachers, administrators, counselors, diagnosticians, speech/language therapists, special education personnel, interventionists, and dyslexia coordinators.

A few examples of the Other Reading Diagnostic Programs provided by ESCs include the following:

Region 2 – Corpus Christi. A workshop entitled “50 Nifty Activities for 5 Components and 3 Tiers of Reading Instruction” is designed for elementary school and special education teachers who teach reading.

Region 6 – Huntsville. A webinar entitled “Reading Comprehension Disorders: Effective Diagnosis and Intervention Using a Neuropsychological Framework” provides educators and psychologists with a theoretical framework for effectively diagnosing and treating reading comprehension disorders in children.

Region 13 – Austin. A training entitled “Transition from Spanish to English – Working with English Language Learners (WELLS)” addresses the five components of literacy instruction (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) with special considerations necessary for effective reading instruction for English language learners. Participants of the training learn how to collect data across languages in order to better design and implement instruction.

Region 18 – Midland. Workshop sessions entitled “Phonological Awareness and Graphophonemic Knowledge” examine phonological awareness and its instruction. Participants learn to apply strategies and examine the components of graphophonemic knowledge and assessment, word study, spelling, and reading connections.

Accelerated Reading Instruction for Middle School Students

In 2007, the 80th Texas Legislature added a requirement to TEC §28.006 that students in Grade 7 who failed the state reading assessment in Grade 6 be administered a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner. The instrument developed in response to the new requirement was the Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment or TMSFA.³⁸ The main goal of the new requirement was to assist school districts and charter schools in preparing students to pass the state reading assessment in Grade 8. Schools can choose to use the TMSFA or an alternative instrument that is included on the Commissioner’s List of Reading Instruments or that has been reviewed and approved by TEA. Grade 7 reading instruments must focus on “the specific skill deficiencies students have in word analysis and fluency that are affecting their comprehension”³⁹ The results of the diagnostic assessment provide the school with information on how to provide accelerated instruction based on individual student needs.

Rider 42 of the General Appropriations Act passed by the 81st Legislature in 2009 provided significant funding for Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) Professional Development (TEKS PD Academies) available to all eligible K – 12 public educators. The professional development initiative launched in spring 2010 and provided a combined amount of \$48.8 million for FY10 and FY11 to ESCs. Approximately \$10 million of the funding went into continuing the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) for Texas teachers in grades 6, 7, and 8. The academies (available beginning in 2007) were designed to provide professional development in scientifically based reading instruction

³⁸ Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” p. 7.

³⁹ Texas Education Agency, “The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report,” p. 7.

for adolescents. The TALA model consists of two academies –the Content Area Academy and the English Language Arts (ELA) Academy.⁴⁰ The Content Area Academy prepares all middle school teachers to provide appropriate reading instruction for all students, including those struggling with reading due to limited English proficiency, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other risk factors for reading difficulties.⁴¹ Participants in the ELA Academy (designed for ELA teachers only) receive additional training in administering the TMSFA, interpreting TMSFA results, and providing Tiers II and III interventions for struggling readers. Rider 42 was the last rider that funded ESCs to provide TALA training to teachers. With funds appropriated in FYs 08, 09, 10, and 11, over 13,000 educators were trained in TALA and in TMSFA administration. Today, the majority of ESCs continue to provide TMSFA training to school districts and charter schools, but training is now provided on a cost recovery basis.

Figure 9: Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) Participants Trained (February 2010 - June 2013)

Academy / Training	Participants Trained
2010 Academies	3,662
2011 Academies	2,282
2012 Academies	4,790
2013 Academies	898
Online Courses	1,614
Total	13,246

Accelerated Instruction for High School Students

TEC §28.0217, §29.081, and §39.025(b-1) require that a school district provide accelerated instruction in the applicable subject area to a student who does not pass an end-of-course (EOC) assessment administered under TEC §39.023(c). Furthermore, the accelerated instruction must be provided before the next administration of the applicable assessment. These provisions also apply to students in special education, including those who take alternate state assessments.^{42, 43}

Accelerated instruction is only required for students who do not perform satisfactorily on the EOC assessments that are currently required under TEC §39.023(c) (i.e., Algebra I, English I (reading/writing), English II

⁴⁰ The *English Language Arts (ELA) Academy* is for English Language Arts/Reading teachers and the *Content Area Academy* is for Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies teachers.

⁴¹ TALA activities funded included content development for face-to-face and online materials, training of trainers, teacher stipends for the 2009-2010 and 2010-11 school years, and delivery of face-to-face training.

⁴² Please see 19 TAC §101.2006(a).

⁴³ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

(reading/writing), biology, and U.S. history). A school district is not required to provide accelerated instruction to students who failed an EOC assessment that is no longer required for graduation.^{44, 45}

TEKS PD Academies - High School Only

As previously mentioned, Rider 42 of the General Appropriations Act passed by the 81st Legislature in 2009 provided significant funding for the TEKS PD Academies. The TEKS PD Academies launched in the spring of 2010 and were available at no cost to all eligible K-12 public school educators. The initiative provided a combined total of \$48.8 million for the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years to ESCs. A portion of the funding was dedicated to content development. Content developers were required to create face-to-face and online materials and provide training of trainers (TOT) sessions, teacher stipends, and ongoing follow-up and support to ESC specialists and designated trainers.⁴⁶ In addition to developing academies, content developers were also responsible for the creation of online courses made available through Project Share.⁴⁷ Content development grants were awarded to the following entities:

- Region 4 – Houston: Science Academies
- Region 6 – Huntsville: Social Studies Academies (2010-2011)
- Region 13 – Austin: Math Academies
- Institute of Public School Initiatives: English Language Arts Academies and Social Studies Academies

Funding was also awarded to the 20 ESCs. ESCs were required to meet the following goals.

- Provide training to as many eligible participants – teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators - as possible. (Teacher leaders are individuals who may not work directly with students but who work primarily with content area teachers as mentors, coaches, strategists, coordinators, etc.)
- Provide training to applicable bilingual/ESL teachers and special education teachers.
- Provide training at no cost to participants.
- Expand participants’ knowledge of TEKS specific to teaching/supervisory assignments.
- Expand participants’ knowledge of English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), how those standards interconnect with content area TEKS, and how those standards relate to classroom instruction.
- Expand participants’ knowledge of the Response to Intervention (RtI) model and how that model can be implemented across K-12 education.
- Impact instructional/supervisory practices of participants in order to ensure effective classroom instruction for all students.

⁴⁴ To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated June 12, 2013: Initial Assessment and Accelerated Instruction Requirements under HB 5 (<http://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=25769805503>).

⁴⁵ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

⁴⁶ Teacher stipends were only for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years

⁴⁷ Project Share is “a collection of Web 2.0 tools and applications that provides high quality professional development in an interactive and engaging learning environment.” (Project Share, “About Us.” (<http://www.projectsharetexas.org/about/>.) TEA announced in August 2013 that there were over 100 online courses available through Project Share in addition to several TEKS-aligned resources. (To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated August 30, 2010: Project Share (<http://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=25769807128>).

- Provide follow-up and ongoing support to participants who complete academies.

Overall, the TEKS PD Academies trained 145,522 participants from February 2010 through June 2013. The TEKS PD Academies covered all core school subjects (English language arts and reading, math, science, and social studies) and grade levels. In the table below, only TEKS PD trainings related to high school and EOC assessments are included to provide information on training designed to improve classroom instruction and to support accelerated instruction for high school students.

**Figure 10: TEKS PD Academies Participant Data
Related to High School Teachers Only
(February 2010 - June 2013)**

Academy / Training	Participants Trained
Biology EOC Success	3,492
Chemistry EOC Success	2,644
Chemistry EOC Success Part II	725
Physics EOC Success	1,711
Science Safety Training for High School	2,779
Algebra I EOC Success	7,021
Algebra I EOC Success Additional Lessons	986
Algebra I EOC Success Academy II	1,606
Geometry EOC Success	2,903
Algebra II EOC Success	2,091
English I and II EOC Success	6,838
English III EOC Success	2,376
Expository Reading and Writing in High School	787
ELAR High School Electives	414
US History EOC Success	1,596
World Geography EOC Success	2,342
World History EOC Success	1,773

As of the 2013-2014 school year, participants in the TEKS PD Academies were no longer tracked since funding ended. Some ESCs continue to offer Rider 42 Academies trainings, but the trainings are now offered on a cost-recovery basis. All applicable content was moved to Project Share and continues to be available at no cost.

OnTRACK Lessons – EOC Online Courses Only

OnTRACK Lessons are funded by the TEA and align with the TEKS in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Each lesson includes interactive experiences, engaging content, feedback, assessment, and links to additional resources. The OnTRACK Lessons are designed to supplement classroom instruction and intervention through dynamic learning. During FY10 and FY11, ESCs were responsible for assisting districts with local

management of OnTRACK Lessons. With funding for the TEKS PD Academies ending in June 2013, some ESCs were able to continue OnTRACK Lessons assistance to districts while others were not. Figure 11 contains lesson enrollment data, particularly enrollment in lessons aligned to EOC courses.

Figure 11: OnTRACK EOC Courses Usage Data
Related to High School Students Only
(September 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014)

Course Name	# of Courses	# of Students	# of Nonstudents
Algebra I	1,555	18,163	5,213
Algebra II	1,036	3,328	3,468
Biology	1,404	20,177	4,698
Chemistry	1,104	4,929	3,582
English I	957	12,963	3,135
English II	745	11,074	2,605
English III	253	1,175	973
Geometry	1,254	5,402	4,279
Physics	970	2,447	3,176
US History	515	1,794	1,869
World Geography	1,027	12,650	3,475
World History	911	7,896	3,120

Accelerated Instruction for Students At-Risk of Dropping Out

TEC §29.081 requires that a school district provide accelerated instruction to a “student at risk of dropping out of school” as described in TEC §29.081(d). A student with a disability may be considered to be at risk of dropping out of school if the student meets one or more of the statutory criteria for being in an at-risk situation that is not considered to be part of the student’s disability.⁴⁸

During the 2012-2013 school year, 2.26 million, or 45%, of students in Texas were considered at risk of dropping out of school (at-risk).⁴⁹ In Region 1 – Edinburg and Region 19 – El Paso, at-risk students made up over 50% of the total student population with 62% and 52%, respectively.⁵⁰ Overall, Region 4 – Houston and Region 10 – Dallas served the highest number of at-risk students with 510,435 and 330,038, respectively.⁵¹ According to TEC §29.081(d), there are 13 indicators for students at risk of dropping out (listed below). The 13 indicators encompass several issues which may cause a student to be considered at-risk (e.g., limited English proficiency, pregnancy, expulsion). For this reason, it is difficult to give one comprehensive review of how accelerated instruction is improving the academic success of students at risk of dropping out of school. However, school districts, charter schools, and ESCs are addressing all 13 at-risk indicators through different programs and initiatives in order to

⁴⁸ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

⁴⁹ Data source: TAPR.

⁵⁰ Data source: TAPR.

⁵¹ Data source: TAPR.

decrease the drop-out rate of these students. For example, Region 13 – Austin has developed the “At-Risk Network” which offers eight workshops addressing the at-risk indicators. The network is designed to keep school personnel up to date and informed on best practices related to students identified as at-risk. Two of the workshops included in the network are entitled “Motivating At-Risk Students” and “Teens in Adult Roles.” Below are additional examples of the programs and processes ESCs have implemented to combat the 13 at-risk indicators, broken down by indicator.

1. Was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years.

- a. Region 8 – Mount Pleasant. Region 8 provides training and guidance to priority and focus schools using the Texas Accountability and Intervention System framework and resources. In addition, a Region 18 Response to Intervention (RTI) team provides campus administrators and support teams the tools, skill development and appropriate training to assist with state mandated initiatives at the campus level.
- b. Region 14 – Abilene. Region 14 provides turnaround services to campus teachers and administrators in order to identify students who did not advance from one grade level to the next. Turnaround services include data disaggregation training, software support, and assistance improving classroom instructional practices. Region 14 also provides Grade Placement Committee (GPC) training and follow up technical assistance to help get students back on track and performing at or above the appropriate grade level.
- c. Region 17 – Lubbock. Region 17 collaborates with the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk to provide training and guidance to schools in the implementation of a Response to Intervention (RTI) process to close the achievement gap and target needs of struggling students.⁵² Region 17 provides support for Early Intervention or the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) by encouraging schools to provide preschool children with special needs instruction with typical peers, and provide them with the guidance and resources to do so. Region 17 also supports PPCD teachers with instructional strategies to strengthen their academic foundation through Professional Learning Communities (PLC), trainings, conferences and mentoring.

2. If the student is in grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester.

- a. Region 1 – Edinburg. Region 1 provides schools support in the area of RTI, including help understanding the RTI framework and on-site technical assistance (i.e., full day visits) to RTI committees. Region 1 also helps schools with writing procedural manuals to guide RTI practices. Region 1 provides multiple modalities of support including face to face, site visits, trainings, webinars, and online courses (e.g., Moodle). Additional support includes face-to-face meetings for new RTI coordinators and follow-up services for RTI implementation. Region 1 also provides campus administrators and support teams the tools, skill development and appropriate training to assist with state mandated initiatives at the campus level.

⁵² According to the RTI Action Network, “Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning.” (RTI Action Network, “What is RTI?” (<http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti>)).

- b. Region 15 – San Angelo. Region 15 provides teachers with training and consultation to assist struggling students. Training topics include: (i) data driven individualized STAAR reviews used during instruction, tutorials and/or academic interventions; (ii) essential questions and multiple perspectives of understanding important concepts; (iii) various technologies that give students continuous access to important content; (iv) analysis of performance data to identify troubling concepts, instructional techniques, lesson development, and intervention strategies; and (v) formative assessment strategies which lead to informed and individualized instructional decisions.
- c. Region 16 – Amarillo. Region 16 developed a number of training sessions and conferences that address the instruction and assessment of the foundation curriculum. These offerings are designed to offer teachers multiple strategies for reaching students of all-levels and accomplishment. Training workshops and conferences include:
 - i. Shine Your STAAR: Using data to meet the rigor and relevance for US History;
 - ii. Countdown to EOC and Retest;
 - iii. Secondary ELAR (grades 6-12): Keeping your Head Above Water;
 - iv. Professional Learning Communities for the Exceptional Learner;
 - v. STAAR-Leading Intentional Intervention; and
 - vi. Trait-based Writing (grades 6-12) Literacy Conference.

3. Did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument.

- a. Region 11 – Fort Worth. Region 11 utilizes the resources available via Project Share to assist students in need of improvement on state assessments. Data analysis training and technical assistance is provided to determine if a student has performed at a level equal to 110% on the relevant instrument. Region 11 training for educators also covers interventions, data products, and students’ plans (e.g., personal graduation plans). Region 11 is a catalyst for LEAs to provide accelerated instruction that assist students in closing performance gaps. With the complexities of the state assessment system, Region 11 provides training and consultation to LEAs in determining the appropriate state assessment for each student based upon need.
- b. Region 18 – Midland. Region 18 provides training to teachers and administrators on effective instructional strategies with increased rigor for the TEKS. These strategies help students perform at higher levels on the state assessments. Teachers are trained on planning quality unit lessons which incorporate the appropriate instructional strategies and target individual student learning needs. The trainings are offered at cluster sites across the region with several six hour training sessions. The training is also posted online in Region 18’s Learning Management System in a summarized version. The final support piece is on-site coaching and modeling where Region 18 consultants go into classrooms to assist teachers.
- c. Region 20 – San Antonio. Region 20 provides various academic and content training to education professionals regarding students who do not perform satisfactory on assessments. The core of the professional development is to facilitate conversations that will allow school districts and charters to develop a process and plan of action to address at-risk student’s performance on state assessments. For

example, STAAR 3Di: Instruct, Implement, Impact Leadership teams are charged with helping teachers meet the challenges of the assessment system and certain performance levels in the accountability system. In this session, leadership teams (administrators and teacher leaders) are trained to:

- i. Create engaged learning environments;
- ii. Analyze and prioritize data;
- iii. Describe vertical and horizontal trends;
- iv. Map identified areas for growth to the district curriculum;
- v. Design and implement professional learning opportunities;
- vi. Connect professional learning to daily instruction and assessment; and
- vii. Respond to demands of the accountability system.

4. If the student is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or grade 1, 2, or 3, did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year.

- a. Region 2 – Corpus Christi. Region 2 runs Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY), an evidenced-based early learning program that addresses achievement gap issues by supporting parents in their critical role as their children’s first and most influential teachers. In the HIPPPY model, peer home visitors deliver 30 weeks of high quality school readiness curriculum directly to parents who then work with their own three, four, and five year-old children.
- b. Region 7 – Kilgore. Curriculum and Special Education staff at Region 7 provide early learning training and support to school districts and charters. Region 7 runs Head Start and Early Head Start programs that serve 12 counties and approximately 2,410 children within 2,229 families. The programs provide comprehensive services to children (birth – 5 years) from low income families. All Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms utilize the school readiness assessment Teaching Strategies GOLD. This on-going assessment is utilized throughout the school year and is grounded in 38 research-based objectives. Teaching Strategies GOLD includes predictors of school success and is aligned to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. Data is analyzed at the individual student level by each classroom teacher and is used to scaffold each child’s learning. In addition, all enrolled students receive a physical examination, immunizations, lead screening, vision exam, developmental and hearing screenings, and dental care.
- c. Region 13 – Austin. Ready, Set, K! is Region 13’s online tool to help teachers enhance the quality of early childhood programs. The tool empowers teachers to gather more accurate student data through authentic assessment, group children for differentiated instruction, and align teaching to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.
- d. Region 19 – El Paso. The Region 19 Migrant Education Program (MEP) has implemented an iPad initiative to promote enrichment programs primarily for students in the 1st grade who are not performing on grade level. The purpose of the iPad initiative is to enhance understanding and learning through the use of technology.

5. Is pregnant or is a parent.

- a. Region 3 – Victoria. The School Health Services and Counseling Services divisions of Region 3 collaborate to provide consultation and training to teachers, health professionals and counselors related to students who are parents or pregnant. These services are provided through training sessions that address topics

such as credit recovery, homebound services, and Pregnancy Related Services (PRS). Schools are also provided consultation on the use of their state compensatory education funds to assist these students.

- b. Region 6 – Huntsville. Region 6 offers services to Out of School Youth (OSY) in the MEP for students who are parents or pregnant. ESC specialists and counselors works with both schools and students to prevent drop out, and offer assistance in locating pregnancy resources in the community. Region 6 offers state compensatory education guidance on the academic support for students who are pregnant or who are already parents. Region 6 specialists and counselors make home visits to students and parents upon request to ensure students are receiving adequate academic services.

6. Has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with Section 37.006 during the preceding or current school year.

Many of the same or similar programs implemented by ESCs and the schools in their regions for at-risk indicator 7 (i.e., expulsion) are also used to combat at-risk indicator 6 (i.e., alternative education programs). Therefore, please see the examples of processes and programs listed under at-risk indicator 7 for information on alternative education programs.

7. Has been expelled in accordance with Section 37.007 during the preceding or current school year.

- a. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Several ESCs work with schools to develop and implement school-wide PBIS. PBIS is an evidence-based program proven to decrease disciplinary referrals and expulsions. ESCs provide training and support in analysis of disciplinary data for root cause identification, developing targeted strategic plans, and monitoring effectiveness of implementation.
- b. Restorative Discipline. Several ESCs help schools implement “Restorative Discipline,” a philosophy and system-wide intervention that places relationships at the heart of the educational experience. The goal of Restorative Discipline is to change the school climate by encouraging accountability and responsibility, rather than merely responding to student behavior. Based on building and affirming relationships, Restorative Discipline is a whole school approach to discipline.
- c. Region 5 – Beaumont. Region 5 serves as the fiscal agent and instructional program monitor for the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs in both Jefferson and Hardin counties. These facilities serve students that are expelled from their districts in those counties. Region 5 oversees the instructional program, hires and evaluates instructional staff, assists in coordinating services between district and county entities, and schedules governance board meetings.
- d. Region 12 – Waco. Region 12 provides training related to discipline settings and appropriate intervention strategies. The training emphasizes behavior intervention strategies and program assessment for assisting students with emotional needs. Region 12 also provides teachers and campus administrators with guidance and training on appropriate instructional decisions for students placed in alternative education programs.

8. Is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release.

Many of the same or similar programs implemented by ESCs and the schools in their regions for at-risk indicator 7 (i.e., expulsion) are also used to combat at-risk indicator 8. Therefore, please see the examples of processes and programs listed under at-risk indicator 7 for more information on this indicator.

9. Was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school.

- a. Out of School Youth (OSY). ESCs offer OSY services to schools to help locate migrant youth who have dropped out of school. ESC specialists work with these students and their families to identify community resources for financial, health, and educational needs. In addition, specialists may conduct home visits to review academic options with students and make appropriate referrals to address academic needs.
- b. Region 17 – Lubbock. Region 17 created a focus group on secondary transition in order to provide a forum to discuss best practices on keeping students in school and transitioning to postsecondary training or employment. Region 17 hosts a Career Day for area juniors and seniors in high school that encourages and promotes successful transition to postsecondary training or education and employment. Region 17 also trains schools on dropout prevention strategies and identification methods for students in early grades who are potentially at-risk of dropping out of school.
- c. Region 20 – San Antonio. Region 20 provides the Adult Education and Literacy Program that helps adult learners build a strong foundation of academic skills so they may fulfill their role as a worker, parent and community member. The Region 20 instructors, teacher aides and supervisors have made a commitment to provide adult learners with the tools to achieve their goals and open a world of opportunities for success in their life. Adult education consists of four different courses which include:
 - i. English as a Second Language (ESL)
 - ii. English Literacy and Civics (EL Civics)
 - iii. Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education (ABE/ASE)
 - iv. Free Adult College Prep Program

Each year over 2,000 students enroll in Region’s 20 FREE of charge classes. There are over 60 different daytime, afternoon and evening classes offered throughout the year at various instructional sites. The service area includes the following counties: Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar (excluding Northside ISD, North East ISD, and San Antonio ISD), Gillespie, Karnes, Kerr and Wilson.

10. Is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by Section 29.052.

- a. Region 3 – Victoria. The Bilingual/ESL Department of Region 3 offers professional development sessions for teachers assisting students who are English language learners (ELLs) and who are at risk of dropping out. Workshop sessions provide training on skills and strategies for teaching academic language to ELLs in order to facilitate learning in the classroom. In addition, the workshops cover instructional strategies for the bilingual/ESL classroom and effective strategies that build conversational English.
- b. Region 19 – El Paso. Region 19 provides a MP3 program for migrant students to access prerecorded English lessons. The MP3 is loaded with English conversational lessons that allow the student to learn at their own pace. Student progress is assessed by a Region 19 staff member after the student has completed the 3rd lesson.

11. Is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official.

ESCs play a critical role in equipping Texas schools to assist students in foster care. Many ESCs are going the extra-mile to support local education agencies in increasing awareness and taking action to improve the education outcomes of student who are in foster care. Fifteen ESC regions throughout Texas have voluntarily designated a 'Foster Care Champion' to provide training and support to Texas schools in implementing provisions, policies, and new practices to advance the education of students in foster care. A number of ESCs have developed local training. Training ranges from in-person events for local districts to collaborative forums that include both educators and child welfare stakeholders; and an online training module to support implementation and dissemination of the information statewide.

- a. Region 9 – Wichita Falls. Region 9 hosted a meeting and open forum for providers of DPRS services in order to increase awareness of multiple resources to use on behalf of students. Providers who attended the meeting included Child Protective Services (CPS), school officials, truant officers, judges, and law enforcement personnel. Region 9 has also provided training and technical assistance to special education directors, administrators, and counselors on the Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide.
- b. Region 14 – Abilene. Region 14 trains district staff on recognizing child abuse, sexual abuse, and maltreatment including proper reporting procedures to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Training and resources are provided to district foster care liaisons regarding resources and rights for foster care students.
- c. Region 15 – San Angelo. Region 15 provides State Compensatory Education and At-Risk Criteria training or consultation to districts with DPRS questions. The region provides Counselor Networking sessions to give schools the opportunity to collaborate on and discuss issues related to child abuse. In addition, Region 15 provides Foster Care Liaison Training and Webinars which are coordinated through the CPS Education Specialist. Region 15 also provides quarterly meeting space for the Concho Valley Consortium, a collaboration between educators, CPS, and other organizations who assist students in the Concho Valley in CPS custody.
- d. Region 20 – San Antonio. The Region 20 School Health program collaborates with CPS and Child Safe to coordinate training for school staff on child abuse and child sexual abuse prevention. In addition, Region 20 provides the following trainings:
 - i. *Youth Mental Health First Aid*. This course is focused on teaching participants how to help youth (ages 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health challenge or who are in a crisis. A variety of mental health challenges common among adolescents are addressed during the training including: anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, ADHD, disruptive behavior disorders, and substance use disorder. Participants receive a three-year Mental Health First Aid certification for completing the course.
 - ii. *Current Issues in Mental Health for School Health Professionals*. The workshop session addresses mental health issues common in children and adolescents, including key warning signs and strategies for school health personnel to best assist students with mental health concerns. The training includes a discussion of the unique stressors facing children and their families. Additionally, participants learn about community resources available to support the needs of students with mental health concerns.

12. Is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302, and its subsequent amendments.

Region 10 – Richardson. Region 10 provides statewide leadership for the Texas McKinney-Vento Homeless Project regarding the education of children experiencing homelessness.⁵³ In collaboration with the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) at the UT Dana Center, Region 10 provides an annual conference, professional development opportunities, individual technical assistance, and numerous web based services to over 1,200 Texas districts and charter schools as well as the other 19 ESCs. All ESCs conduct training on Homelessness for their districts, but either Region 10 or THEO are on-site during at least one training to assist and answer questions. Identification, enrollment, transportation, program requirements and funding usage are areas of focus. In addition, Region 10 provides sub-grantee funding through the Texas Support for Homeless Education Program (TEXSHEP). TEXSHEP provides direct support to students and families experiencing homelessness through 61 single member districts and charter schools as well as 5 ESC shared service arrangements.⁵⁴

13. Resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.⁵⁵

- a. Region 4 – Houston. Region 4 provides coaching and professional development in science to teachers from Southwest Schools. Teachers from Southwest Schools include those from the Phoenix Schools providing education in multiple Houston-area residential treatment centers (RTCs) and alternative learning facilities.
- b. Region 6 – Huntsville. Region 6 provides professional development and technical support to staff at the Raven School/Gulf Coast Trades Center in TEKS-based instruction, intervention, and STAAR. The Raven School is an open-enrollment charter school for at-risk youth in Texas with the purpose of teaching trade skills. Region 6 also provides consultation to districts in maintaining compliance with serving students with disabilities in residential facilities.
- c. Region 14 – Abilene. Region 14 consultants collaborate with residential placement facilities to assist students in transitioning back to a school setting. Region 14 staff also monitor and train district personnel on effective programming for students with disabilities residing or transitioning from residential facilities. Consultants collaborate with emergency shelters and foster care homes to ensure students are immediately enrolled in school and provided an individualized graduation plan.

Accelerated Instruction Under the Student Success Initiative

TEC §28.0211 (also referred to as the Student Success Initiative or SSI) requires a school district to provide students in third through eighth grade who do not perform satisfactorily on a state assessment with accelerated instruction in the applicable subject area.⁵⁶

⁵³ The Texas McKinney-Vento Homeless Project is a TEA decentralized program.

⁵⁴ The five ESCs that receive TEXSHEP funding applied for the grant.

⁵⁵ Please see at-risk indicator 11 for information on regional Foster Care Champions.

⁵⁶ Accelerated Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction for Students in Special Education Programs (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769809755&libID=25769809768>).

For students in grades 3-8, Texas Education Code §28.0211 outlines accelerated instruction requirements while also addressing Grade Advancement requirements for students in grades 5 and 8. Texas Education Code §39.025 addresses accelerated instruction for students participating in an End-of-Course (EOC) assessment.⁵⁷

Students in grades 5 and 8 who fail to perform satisfactorily on the appropriate reading and mathematics assessment and who are promoted to the next grade level through a Grade Placement Committee (GPC) must complete accelerated instruction before placement in the next grade level. A student who fails to complete required accelerated instruction may not be promoted.⁵⁸

The Student Success Initiative (SSI) was enacted in 1999 by the 76th Texas Legislature with the purpose of ensuring “all students receive the instruction and support they need to be academically successful in mathematics and reading.”⁵⁹ As described above, the SSI prescribes grade advancement and accelerated instruction requirements for students in grades 5 and 8 who fail to meet the passing standard on the math and reading STAAR. Originally, the SSI focused on students in grades 5 and 8 only, but in 2009 the legislature passed House Bill 3 which expanded the focus to include grades 3, 4, 6, and 7.⁶⁰ During the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years, the SSI was implemented through Texas SUCCESS, an initiative providing no-cost access to online math and reading programs to all Texas students in grades 3-8. Information about the programs, including how to enroll and how to receive assistance and support, is available on the Texas Success website at texassuccess.org.⁶¹ According to TEA, “Texas SUCCESS is designed to provide Texas public school students with access to interactive math and reading programs in grades 3-8 under the Student Success Initiation (SSI).”⁶² Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, TEA selected Think Through Math and Istation as the online supplemental mathematics and reading programs available at no cost to students for use both in school and at home. Features of the two programs include, but are not limited to, the following.

Think Through Math

- a) *[I]nstructional design ... provides motivation + computer-adaptive instruction + LIVE state-certified teachers + actionable data.”⁶³*
- b) *High quality instruction and interventions that match individual students’ learning needs.⁶⁴*
- c) *Live bilingual tutors to engage and assist students as they work to strengthen their math skills and deepen their understanding of math concepts.⁶⁵*

⁵⁷ Pflugerville ISD, “Support Framework for Grade Advancement and Accelerated Instruction 2012-2013,” p. 3 (<http://cms.pflugervilleisd.net/cms/lib/TX01001527/Centricity/Domain/876/Support%20Framework%20for%20SSI%202012-13.pdf>).

⁵⁸ Pflugerville ISD, “Support Framework for Grade Advancement and Accelerated Instruction 2012-2013,” p. 3 (<http://cms.pflugervilleisd.net/cms/lib/TX01001527/Centricity/Domain/876/Support%20Framework%20for%20SSI%202012-13.pdf>).

⁵⁹ Texas Education Agency, “Student Success Initiative Manual – Grade Advancement Requirements, Update for the 2013-14 School Year,” p. 2.

⁶⁰ Texas Education Agency, “Student Success Initiative Manual – Grade Advancement Requirements, Update for the 2013-14 School Year,” p. 3.

⁶¹ Please visit the Texas SUCCESS website for more information (<http://texassuccess.org/>).

⁶² To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated August 18, 2014: Continuation of Texas SUCCESS – Student Success Initiative Online Mathematics and Reading Resources (http://texassuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TexasSUCCESS_TAA8.18.14.pdf).

⁶³ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Math” (<http://texassuccess.org/math>).

⁶⁴ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Math” (<http://texassuccess.org/math>).

⁶⁵ To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated August 18, 2014: Continuation of Texas SUCCESS – Student Success Initiative Online Mathematics and Reading Resources (http://texassuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TexasSUCCESS_TAA8.18.14.pdf).

- d) Recently aligned to the revised math TEKS that will be implemented beginning in the 2014-15 school year.⁶⁶
- e) [S]ystem collects data based on individual responses and adjusts instruction to meet a student’s needs.⁶⁷
- f) Spanish Support – visual, auditory, simple language, Spanish translations and lessons structured in consistent ways.⁶⁸

Istation

- a) [I]ntegrates direct ... systematic instruction with strategic reading skills to improve phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension...⁶⁹
- b) Engaging, interactive content in a game-like format.⁷⁰
- c) Computer-adaptive curriculum that dynamically adjusts to each student’s skill level.⁷¹
- d) Differentiated instruction to accommodate different learning styles.⁷²
- e) Assessments and lessons reviewed by a respected advisory board of academic scholars.⁷³
- f) A rich library of teacher resources, including over 1,900 teacher-directed lessons, complete bibliographies for each lesson, online interactive books, a teacher’s manual, a user’s guide, and technical support.⁷⁴

Region 20 – San Antonio, as the SSI Support Center for Texas SUCCESS, provides help desk and technical support to districts, coordinates outreach and training efforts at all ESCs and some districts, promotes the program at state and regional conferences, maintains a web portal with support materials for both Think Through Math and Istation Reading programs. During the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, Region 20 offered a combined total of 64 face-to-face workshops related to Think Through Math and Istation, and 33 outreach events through regional and state conferences. In addition, the Support Center fielded over 4,500 calls and approximately 5,000 emails over the two preceding school years. Below is the usage data for Think Through Math and Istation for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. As the figures below show, usage increased for Think Through Math and Istation between 2012-2013 and 2013-2014.

Figure 12: Texas SUCCESS Usage Data (2012-2013)

	Think Through Math	Istation
Number of Participating Districts	1,056	858
Number of Participating Campuses	5,844	5,217
Number of Students Enrolled	1,638,844	1,941,159

⁶⁶ To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated August 18, 2014: Continuation of Texas SUCCESS – Student Success Initiative Online Mathematics and Reading Resources (http://texassuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TexasSUCCESS_TAA8.18.14.pdf).

⁶⁷ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Math” (<http://texassuccess.org/math>).

⁶⁸ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Math” (<http://texassuccess.org/math>).

⁶⁹ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Reading” (<http://texassuccess.org/reading>).

⁷⁰ To the Administrator Addressed Letter dated August 18, 2014: Continuation of Texas SUCCESS – Student Success Initiative Online Mathematics and Reading Resources (http://texassuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TexasSUCCESS_TAA8.18.14.pdf).

⁷¹ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Reading” (<http://texassuccess.org/reading>).

⁷² Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Reading” (<http://texassuccess.org/reading>).

⁷³ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Reading” (<http://texassuccess.org/reading>).

⁷⁴ Texas SUCCESS, “Student SUCCESS in Reading” (<http://texassuccess.org/reading>).

Figure 13: Texas SUCCESS Usage Data (2013-2014)

	Think Through Math	Istation
Number of Participating Districts	1,106	940
Number of Participating Campuses	5,946	6,605
Number of Students Enrolled	1,912,062	2,161,923

Write for Texas

The SSI for 2014-2015 also includes professional development designed to improve writing instruction in all content areas in grades 6-12. The professional development, *Write for Texas*, includes both online materials and face-to-face sessions in which coaches personally meet with teachers to observe, co-teach, model, mentor, and provide feedback. Topics covered in *Write for Texas* include the following:

- Using Reading and Writing to Support Learning
- Teaching Sentence Skills
- Teaching Revising and Editing Skills
- Teaching Expository and Persuasive Texts
- Teaching Personal Narrative Texts

Funding for *Write for Texas* was distributed across numerous ESCs and National Writing Project (NWP) of Texas sites. ESCs and NWP of Texas sites were selected by identifying “high need” regions according to STAAR writing results for English I (first administration, spring 2013). ESCs not receiving funding are able to provide the PD through a cost recovery model or may incorporate the materials into other trainings.

Write for Texas also includes a pilot of an online writing evaluation program. Districts volunteering to participate in the pilot are working with TEA and a selected vendor (identified through a competitive solicitation process) to use an online writing evaluation program during the 2014-2015 school year. The program provides formative feedback to students as they complete assignments. The feedback, when combined with teacher feedback, guides students through multiple drafts of an assignment.

Agency Contact Person(s)

For information on **accelerated instruction programs**, please contact Kerry Ballast, Director of Educational Technology at (512) 463-9601 or kerry.ballast@tea.state.tx.us. For information on **Texas SUCCESS**, please contact Stacy Avery, Director of Texas Initiatives, at (512) 463-9414 or stacy.avery@tea.state.tx.us.



Exemptions and Waivers

Overview

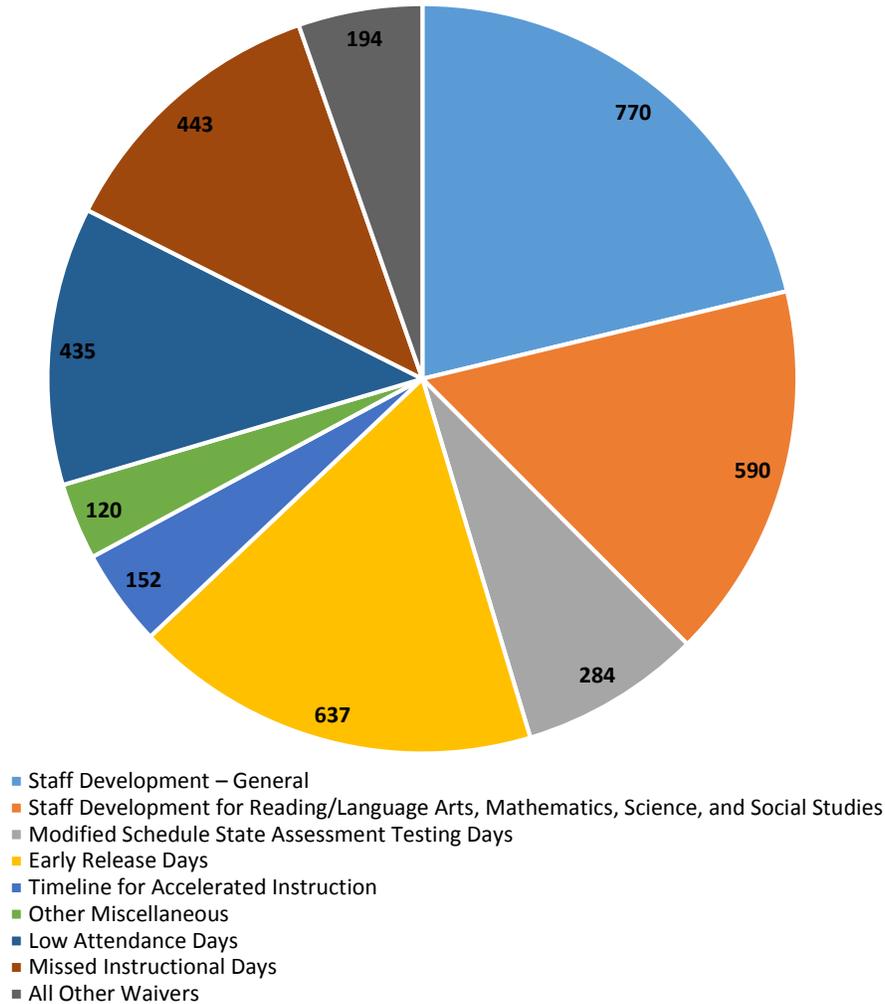
TEC §39.333(2) requires (i) a summary of exemptions and waivers granted to campuses and school districts under §7.056 and §39.232, and (ii) a review of the effectiveness of each campus or district following deregulation. No state accountability ratings were assigned in 2012 due to the changes related to the new accountability system. The 2013 rating labels were *Met Standard, Met Alternative Standard, Improvement Required, and Not Rated*. As there were no exemplary ratings, the automatic exemption under TEC §39.232 does not apply. Therefore, this section only reviews waivers related to TEC §7.056.

State Waivers Granted 2012-2013 and 2013-2014

In the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the Commissioner of Education granted a combined total of 3,625 state waivers and 494 class size exceptions. Please see the section on Student-Teacher Ratios and Class Size Limitations for an in-depth review of class size exceptions, referred to as class size waivers in this report. In Figure 14 below, state waivers granted in the two preceding school years are presented by waiver type.⁷⁵ As the figure below shows, the most frequently requested waivers were for staff development, early release days, low attendance days, and missed instructional days.

⁷⁵ There are 17 types of waivers schools may submit to TEA for approval. Waiver types accounting for 2.0% or less total state waivers are included in the “All Other Waivers” category in Figure 14. The “All Other Waivers” category includes nine types of state waivers and accounted for 194 total waivers over the two preceding school years.

Figure 14: State Waivers Granted
(2012-2013 and 2013-2014)⁷⁶



Staff Development Waivers

The type of waiver most frequently requested, “Staff Development – General,” allows a school district or campus to modify its calendar, making additional time available for staff development. During the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the commissioner approved a total of 770 of these waivers granting a maximum of three days for general staff development. To encourage staff development related to reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the commissioner may approve two additional waiver days for staff development. The commissioner granted 590 of these types of waivers over the two preceding school years. One additional day of staff development may be approved for districts requesting to participate in eligible conferences appropriate to individual teaching assignments. The commissioner granted 42 of these types of waivers over the two preceding

⁷⁶ Waivers approved from 06/01/2012 through 05/31/2013 and from 6/01/2013 through 05/31/2014.

school years.⁷⁷ Overall, waivers related to staff development accounted for 38.7% of total state waivers granted during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years.⁷⁸

Early Release Day Waivers

The second type of waiver most frequently requested was classified as “Early Release Day.” This type of waiver accounted for 17.6% of total state waivers granted during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. According to TEA, an Early Release Day waiver “allows the districts and charter schools to conduct school for less than seven hours for a total of six days of student instruction a year. These days may provide additional training in education methodologies or provide time to meet the needs of student and local.”⁷⁹

Attendance Waivers

The third types of waivers most frequently requested were classified as “Low Attendance Day” and “Missed Instructional Day.” Collectively, these attendance-related waivers accounted for 24.2% of total state waivers granted during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. According to TEA, Low Attendance Day waivers are, “waiver[s] to excuse any instructional days from ADA calculations that have attendance at least 10 percent below the last school year's average attendance due to inclement weather, health, safety-related, or other issues.”⁸⁰ Missed Instruction Day waivers are, “for excused absences if instructional days are missed due to inclement weather, health, safety-related, or other issues.”⁸¹

Agency Contact Person(s)

For information on general state waivers, please contact Sally Partridge, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation and School Improvement, or Leah Martin at (512) 463-5899 or accred@tea.state.tx.us.

⁷⁷ The 42 waivers granted for “Staff Development through Eligible Conference” is included in the “All Other Waivers” category in Figure 14 since it makes up less than 2% of total state waivers granted in the two preceding school years (42 / 3,625 = 1.2%).

⁷⁸ Calculation: (770 + 590 + 42) / 3,625 = 38.7%.

⁷⁹ Texas Education Agency, “State Waiver Types – Expedited” (<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=7085#ER>).

⁸⁰ Texas Education Agency, “State Waiver Types – Attendance” (<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=7089#MID>).

⁸¹ Texas Education Agency, “State Waiver Types – Attendance” (<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=7089#MID>).



Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs)

Overview

TEC §39.333(3) requires an evaluation of the performance of the system of regional education service centers based on (i) the indicators adopted under Section 8.101 and (ii) client satisfaction with services provided under Subchapter B, Chapter 8. The 20 ESCs were established through TEC §8.001 in 1967. According to §8.002, the purpose of the ESCs is to (i) assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system, (ii) enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically, and (iii) implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner. The ESCs develop and provide services to school districts and charter schools including, but not limited to, professional development and consulting assistance, trainings, and coaching by content specialists. The ESCs also secure products for schools at lower costs through shared service agreements and cooperative purchasing. All of these services are reviewed annually by the Commissioner of Education in a multi-phased review of the education service centers and the quality and effectiveness of their services as reflected in an analysis of both student achievement and client satisfaction measures.

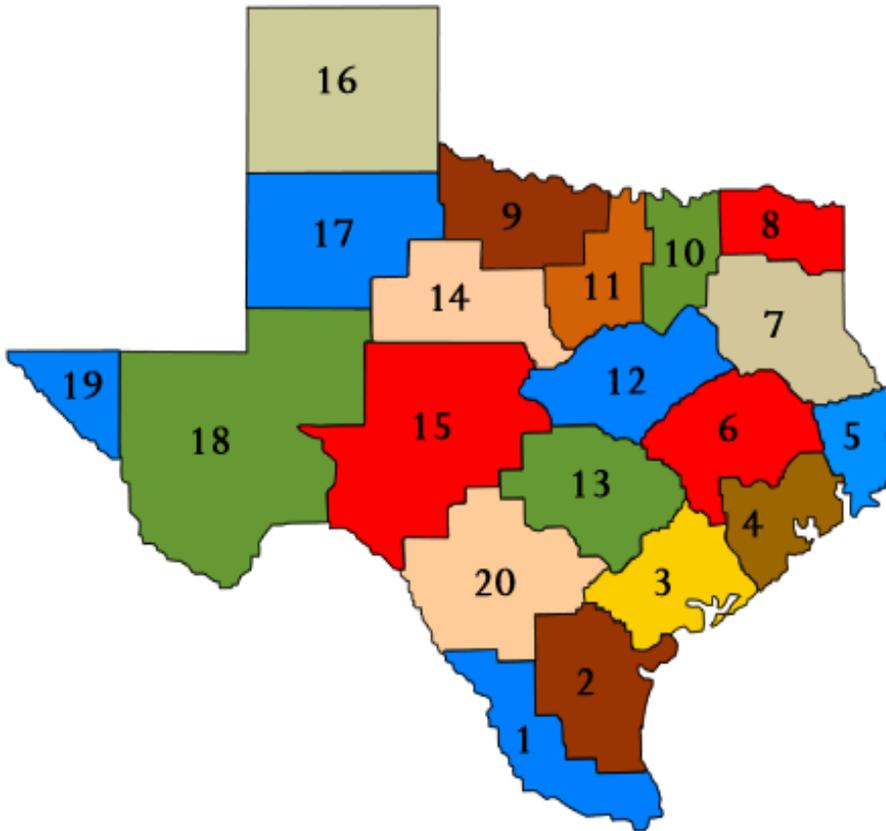
Most often associated with assistance to small and medium-sized school districts, the ESCs have a long history of providing assistance to all districts, including metropolitan and large suburban districts. ESCs continue to be an asset for both large and small schools in both sparse and densely populated regions. For example, schools with large student populations in urban areas benefit from the ESC's ability to use economies of scale when purchasing and providing services. In addition, schools with small student populations in rural areas of Texas benefit from ESCs providing services no other vendors are likely to provide at a cost effective rate (e.g., internet in West Texas).

General Information

Location and Governance

The map of the ESCs shown below outlines the location of each of the 20 service centers. ESCs are assigned responsibility for providing core services to each school district, campus, and charter school within their respective regional boundaries. Districts, however, may elect to receive services from any service center in the state. The State Board of Education defined the regions in 1967, as geographic areas of counties and the encompassed school districts. Since 1995, the Commissioner of Education has had final authority over all aspects of ESC location, governance, and accountability issues.

Figure 15: Map of Texas Regional Education Service Centers



Pursuant to 19 TAC 53.1001 and 53.1002, each ESC is governed by an eight-member board of directors. Seven of those directors have voting power and are elected by the boards of trustees of school districts within the region. The eighth member is appointed by the Commissioner of Education to represent charter schools within the region and is a non-voting member. Each ESC's board of directors, with the approval of the Commissioner of Education, selects an Executive Director who serves as the chief executive officer of that center. The center's board establishes policies that govern the operation of the center. In addition to its board of directors, each center has several key advisory committees composed of stakeholders in the various service areas, including teachers, campus and central administrators, and superintendents and directors of charter schools. These committees provide input to the Executive Director regarding programs and services.

ESC Staffing

Over 4,500 FTEs were employed by the 20 ESCs during the 2013-2014 school year. Employees at the ESCs include consultants, content specialists, field agents, and program directors or staff. At least seven ESCs run Head Start, Early Head Start, and/or Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs which is why these regions appear to be much larger than other ESCs according to the staff FTE data in Figure 16. Below are the ESCs with early childhood programs along with the number of children served and FTE positions dedicated to these programs.

Region 7 – Kilgore. The Head Start/Early Head Start program at Region 7 serves approximately 2,170 children (ages 0 – 4) located at 56 sites within 12 counties. Region 7 partners with 42 school districts and two child care centers which allows for the reimbursement for 220 Head Start teachers and teaching assistants and 31 Early Head Start teachers. Staff development and materials for these classrooms are also funded by the Head Start/Early Head Start program which provide a rich learning environment for the students. The Region 7 Head Start/Early Head Start program employs about 123 FTEs which accounts for approximately 50% of all FTEs at Region 7.

Region 9 – Wichita Falls. The Head Start program at Region 9 serves approximately 630 children (ages 3 – 4) in 9 school districts across Clay, Cooke, Montague, and Wichita counties. Region 9 employs six centralized Head Start employees (approximately 8% of all FTEs at Region 9) and provides funding for participating school districts to hire an additional 100 Head Start FTEs.

Region 10 – Richardson. The Head Start program at Region 10 employs 72 FTEs. The program serves 980 children (ages 3 – 4) within 19 school districts in Collin, Grayson, Ellis, Rockwall and Kaufman counties. Region 10 also offers an Early Head Start program which employs 55 FTEs and serves 188 children (ages 0 – 3) within three school districts in Collin, Grayson and Rockwall counties. Combined, these early childhood programs employ 127 FTEs which accounts for approximately 33% of all FTEs at Region 10.

Region 14 – Abilene and Region 15 – San Angelo. For the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in Region 14 and Region 15, Region 14 is the federal grantee and Region 15 serves as a delegate. The programs extend over 16 counties and serves approximately 697 children (ages 3 – 5) for Head Start, and 96 children (ages 0 – 3) for Early Head Start. These early childhood programs employ 22 FTEs between Region 14 and Region 15.

Region 16 – Amarillo. The Head Start program at Region 16 serves approximately 1,763 children (ages 0 – 4) and employs 145 FTEs. The program extends to 17 school districts within 14 counties. Region 16 also offers an ECI program which serves approximately 268 children (ages 0 – 3) and employs 28 FTEs. Combined, these early childhood programs employ 173 FTEs which accounts for approximately 54% of all FTEs at Region 16.

Region 19 – El Paso. The Head Start program at Region 19 is the largest in Texas and employs about 830 FTEs. The program serves approximately 4,370 children (ages 0 – 4) at 30 sites within El Paso and Hudspeth counties. Region 19 also offers an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program which employs about 30 FTEs and serves approximately 296 children (ages 0 – 3). Combined, these early childhood programs employ over 860 FTEs which accounts for approximately 83% of all FTEs at Region 19.

Region 20 – San Antonio. The Head Start program at Region 20 serves 867 children in the counties of Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, and Medina. Region 20 partners with 11 independent school districts to provide a full-day of service for children who are dually enrolled in the State Pre-K program and Head Start program, which affords the children all possible services from each program. Additionally, there are approximately 406 Pre-K children integrated throughout the 65 classrooms who also benefit from the combined Pre-K and Head Start experience. The partnership school districts provide the following services as non-federal share due to the dual

enrollment of children: food service, nurse, counselor, special education, and transportation. Combined, the Head Start programs employ about 50 FTEs which accounts for approximately 14% of all FTEs at Region 20.

Figure 16: ESC FTE Counts
(2013-2014)⁸²

Regional ESC	2013-2014
Region 1	255.00
Region 2	87.00
Region 3	110.50
Region 4	259.00
Region 5	96.00
Region 6	177.63
Region 7	252.00
Region 8	77.50
Region 9	74.55
Region 10	382.00
Region 11	155.98
Region 12	194.50
Region 13	293.00
Region 14	101.43
Region 15	112.99
Region 16	320.00
Region 17	113.57
Region 18	131.00
Region 19	1,038.04
Region 20	366.12
Total	4,597.81

Revenues and Expenditures

During the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the ESC system budgeted funds of \$567 million.⁸³ Approximately 46% of the funds were from Federal Grants, 16% from State Grants, and 38% from Local Revenue. The ESCs receive funds from three sources defined below:

1. Federal Grants. ESCs receive federal grants primarily from the U.S. Department of Education. For the majority of federal grants, TEA acts as a “pass-through” agency and grants the federal dollars to the ESCs via competitive sub-recipient procurement processes.

⁸² Data source: FTE counts were submitted to TEA by the ESCs in a consolidated format.

⁸³ Each ESC hires an independent auditor to review the finances of the ESC. The Annual Financial Reports for each ESC can be found online at <http://tuna.tea.state.tx.us/audit/PDFviewer.asp>.

2. State Grants. ESCs receive state grants from Texas state agencies including TEA and the Texas Health and Human Service Commission. TEA acts as a “pass-through” agency for some state grants via competitive grants or contracts. Other state agencies have similar granting and oversight processes. Formula funding appropriation via Rider 38, General Appropriations Act, 83rd Legislature, for ESC core services or necessary operational expenses, is included in the State Grant totals by region in Figure 17 and are separately identified by region in Figure 19.
3. Local Revenue. Local Revenue is generated by ESCs from sales of products and services to school districts and charter schools.

**Figure 17: ESC Audited Budget Funds
(2012-2013)**

ESC	Total Federal Grants	Total State Grants	Total Local Revenue	Total Funds
Region 1	\$19,595,383	\$3,719,324	\$13,632,798	\$36,947,505
Region 2	\$3,659,426	\$1,144,449	\$8,573,719	\$13,377,594
Region 3	\$3,261,090	\$3,852,633	\$3,576,514	\$10,690,237
Region 4	\$10,231,553	\$8,261,302	\$10,346,773	\$28,839,628
Region 5	\$2,966,394	\$1,434,517	\$6,291,414	\$10,692,325
Region 6	\$6,437,771	\$2,141,547	\$5,958,850	\$14,538,168
Region 7	\$17,755,192	\$1,794,507	\$10,869,191	\$30,418,890
Region 8	\$2,915,127	\$1,860,018	\$5,036,079	\$9,811,224
Region 9	\$7,034,888	\$1,455,488	\$3,091,880	\$11,582,256
Region 10	\$42,485,649	\$20,948,762	\$20,045,972	\$83,480,383
Region 11	\$7,206,561	\$3,583,873	\$12,736,943	\$23,527,377
Region 12	\$9,369,469	\$2,474,701	\$10,646,377	\$22,490,547
Region 13	\$21,264,025	\$11,935,795	\$32,197,914	\$65,397,734
Region 14	\$7,600,436	\$2,751,454	\$5,117,460	\$15,469,350
Region 15	\$3,373,786	\$3,012,519	\$5,967,861	\$12,354,166
Region 16	\$22,392,413	\$2,101,726	\$9,777,447	\$34,271,586
Region 17	\$4,411,305	\$3,593,562	\$8,761,101	\$16,765,968
Region 18	\$14,771,119	\$2,580,354	\$8,011,885	\$25,363,358
Region 19	\$38,154,166	\$3,045,320	\$4,932,460	\$46,131,946
Region 20	\$15,962,806	\$8,418,117	\$30,687,800	\$55,068,723
Totals for ESC System	\$260,848,559	\$90,109,968	\$216,260,438	\$567,218,965

**Figure 18: ESC Audited Budget Funds – Federal Grants
(2012-2013)**

ESC	Federal Grants Administered by TEA	All Other Federal Grants	Total Federal Grants
Region 1	\$6,466,983	\$13,128,400	\$19,595,383
Region 2	\$2,679,126	\$980,300	\$3,659,426
Region 3	\$1,750,025	\$1,511,065	\$3,261,090
Region 4	\$9,088,335	\$1,143,218	\$10,231,553
Region 5	\$1,979,007	\$987,387	\$2,966,394
Region 6	\$5,046,373	\$1,391,398	\$6,437,771
Region 7	\$2,632,407	\$15,122,785	\$17,755,192
Region 8	\$2,636,732	\$278,395	\$2,915,127
Region 9	\$2,384,110	\$4,650,778	\$7,034,888
Region 10	\$32,461,285	\$10,024,364	\$42,485,649
Region 11	\$6,229,540	\$977,021	\$7,206,561
Region 12	\$5,349,711	\$4,019,758	\$9,369,469
Region 13	\$20,002,489	\$1,261,536	\$21,264,025
Region 14	\$3,382,914	\$4,217,522	\$7,600,436
Region 15	\$2,204,105	\$1,169,681	\$3,373,786
Region 16	\$4,320,862	\$18,071,551	\$22,392,413
Region 17	\$3,599,156	\$812,149	\$4,411,305
Region 18	\$2,697,954	\$12,073,165	\$14,771,119
Region 19	\$4,227,113	\$33,927,053	\$38,154,166
Region 20	\$8,949,400	\$7,013,406	\$15,962,806
Totals for ESC System	\$128,087,627	\$132,760,932	\$260,848,559

Figure 19: ESC Audited Budget Funds – State Grants
(2012-2013)

ESC	State Grants Administered by TEA	Legislative Appropriations (Rider 38)	All Other State Grants	Total State Grants
Region 1	\$2,264,408	\$258,536	\$1,196,380	\$3,719,324
Region 2	\$610,071	\$519,044	\$15,334	\$1,144,449
Region 3	\$853,613	\$663,863	\$2,335,157	\$3,852,633
Region 4	\$7,789,280	\$452,972	\$19,050	\$8,261,302
Region 5	\$529,536	\$335,836	\$569,145	\$1,434,517
Region 6	\$1,577,426	\$479,292	\$84,829	\$2,141,547
Region 7	\$1,055,581	\$649,360	\$89,566	\$1,794,507
Region 8	\$1,060,015	\$526,376	\$273,627	\$1,860,018
Region 9	\$618,364	\$816,217	\$20,907	\$1,455,488
Region 10	\$19,149,680	\$494,145	\$1,304,937	\$20,948,762
Region 11	\$1,925,880	\$471,766	\$1,186,227	\$3,583,873
Region 12	\$1,410,564	\$645,403	\$418,734	\$2,474,701
Region 13	\$11,511,750	\$424,045	\$0	\$11,935,795
Region 14	\$825,516	\$764,140	\$1,161,798	\$2,751,454
Region 15	\$948,627	\$1,280,386	\$783,506	\$3,012,519
Region 16	\$1,000,601	\$1,023,996	\$77,129	\$2,101,726
Region 17	\$2,358,301	\$850,027	\$385,234	\$3,593,562
Region 18	\$1,412,530	\$1,114,628	\$53,195	\$2,580,354
Region 19	\$2,300,731	\$237,844	\$506,745	\$3,045,320
Region 20	\$5,751,341	\$492,124	\$2,174,652	\$8,418,117
Totals for ESC System	\$64,953,815	\$12,500,000	\$12,656,152	\$90,109,968

Performance of Education Service Centers

Per the statutory requirement in TEC §39.333, this section provides an evaluation of the performance of the system of regional education service centers (ESCs) based upon:

- (1) the indicators adopted under §8.101, Performance Standards and Indicators;
- (2) client satisfaction with services provided under Subchapter B, Chapter 8, related to core services and services to improve performance, state initiatives, and additional services; and
- (3) the Commissioner of Education’s top priorities.

TEC §8.101, Performance Standards and Indicators, states, “[t]he commissioner shall establish performance standards and indicators for regional education service centers that measure the achievement of objectives in Section 8.002. Performance standards and indicators must include the following:

- (1) student performance in districts served;
- (2) district effectiveness and efficiency in districts served resulting from technical assistance and program support;
- (3) direct services provided or regionally shared services arranged by the service center which produce more economical and efficient school operations;
- (4) direct services provided or regionally shared services arranged by the service center which provide for assistance in core services; and
- (5) grants received for implementation of state initiatives and the results achieved by the service center under the terms of the grant contract.”

ESC Performance Evaluation Based Upon TEC §8.101

The 20 ESCs were formally reviewed for the 2013-2014 school year. Between July and August 2014, each ESC Executive Director met with the Commissioner of Education and the Director of Education Service Centers to discuss performance and the goals for the upcoming school year. Because the ESC Performance Standards and Indicators manual was not effective until the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the 2013-2014 evaluation included a review of the ESC’s performance based on the five statutory requirements of TEC §8.101. The evaluation also included a review of ESC audited financial statements, client satisfaction, and any other factors the commissioner determined to be appropriate. Below are the results of the performance evaluation of the ESCs related to TEC §8.101.

Student Performance in Districts Served TEC §8.101(1)

ESCs were evaluated on student performance through accountability ratings. The state accountability framework of four Performance Indexes includes a broad set of measures that provide a comprehensive evaluation of districts and campuses. Below are descriptions of the four Performance Indexes along with a review of ESC ratings for the 2012-2013 school year.⁸⁴

Index 1: Student Achievement. Measures campus and district performance based on satisfactory student achievement combined over all subjects for all students. In 2012-2013, the statewide target for Index 1 was 50 and the statewide average was 77. All ESC regions exceeded the statewide target.

Index 2: Student Progress. Measures student progress by subject and by student demographics: race/ethnicity, special education, and English Language Learners (ELLs). In 2012-2013, the statewide target for Index 2 was 21 and the statewide average was 34. All ESC regions exceeded the statewide target.

Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps. Emphasizes the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the two lowest performing racial/ethnic student groups. In 2012-2013, the statewide target for Index 3 was 55 and the statewide average was 71. All ESC regions exceeded the statewide target.

⁸⁴ Data for the 2013-2014 school year was not available at the time of this report.

Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness. Emphasizes the role of elementary and middle schools in preparing students for the rigors of high school, and the importance of earning a high school diploma that provides students with the foundation necessary for success in college, the workforce, job training programs, or the military. In 2012-2013, the statewide target for Index 4 was 75 and the statewide average was 85. All ESC regions exceeded the statewide target.

Figure 20: Index 1 – Student Achievement
(2012-2013)

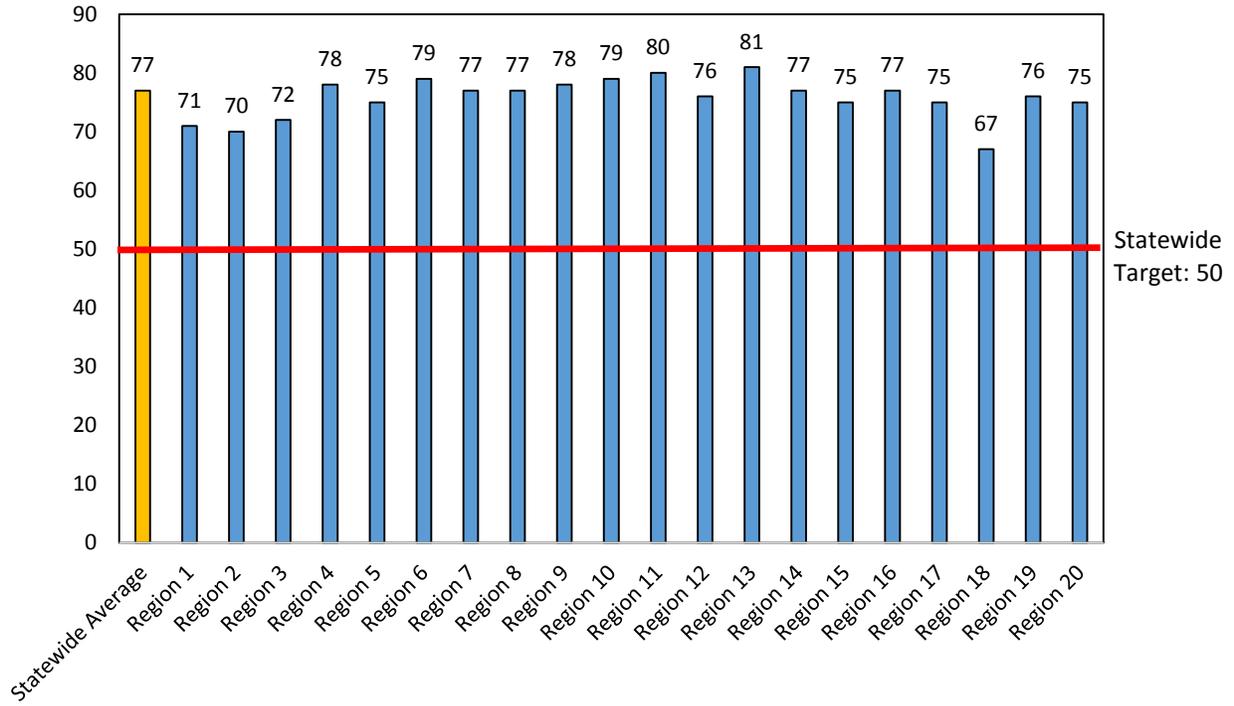


Figure 21: Index 2 – Student Progress
(2012-2013)

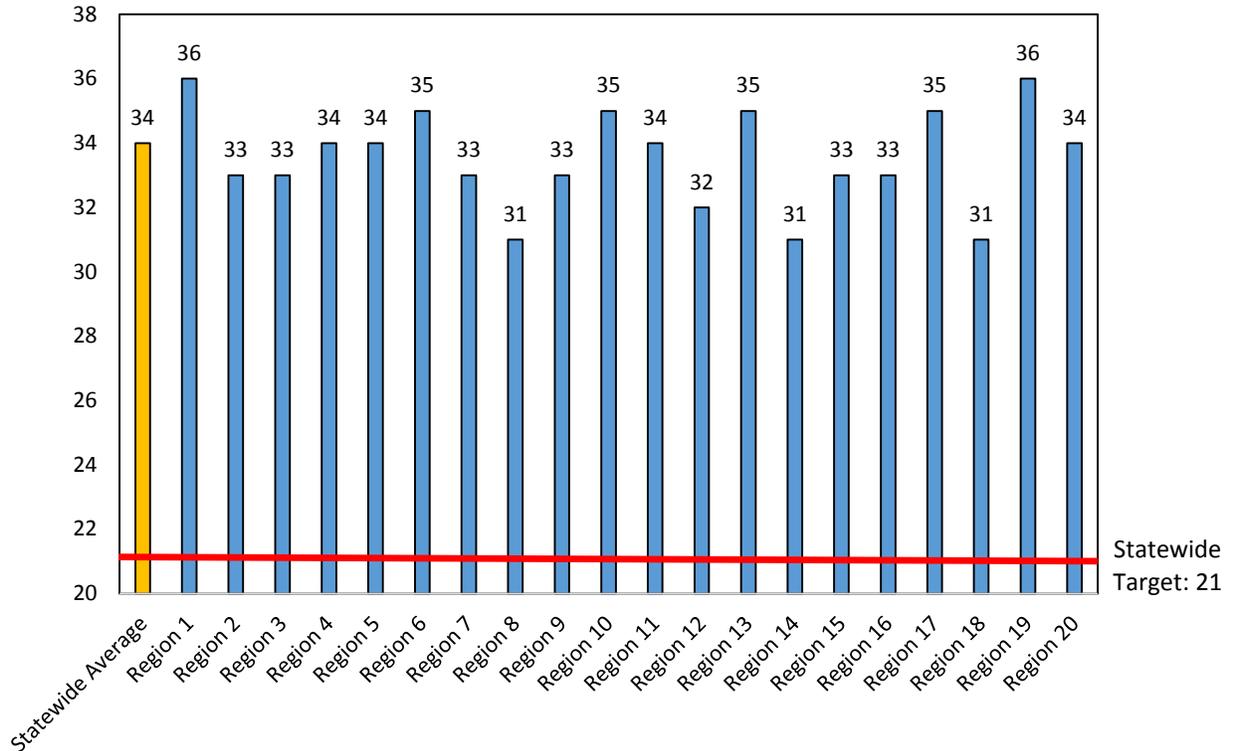


Figure 22: Index 3 – Closing Performance Gaps
(2012-2013)

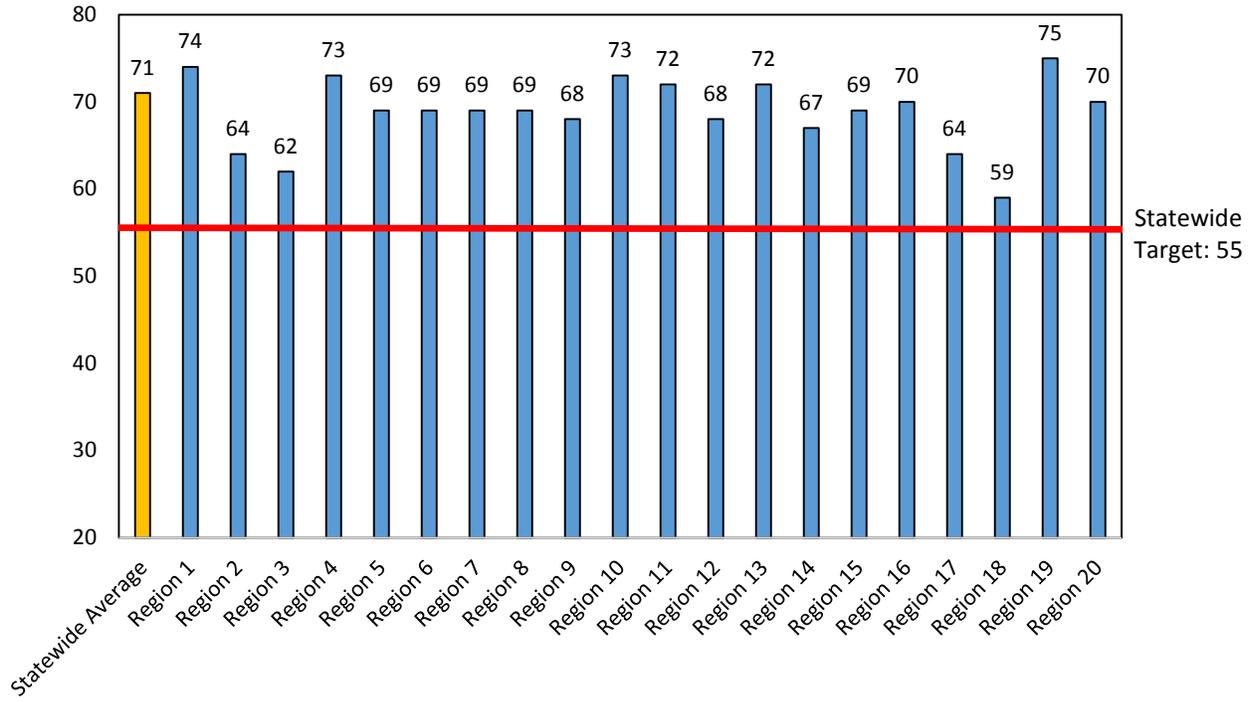
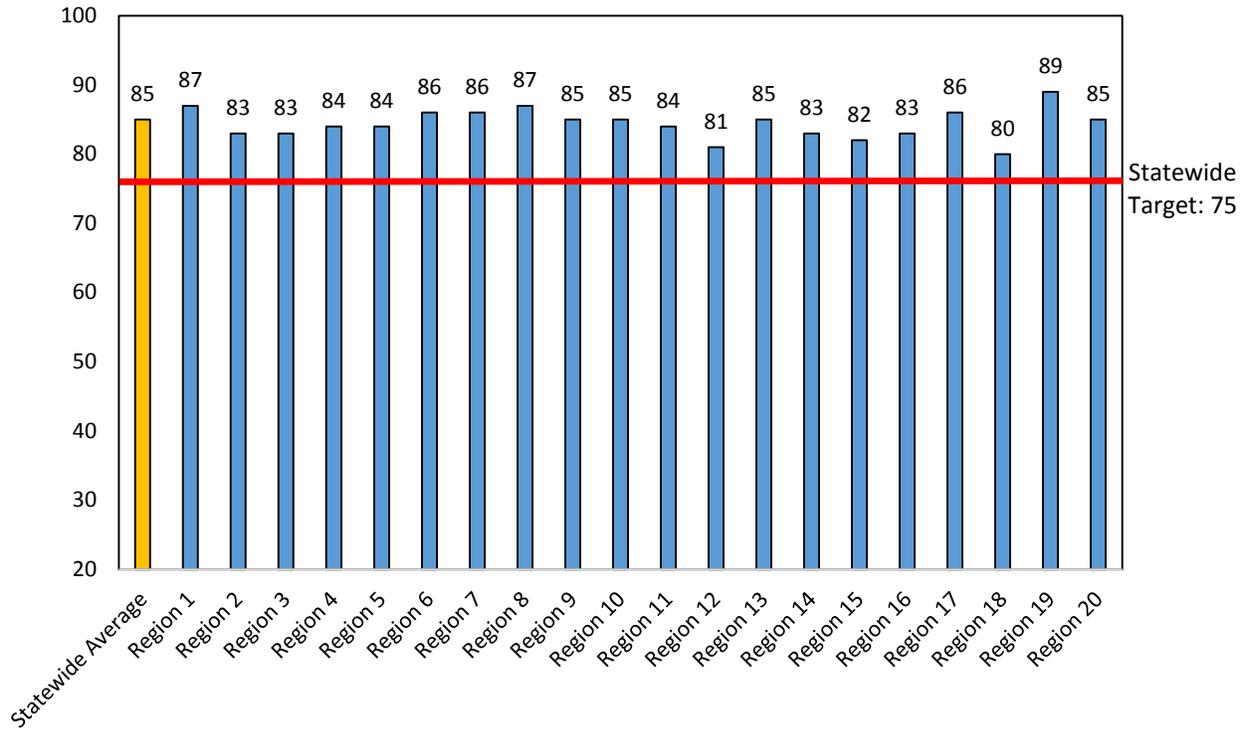


Figure 23: Index 4 – Postsecondary Readiness
(2012-2013)



In addition to the four indexes, TEA assessed college readiness statistics for each regional ESC. Included in the evaluation were: Attendance and Annual Dropout Rate (Grades 9-12), AP/IB Results, SAT/ACT Results, and College Ready Graduates in both ELA and Math. Although the ESC is not directly responsible for these ratings, they do provide services to school districts to address areas of concern or enhance current programs, therefore, TEA assessed the data along with the services and activities provided to school districts and charter schools. As a result of the assessment, all ESCs are providing acceptable levels of service to school districts and charter schools with regard to student performance. Additionally, some ESCs have determined that enhanced services are needed in their respective regions for various student performance areas, and will be implementing the enhancements in the 2014-2015 school year.

One example of how an ESC may utilize state appropriations to address student performance in the region is through the establishment of an Accountability Plan implemented by an Accountability Team. These efforts are geared toward schools that have been identified through one of many accountability systems as needing improvement. An Accountability Team may be created at an ESC with employees from several disciplines with various expertise in areas such as Accountability, School Improvement, Curriculum/Instruction, NCLB, Bilingual/ESL programs, and Leadership. In most cases, the Accountability Team supports the region in all areas of the Accountability System including State and Federal Accountability, Performance Based Monitoring (PBM), Data Validation Monitoring (DVM), Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), PAR, FIRST and Accreditation.

Another example of how an ESC may utilize state appropriations to address student performance is through the establishment of a Turnaround Team. A Turnaround Team provides targeted support, technical assistance and professional development support to LEAs in their efforts to improve student performance. Targeted support is provided to LEAs in regards to the identified area(s) of focus. Professional development training and support is provided both at the ESC and onsite as requested by LEAs in a variety of areas including, but not limited to: Understanding the Accountability System/Critical Success Factors and Turnaround Principles, Data Analysis/Review, District and Campus Improvement Planning, Curriculum/Instruction and Programmatic support, Culture/Climate, and Intervention. All support provided is grounded in research-based best practices and all efforts are made to build capacity within the LEA.

District Effectiveness and Efficiency (Technical Assistance and Program Support) TEC §8.101(2)

ESCs provide professional development, technical assistance, program support, leadership meetings, and resources to enhance many aspects of instructional and administrative effectiveness for school districts and charter schools. Many of the resources developed and delivered are in direct response to a request from a school district or charter school. Some of these resources include, but are not limited to:

- Administrator's Guides: Accountability, School Finance Codes, PEIMS, Discipline Codes
- NCLB Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Special Education Operating Guidelines

- STAAR Analysis Guides
- Financial Organizational Review & Compliance (FOR-C) Tool: A comprehensive web-based self-audit tool for fiscal and programmatic compliance

In addition to these resources developed and delivered to school districts and charter schools, many ESCs have entered into shared service agreements and purchasing cooperatives. These arrangements allow school districts and charter schools to cluster and leverage pricing structures for services needed. Some of these arrangements include, but are not limited to:

- Benefits Cooperative
- Special Education Related Services Cooperative
- Living Science Materials Center
- Purchasing Cooperative (Educational Technology & General Supplies)
- Food Service Cooperative

In the area of school finance, ESCs provide an array of services to school districts and charter schools. The following examples are some of the ways ESCs provide school finance assistance.

- Business Managers Cooperative (BMC). The BMC is a successful service organized and facilitated by the Region 20 Field Services team with 45 districts and charters members. Led by a former superintendent and business manager, the BMC has monthly training sessions that address all areas of school finance, including the required Investment Officer Training and long term budget planning. Members also have access to the Financial Organizational Review and Compliance tool that was developed and currently maintained at Region 20. Members have access to a Federal Funding Specialist who can provide technical service and assistance for maintaining proper procedures and documents to successfully complete a state or federal financial audit. BMC membership also includes onsite assistance with budget building, revisions and developing a plan for bond elections.
- Monthly Financial Updates. Financial updates are offered for all school districts and charter schools typically on a monthly basis and most often at various superintendents cluster meetings throughout the regions two times a year. Federal and State level financial initiatives are researched, resources outlined, and possible local-level implications are shared with superintendents and business office staff. Training around the indicators and components of the FIRST ratings are integrated into these sessions as well. In the event of a state or federal audit, ESC field service agents provide onsite guidance and recommendations to assist schools with requirements, guidelines and timelines.
- Financial Impact of the Eagle Ford Shale. Due to the impact of the Eagle Ford Shale in various regions across the state, mainly Region 1, 2, 3, 18, and 20 (with other regions impacted but not as significantly), ESCs have begun to look at a new initiative to address the changing financial state of school districts. This initiative has become quite time consuming for school districts because of the variety of concerns that have surfaced:
 - shifting from Chapter 42 to Chapter 41 status;
 - responding to teacher and auxiliary staff shortages;

- reacting to the housing crisis (shortage and increasing rent);
- educating and informing the public about the financial impact;
- developing a bond package and election;
- increasing need to develop partnerships with companies in the energy industry; and
- addressing the financial impact of developing and implementing revised curriculums that prepare graduates to work in the energy field if not college bound.

Economical and Efficient School Operations TEC §8.101(3)

To assess the performance of ESCs in providing opportunities for economical and efficient school operations, TEA reviewed the biennial consolidated report provided by the ESCs to the 83rd Legislature pursuant to Rider 39 of the Appropriations Bill from the 82nd legislative session (2012 Rider 39 Report).

The purpose of the 2012 Rider 39 Report was to demonstrate the savings achieved by school districts as a result of services provided by an ESC. The Rider 39 statutory language prescribed that ESCs shall report the following data related to expenditures in the prior state fiscal year:

- The amount of savings achieved by school districts as a result of services provided by an ESC, by total amount, and on a per student basis as measured by weighted average daily attendance (WADA).
Depending on the product or service, savings can be calculated based on a school district's cost if (a) it were to provide the service internally or (b) it used another outside source for the product or service.
- Services provided by ESCs and a cost comparison to similar services provided by alternative providers.
*This requirement is assumed to represent the difference in **unit** costs between ESC products and services and those of alternative providers – as opposed to savings estimated above.*
- For each service provided by the ESC, the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) ESC positions, total salaries, and the source(s) of funding associated with the service.

ESCs provide a wide array of services and products to schools under multiple pricing structures. For purposes of the 2012 Rider 39 Report, data was collected on services in the following four categories:

- 1. Professional Development.** Professional development services provided by the ESCs include, but are not limited to, training for board members, administrators, teachers, auxiliary staff and others.
- 2. Products.** During the 82nd legislative session, the ESCs developed a list of the major products offered to school district clients. These products include, but are not limited to, application software, instructional materials, printing, and internet filtering.
- 3. Direct Services.** Direct services provided to school districts vary significantly among the ESCs. These services include, but are not limited to, staffing (e.g., business managers, librarians, counselors, and nurses), technology services, legal services, auditing services and other resources provided to districts generally on an annual basis.

- 4. Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance is differentiated from direct services primarily by the short-term nature of assistance provided as opposed to the type of service. School districts and charters purchase technical assistance on a temporary or ad-hoc basis, not making an annual commitment to use the service. For example, technology support services can be provided by an ESC on an annual basis to districts (direct service), or on a short-term, ad hoc basis (technical assistance).

As a result of the data collected, the 2012 Rider 39 Report indicated the total savings, average total savings for all school districts/charter schools, the average savings per WADA of the 100 school districts/charter schools surveyed, and the estimated total savings for all school districts and charter schools in Texas. The estimated statewide savings was determined by multiplying the average savings for all schools surveyed by the total number of school districts and charter schools in Texas.

Figure 24: Estimated Savings Experienced by Schools (2011-2012)⁸⁵

Total Savings for Schools Surveyed	\$67,181,585.71
Total WADA of Schools Surveyed	849,371.93
Average Savings per School	\$671,815.86
Average Savings per WADA per School	\$380.97
Estimated Statewide Savings	\$837,754,373.80

In assessing ESC performance based on the 2012 Rider 39 Report, TEA requested additional information from each of the 20 ESCs in order to gather more details on how these savings are achieved. All ESCs provide some type of product or services that are more economical than others. Below are a few examples of the products and services provided by ESCs that help achieve the savings in the 2012 Rider 39 Report.

- Texas Computer Cooperative (TCC). TCC was formed by all 20 ESCs in order to provide student and business information systems and support services to Texas schools. Over the past 42 years of operation, the TCC has developed and refined software solutions to meet the varied and ever-changing information system needs of Texas schools. The TCC continually modifies products in order to achieve the following objectives.
 - Comply with state and federal mandates and reporting requirements that influence reporting and record-keeping requirements of Texas public schools.
 - Continually improve the efficiency and functionality of the software so that Texas school personnel are more productive and able to make better decisions regarding the overall education process through accurate, timely data.
 - Provide school districts and charter schools with the best, most cost-effective business and student information software and customer support available.
- Accounting services. Accounting services provided to schools by ESCs include payroll preparation, general ledger maintenance, and vendor payments among others. These services save school districts

⁸⁵ Rider 39 Report, Cost Savings Experienced by School Districts and Charter Schools, dated December 1, 2012, p. 7 (tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147510190&libID=2147510177).

and charter schools the cost of hiring personnel in rural areas where the type and level of professional credentials needed are extremely difficult to find. Providing these functions also help ensure that a school's financial information complies with all state guidelines.

- Personnel services. ESCs help link high level professionals in the education field to schools looking to staff their schools. Services typically focus on having applicants' complete one application for the entire network at no cost to the applicant.
- Transportation services. ESCs provide bus driver physical exam services, and bus driver or student drug and alcohol testing.
- Benefits Cooperative. The Benefits Cooperative provides access to supplemental employee benefits including accident, cancer, COBRA, dental, vision, disability income protection, identify theft protection, life voluntary group term insurance, section 125 administration, optional 403(b)/457(b) plan administration, flex spending accounts, health reimbursement account (HSA) administration, and medical gap plan.
- Purchasing Cooperatives. ESCs provide several purchasing cooperatives for technology related items, general supplies, food services and child nutrition allowing the participants to purchase from these awarded vendors. The cooperatives allow participants to reduce costs and improve the quality of technology-related purchases and general supplies due to larger buying power.

District Assistance in Core Services TEC §8.101(4)

TEA assessed ESC performance in the areas of core services by addressing each of the components outlined in TEC 8.051. TEA was provided information on how each ESC meets all statutory requirements, including programs and services offered in relation to core services. Based on TEA's assessment, ESCs are an invaluable resource to school districts and charter schools in every region of the state.

As per Rider 38, GAA Article III, Texas Education Agency, 83rd Legislature, ESCs utilize funding appropriated out of Strategy A.2.4, School Improvement and Support, to provide professional development and other technical assistance services to public schools in accordance with TEC, 8.121. The funding may be used for the provision of core services, TEC, 8.051, or for the operational expenses of the center related to the provision of those services.

The activities performed by the ESCs, pursuant to TEC, 8.051, include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Development, maintenance, and delivery of services to improve student and school performance.
- Development of annual performance improvement plans addressing the purpose and description of services provided to campuses (i) assigned an unacceptable performance rating, (ii) reported as the lowest-performing in the region, or (iii) needing assistance.
- Providing services that allow schools to operate more effectively and economically.
- Maintenance of core services including the following:
 - Training and assistance in assessment instruments designed to measure essential knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science (TEC, 39.023);
 - Providing instruction in personal financial literacy; and
 - Training and assistance in special education (TEC, 42.151), compensatory education (TEC, 42.152), bilingual education (TEC, 42.153), and gifted and talented (TEC, 42.156).

- Providing training and assistance in site-based decision making, compliance with state and federal special education requirements, and complying with state laws and rules.

ESCs utilize funding from TEC 8.121 in a variety of ways which are directly related to the needs of school districts and charter schools in each respective region and pursuant to TEC 8.051. Some of the ways in which ESCs utilize funding include, but are not limited to, the following examples.

- Support to academically unacceptable campuses. ESCs conduct need assessments based on data and district feedback in order to develop comprehensive support services that improve student performance. ESCs keep in close contact with school leadership for the purpose of disseminating information related to state requirements and best practices. ESCs provide field service agents who work to anticipate school district needs and subsequently deliver appropriate services. An ESC may also establish an accountability team to deliver ongoing and continuous support via the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS). Lastly, ESCs strive to develop and provide professional development aligned to critical success factors and turnaround principles for academically unacceptable campuses.
- Services to enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically. ESCs provide various cooperative initiatives to districts within their regions with the goal of achieving significant cost savings. Co-ops related to school business operations management, accounting, school nurses, school health, and substitute teachers are available. ESCs also provide trainings and technical assistance for indicators and components of the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) report to schools. School finance training is available for school boards of trustees in order to provide a deeper understanding of the local implications of tax rates, bond elections, and budget planning processes. ESCs also help schools operate more economically by providing teacher certification programs, bus driver training, assistance with legal issues, and on-site support for administrators and central office personnel. Lastly, ESCs assist with strategic planning meant to align academic, financial, and accountability goals.
- Training and assistance in teaching each subject area assessed under TEC, 39.023 (math, reading, writing, social studies, and science). ESCs provide training and technical assistance on (i) the state assessment system, (ii) instructional strategies including modifications and accommodations for students with disabilities, and (iii) technology tools used to access general curriculum for students with disabilities.
- Instruction in personal financial literacy. ESCs provide training and support to schools in all areas of personal financial literacy. For example, ESCs train teachers who conduct personal financial literacy courses and to administrators who implement personal financial literacy standards at their respective districts.
- Training and assistance in special education (TEC, 42.151). ESCs assist schools in relation to special education and student with disabilities by (i) determining instructional arrangement, (ii) evaluating ARD/IEP processes (including both standard-based and facilitated IEPs), (iii) developing evaluation processes, early intervention guides, and Response to Intervention (RTI) processes, and (iv) providing trainings related to TEKS based instructional strategies.
- Training and assistance for educationally disadvantaged (TEC, 42.152). ESCs provide training and technical assistance which address dropout prevention, foster care students, and homeless students. ESCs also assist districts with understanding poverty and cultural differences of students which may lead them to become educationally disadvantaged. In addition, ESCs support and enhance accelerated instruction programs meant to keep educationally disadvantaged students from falling behind their

counterparts. Please see the Accelerated Instruction section of this report for more information on accelerated instructional programs for students considered “at-risk” of dropping out of school.

- Training and assistance in bilingual education (TEC, 42.153). ESCs offer professional development to educators in the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and performance based monitoring for bilingual education. ESCs also review and analyze district bilingual/ESL programs to ensure alignment with TAC, Chapter 89.
- Training and assistance in gifted and talented (TEC, 42.156). ESCs support advanced academic programs by providing gifted and talented (GT) program review and analysis to ensure alignment with state laws and guidelines. In addition, ESCs ensure districts meet state requirements for initial and annual certifications. Lastly, ESCs provide administrator and counselor trainings related advanced academic programs.
- Training and assistance with site-based decision making. ESCs provide training and technical assistance to school boards and administrators.
- Assistance for school districts out of compliance with state and federal special education requirements. ESCs provide training and technical assistance related to State Performance Plan indicators 11, 12, and 13, and performance based monitoring in the area of special education. In addition, ESCs conduct special education program reviews for school districts and charter schools.
- Training and support of the Public Education Information Management System (PIEMS) and Texas Student Data System (TSDS). ESCs assist schools with accessing and troubleshooting PIEMS, TSDS, TEAL, TREx, PET, PID, SENS, Edit+, Unique ID, and other applications. ESCs also provide training and on-site technical support to schools requiring data assistance. Lastly, ESCs conduct data integrity reviews for school districts and charter schools.

State and Federal Grant Program Implementation and Results TEC §8.101(5)

In order to evaluate ESC performance on state and federal grant program implementation and subsequent results, TEA program area staff was asked to provide input on each ESC’s performance as it relates program implementation and use of grant funds. The evaluation completed by TEA program area staff related only to grants under the responsibility of TEA. The evaluation focused on how well the ESC administered the grant, implemented necessary programmatic requirements, and spent grant funds (in accordance with grant guidance). In all responses received, TEA program area staff reported ESCs spent state and federal funds in accordance with programmatic guidelines and provisions of the grants. In addition, the evaluation concluded all ESCs met the required performance standards with respect to the progress and results of federal and state grants. Comments received from TEA program area staff include the following:

- “High quality statewide tools/resources being developed. Understands and actively promotes/supports agency’s efforts to align required interventions and support for districts and campuses.”
- “ESC was awarded the Texas SUCCESS Support Center grant. They have done an EXCELLENT job of providing support for Texas SUCCESS. They ramped up the support very quickly and continue to respond to the needs of TEA and the districts that receive the support.”

An example of how TEA program area staff assess ESC performance is provided below:

In 2013-2014, each of the 20 ESCs were given \$40,000 to support TEA and the 70 Early Adopter districts/charter schools for the TEA Texas Student Data System (TSDS) Project. As part of the agreement between TEA and ESCs with regard to the \$40,000, each ESC was required to name at least one "TSDS Champion" in five areas that would be responsible to TEA and the Early Adopter districts/charter schools in providing training, communication, and support. In April 2014, TEA conducted a survey of the 70 Early Adopter districts/charter schools to assess satisfaction with the training, communication, and support given to them by the ESC in their region. Of the 70 districts/charter schools contacted, 61 participated in the survey (87% response rate). When a district/charter school rated an ESC as poor or unacceptable, the district/charter school was asked to indicate whether TEA should intervene. In nearly every response, with the exception of those who had extenuating circumstances usually related to staff turnover, ESCs received an acceptable satisfaction rating in TSDS training, communication, and support. It is expected that ESCs will continue to provide acceptable TSDS training, communication, and support to schools as more districts and charter schools migrate to TSDS.

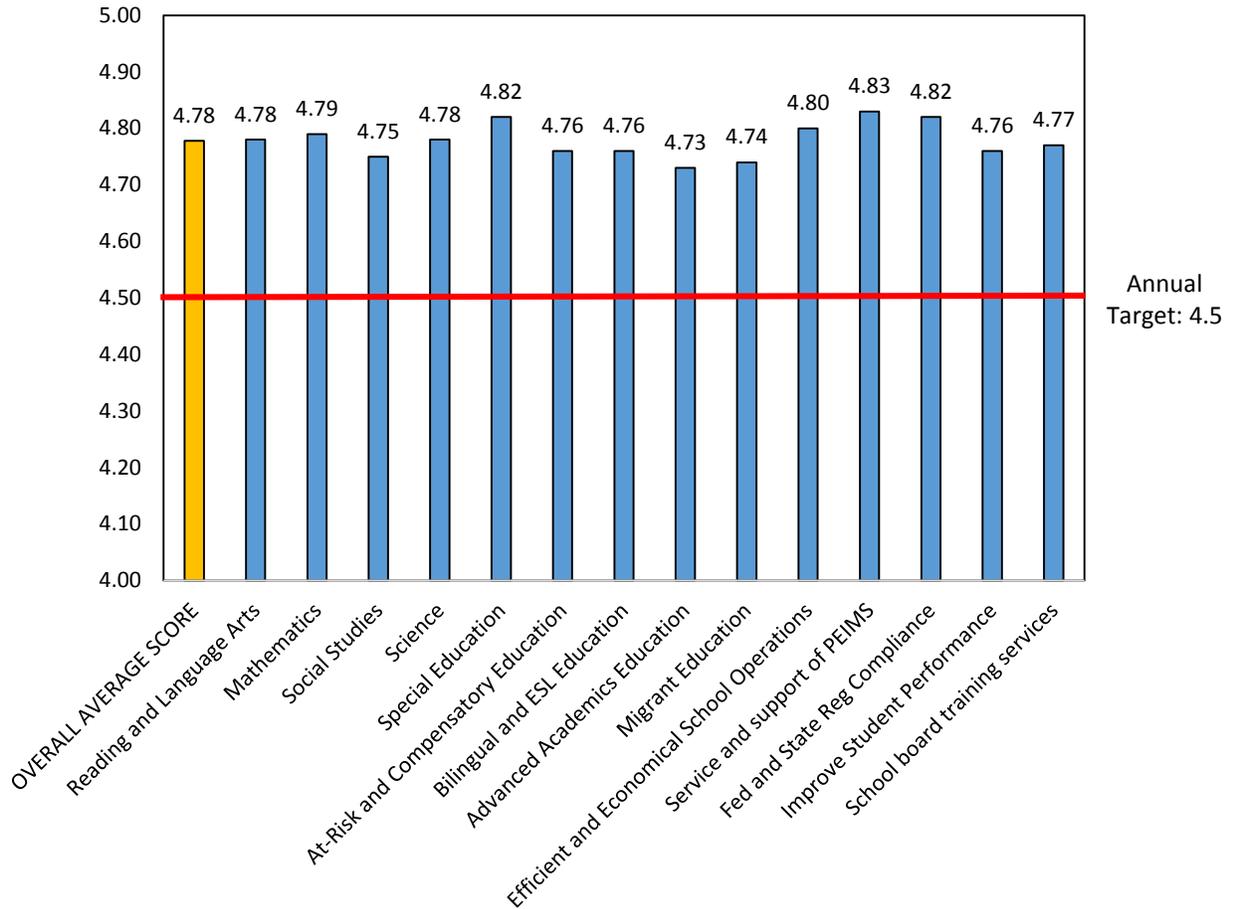
ESC Performance Evaluation Based Upon 2013 Client Satisfaction

As mentioned above, the annual performance evaluation includes a review of client satisfaction (i.e., school district and charter school satisfaction) with ESC products and services developed and delivered throughout the school year. This section evaluates ESC performance based on an annual client satisfaction survey sent to all schools in Texas. Since 2005, the ESCs have contracted with the Institute for Organizational Excellence at The University of Texas at Austin to conduct a survey that is sent to representatives of all school districts and charter schools in Texas. The overall results continue to illustrate a high level of satisfaction from school districts and charter schools. Each year, respondents have the opportunity to provide comments, suggestions, and compliments for the work conducted by the 20 ESCs. These narrative responses are included in the corresponding ESC's individual survey report and are used by the ESCs for strategic and operational planning.

The survey is conducted electronically in the fall of each year. In 2013, the survey was sent to 1,288 potential respondents with 945 of 1,288 responding (73% response rate). The survey included both quantitative and qualitative items. Three sections of quantitative items asked respondents to assess their level of satisfaction with the services provided by the ESCs in the areas of regular education programs, programs for special populations, and other specific areas. Specific areas assessed included PEIMS, shared services, state and federal regulations, child nutrition, student performance, NCLB, AYP, PBM and board training. A qualitative item asked for additional comments and program suggestions (i.e., narrative responses).

The 2013 quantitative target, based on the previous year's overall statewide satisfaction rating, was 4.5 on a 5.0 point Likert scale. The ratings range from 1 – Very Dissatisfied to 5 – Very Satisfied. All quantitative items on the combined overall reports received ratings between 4.73 and 4.83. The overall statewide satisfaction rating in all categories was 4.78. These scores suggest overall improvement from previous years thus following the trend of improvement each year.

Figure 25: ESC 2013 Client Satisfaction Survey Results
Statewide Averages by Survey Category



Survey data for 2014 will be available in January 2015, and will be used in the 2014-2015 annual evaluation of ESCs.

Commissioner’s Priorities

As mentioned above, the formal performance evaluation includes a review of any other factors the commissioner determines to be appropriate, including the commissioner’s priorities. The commissioner’s priorities or initiatives for the ESCs during the 2013-2014 school year were to assist their respective school districts and charter schools with student performance, district effectiveness and efficiency, economical and efficient school operations, core services, administration of grants, and to assist TEA with the development of the ESC Standards and Indicators pursuant to TEC 8.101. Each of the ESCs provided valuable input and resources to inform the development and implementation processes.

During the 2013-2014 evaluations, the commissioner shared with each ESC Executive Director specific priorities for the 2014-2015 school year, which are an addition to those outlined in the ESC Standards and Indicators manual. The

ESC are expected to assist TEA with implementing the following priorities which were discussed with each Executive Director, and shared with each ESC Board of Directors:

1. End the academic performance gap between Hispanic, African-American, English Language Learners (ELL), economically disadvantaged and rural students and their counterparts.
2. Lead a statewide campaign to insure that EVERY student earns postsecondary credits while still in high school.
3. Develop an educator preparation program accountability system that produces new teachers with the classroom management skills and content knowledge sufficient to thrive in classrooms with ever increasing ethnic and socioeconomic diversity and teacher evaluation systems that transform the paradigm from compliance to continued teacher feedback and support.

Each of the ESCs will be evaluated on their performance related to assisting with the commissioner priorities in the 2014-2015 evaluations, in addition to those outlined in the ESC Standards and Indicators manual.

Rule Making Process – Newly Adopted ESC Performance Standards and Indicators Manual

In March 2014, the Commissioner of Education adopted and TEA published the Regional Education Service Center Performance Standards and Indicators Manual. The manual is based upon and references TEC §8.101, Performance Standards and Indicators. The manual serves as “a resource that outlines the performance standards and indicators used by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the performance of ESCs and ESC executive directors.”⁸⁶ There are seven performance standards outlined in the manual which relate to the following:

1. student performance;
2. school district and charter school effectiveness and efficiency
3. economical and efficient products and services for school districts and charter schools;
4. core services;
5. state and federal grant implementation;
6. fiscal responsibility; and
7. public image.⁸⁷

The performance standards and indicators are intended to ensure ESCs comply with TEC §8.002. The manual was designed to phase-in indicators which were not previously captured or available for reporting by ESCs. According to the manual, “[a]ll standards and some indicators are to be implemented and reported in the 2014-2015 fiscal year as specified in the front of the manual” and “[t]he indicators to be phased-in for implementation in the 2015-2016

⁸⁶ Regional ESC Performance Standards and Indicators Manual (Figure: 19 TAC §53.1021(b), p. 2 (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter053/19_0053_1021-1.pdf).

⁸⁷ Regional ESC Performance Standards and Indicators Manual (Figure: 19 TAC §53.1021(b), p. 2 (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter053/19_0053_1021-1.pdf).

fiscal year are listed at the end of the manual.”⁸⁸ Therefore, all standards and indicators will be implemented by the 2015-2016 school year. In addition to the standards and indicators, and in accordance with TEC §8.103(2), “the Commissioner of Education will conduct an annual evaluation of each ESC Executive Director and ESC’s performance on the indicators adopted under TEC, §8.101.”⁸⁹

Agency Contact Person(s)

For information on education service centers, please contact Julie Beisert-Smith, Director of Education Service Centers at (512) 463-9183 or julie.beisert-smith@tea.state.tx.us; additionally, Haley Carroll at (512) 463-5917 or haley.carroll@tea.state.tx.us.

⁸⁸ Regional ESC Performance Standards and Indicators Manual (Figure: 19 TAC §53.1021(b), p. 2 (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter053/19_0053_1021-1.pdf).

⁸⁹ Regional ESC Performance Standards and Indicators Manual (Figure: 19 TAC §53.1021(b), p. 3 (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter053/19_0053_1021-1.pdf).