

85TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TEXAS ADULT EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM

EVALUATION REPORT

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

The primary purpose of the public school curriculum is to prepare thoughtful, active citizens who understand the importance of patriotism and can function productively in a free enterprise society with an appreciation for the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage [TEC 28.002(g)(h)]. The state of Texas consistently engages in a collective effort to actuate these philosophies of education and maintain a proud history of self-determinism across the Texas landscape, the culmination of which is a plethora of viable enterprises in our state's educational setting. Inclusive of these educational settings is a 20-year track record of school choice through open-enrollment charter school authorization.

The history of Texas charter schools has been a successful venture since their inception in 1995. Beginning with 20 open-enrollment charter schools, the State has developed a strong portfolio of secular, tuition-free educational opportunities that continue to:

- Improve student learning;
- Increase the choice of learning opportunities with the public school system;
- Create professional opportunities that attract new teachers to the public school system;
- Establish a new form of accountability for public schools; and
- Encourage difference and innovate learning methods.

During the 83rd legislative session, Senator Robert Duncan identified an opportunity to reach an unserved population of individuals in the state. Senate Bill (SB) 1141 thus codified legislative provisions for an adult, high-school diploma and industry certification charter pilot program for adults 19-50 years of age. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas was subsequently awarded a charter to operate *The Excel Center for Adults* within the regulatory provisions of Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.259. This report details the development, operation, and current outputs of *The Excel Center for Adults* thus far.

In accordance with TEC §29.259, the Texas Education Agency (agency) is required to make a recommendation regarding the abolition, continuation, or expansion of the adult education pilot program. This evaluation report formally recommends immediate continuation of the adult, high-school diploma and industry certification charter program.

Analysis of the available data, policies, and operational narratives have been synthesized to incorporate the following supportive recommendations for the *Texas Legislature*:

- Increase the student enrollment cap from 150 students to 300 students;
- Provide for the maintenance and the extension of funding for all adult students 19-50 years of age as if they are all eligible for Foundation School Program (FSP) funding for the attainment of a high school diploma and industry certification;
- Designate a funding stream for the additional funding needed to serve special populations such as: At-Risk; Limited English Proficient; Special Education; and Parents with children under the age of 5; and
- Amend current language in TEC §29.259 to allow students with a high school equivalency certificate to enroll in the program, expanding the availability of a diploma to all students age 19-50.

In addition, the agency proposes the following supportive recommendations for The Excel Center for Adults:

- Diversify available industry certificates to align with a shift in Texas industries - including architecture & construction; business management & administration; finance; health science; hospitality & tourism; information technology; insurance; law, public safety, corrections & security; manufacturing; service industries; and transportation;
- Contract with Austin Community College (ACC) to guarantee opportunities for students who wish to pursue higher education and (or) complete industry certification(s); and
- Increase staff diversity to ensure student demographics are reflected across organizational staffing and faculty.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

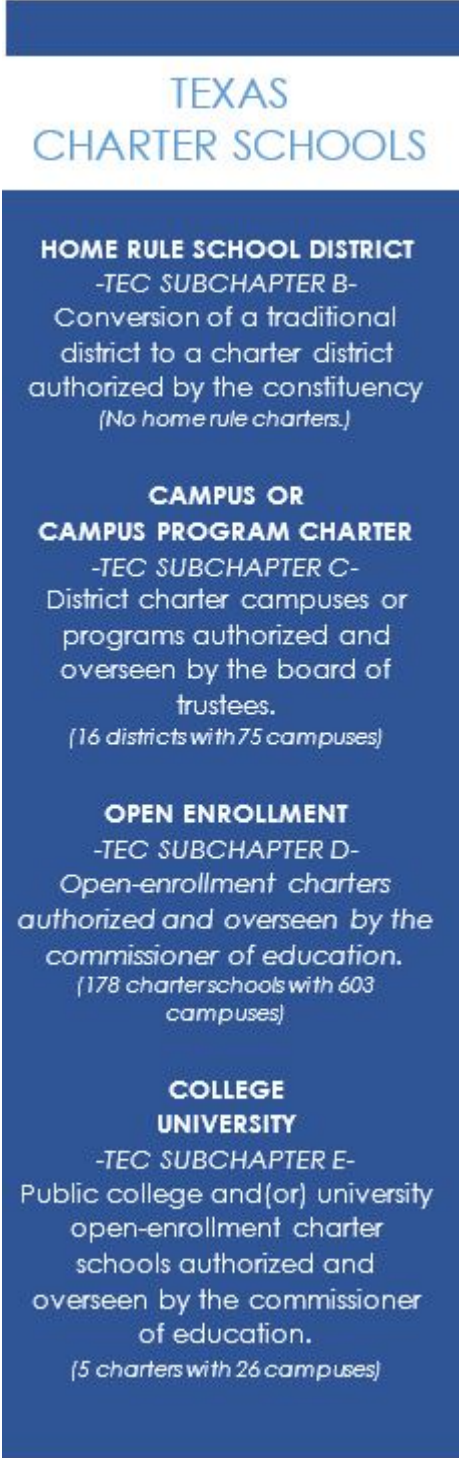
Texas open-enrollment charter schools have served a pivotal role in the forum of school choice since 1995. Enacted in the 75th legislative session, charter schools are currently authorized and regulated by Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12 and Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 100. The legislative philosophy of which is a belief that a calculated reduction in specific statutory regulation(s) will provide flexibility to enable innovative and diverse, educational opportunities. Consequently, Texas charter schools are subject to fewer state laws than traditional independent school districts.

The figure on the right outlines four current statutorily-authorized pathways to establish a charter school.¹ Each pathway, or subchapter, explicitly outlines eligibility requirements and regulations for the award and operation of charter. The results are distinct statutory pathways and guidance for: (i) *the board of trustees of independent school districts*, (ii) *501(c)3's*, (iii) *governmental entities*, (iv) *private college/universities*, (v) and *public college/universities*. Both historical and current data indicate that the overwhelming majority of charter schools in Texas are authorized and operated as subchapter D open-enrollment institutions²; serving approximately 245,406 students across 178 charter schools and 603 campuses.³

The legislative authority and oversight of charter schools was initially granted to the State Board of Education. With the passage of Senate Bill 2 in the 83rd Legislative Session, all oversight of charter schools was vested with the commissioner of education. The commissioner of education now exercises authority to authorize⁴, amend; renew, and revoke Subchapters D and E open-enrollment charter schools.

SCOPE OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE GAPS IN TEXAS

Educational attainment is a reliable indicator of individual earning power, overall productivity, and commercial health within the state of Texas. As such, residents of the State who do not possess a high school diploma hold significantly lower earning power over the course of their lives. The result of which is a diminished quality of life for those individuals; as well as, a demonstrable gap between employment opportunities and a qualified workforce. In 2014, Texans that



¹ TEC §12 Subchapter E *Public College and University* was subsequently passed during the 77th Legislative Session.
² TEC §12 Subchapter E *Public College and University* are also required to operate as open-enrollment.
³ Data Source: October 2015 Fall Snapshot
⁴ A majority of the SBOE members present and voting may veto the commissioner’s proposal to grant a charter

possessed a high-school diploma earned a significantly higher median income (\$27,072) than those who did not possess a diploma (\$19,420).⁵

Available data consistently outlines an identifiable need for adult education as a means to remedy workforce gaps and uplift a general quality of life for many in the state of Texas.

While high school equivalency exams serve as a constructive measure to recapture economic earning power; available research demonstrates a further income gap between those with a High School Equivalency Certificate or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (\$3,100 average monthly income) and those with a high school diploma (\$4,700 average monthly income).⁶

HISTORY OF THE TEXAS ADULT EDUCATION PILOT

As mentioned in the prior section, the state of Texas is home to many residents who directly contribute to both the state economy as well as their quality of life. To fulfill those community and workforce development needs, Senator Robert Duncan (R) authored Senate Bill 1141 during the 83rd Regular Legislative Session relating to an adult high school diploma and industry certification charter pilot program for adults 19 to 50 years of age. Legislative intent was clear to the implementation of a school-choice option with the inherent flexibility to serve the unique population of adult students.

In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature authorized the creation of the pilot program for adults (TEC §29.259). Upon passage, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was charged with the development, implementation, and regulation of an open-enrollment charter school that would operate the adult education program. Senator Duncan also included an industry certification segment in an effort to meet career readiness expectations for students whom this bill was targeted to serve. Those expectations included, middle-skill jobs, and jobs that require education/training beyond high school (*but less than a bachelor’s degree*).⁷ During its initial two-year term, the pilot program designated express parameters to include: (i) *student enrollment maximums of 150 individuals*; (ii) *between the ages of 19 and 50*; (iii) *who had not otherwise attained a high school equivalency certificate*; or (iv) *a high school diploma*. Students are expected to successfully complete a high school program (*that can lead to a diploma*); and (or) career and technology education (CTE) courses (*that can lead to industry certification*).

The statute further stipulates that the charter must be granted to a single, nonprofit entity that has a successful history of providing education services to the target population, including industry certifications and job placement services, and can agree to commit a minimum of \$1 million to the program.

**TEC §29.259
AT A GLANCE**

- LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVE·**
Pilot Program to fulfill community and workforce development needs in the state of Texas.
- EXPECTED OUTCOMES·**
Program that enable successful completion of a high school diploma and career and technology courses that can lead to industry certification.
- ELIGIBLE POPULATION·**
(a) Adults 19-50 years of age
(b) Failure to have completed curriculum requirements for high school graduation; or
(c) Failure to have performed satisfactorily on an assessment instruction required for high school graduation.
- PARTICIPANT CAP·**
Maximum of 150 students.
- AUTHORIZATION TYPE·**
Commissioner of Education must approve and grant an open-enrollment charter school based on an application submitted by a single non-profit entity.
- PROGRAM TERM·**
Two Terms

⁵ Data Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

⁶ Data Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008 Panel](#)

⁷ Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE), 2013

To ensure accountability, the bill included specific directives for the development of an assessment tool to successfully measure competency in both (i) *basic high-school curriculum*; and (ii) *proficiency in job-related skills*. In response, the state recommended the administration of state authorized, standardized assessment instruments and corresponding standards (TEKS). Furthermore, TEC §29.259 requires that the commissioner of education determine the level of performance considered to be satisfactory on the secondary, exit-level assessment instrument for receipt of a high school diploma. The statute stipulates that the TEA is to adopt and administer this standardized, secondary, exit-level assessment instrument.”

Students enrolled in the adult education charter pilot program are held to the same curriculum and assessment requirements as all Texas public school students.⁸ The assessment requirements for students, including the requirements for students who entered high school before the implementation of the STAAR assessment, are outlined in TEC Chapter 39; Subchapter B. Commissioner’s rules provide further clarity for those individuals. As an example, TAC §101.3024 specifically states, “a student who entered Grade 11 in the 1989-1990 school year or an earlier year shall fulfill testing requirements for graduation with assessments via the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), when the student was first eligible to take the exit level TEAMS.” Furthermore, TEC §39.023(c), outlines that “for students in grades 9 or higher on January 1, 2001 or in grades 8 or lower or January 1, 2001, if they were on accelerated track and fulfilled all coursework necessary to graduate by September 1, 2004, the agency (TEA) shall adopt end-of-course assessment instruments for secondary-level courses in Algebra 1, Biology, English I, English II, and US History. The Algebra I end-of-course assessment instrument must each assess essential knowledge and skills in both reading and writing in the same assessment instrument and must provide a single score.

HISTORY OF THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Pursuant to TEC §29.259, the Division of Charter School Administration published a Request for Application (RFA) seeking a nonprofit entity with a mission and vision to serve the educational needs of adult populations without a high school diploma in Texas. All eligible entities were required to demonstrate a history of: (i) *academic achievement*; (ii) *experience in community engagement*; (iii) *ability to anticipate both academic and non-academic needs of the adult population*; and (iv) *successful job placement*. Additionally, all eligible entities were required to demonstrate an innovative and rigorous program design that was qualified to meet the objectives outlined in TEC §29.259. Lastly, the RFA required sound leadership and governance structures that would align with Texas statutes upon authorization. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas (Goodwill) was the sole applicant upon the release of the Request for Application RFA 701-14-108.

BASIC CRITERIA FOR CHARTER APPROVAL

- Merit of Proposal ·
- Innovative Program Model ·
- Strategic Partnerships ·
- Successful History of Adult Educational Services, Industry Certifications, and Job Placement ·
- Ability to Commit at Least \$1 Million ·

⁸ As outlined in Texas Education Code (TEC) §§28.025 and 39.023 and Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§74 and 101

CHAPTER 2. THE EXCEL CENTER FOR ADULTS

Pursuant to the statutory intent of both TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D and TEC §29.259; the commissioner of education⁹ approved Goodwill on the overall strength of their proposal, extensive background with educational/vocational adult services, successful history of job-placement programs, available resources, and strategic partnerships to operate The Excel Center for Adults as an open-enrollment charter school. Lastly, Goodwill demonstrated applicable knowledge and experience regarding the common challenges facing both educational and vocational programs among the intended adult subpopulation.

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Goodwill Industries of Central Texas (Goodwill), a subsidiary of Goodwill Industries, was founded in 1958 as a private, non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. Since its inception, Goodwill has become a multi-dimensional non-profit with strategic relationships in both private and public sectors — providing goods and services to underserved communities through financial assistance and community donations.

INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT MODEL

The Excel Center for Adults’ recruitment methods included a comprehensive needs-assessment of neighborhoods in Austin. For example, The Excel Center for Adults utilized data from the St. John neighborhood to construct recruitment methods for a community of which 48 percent of its residents over the age of 25 lack a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate and 30 percent of its residents ages 18-64 live below the poverty line. The Excel Center for Adults also includes non-academic support services for challenges that are common among the target population(s). These support services include assistance with transportation, childcare, housing, obtaining identification, and accessing post-secondary education and health resources. Furthermore, there are available supports for students with disabilities, individuals with substance abuse problems, re-entry populations, homeless individuals, English language learners, and students lacking basic literacy skills.

INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM MODEL

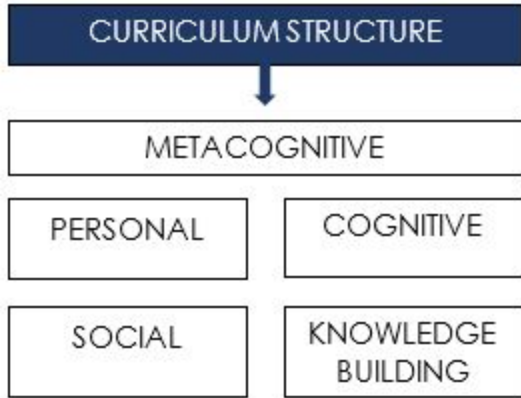
The Excel Center provides student-centered, teacher-facilitated classrooms, which exercise differentiated instructional support(s) based on student need. As proposed in their application for charter, *“Curriculum and instructional design center around a metacognitive framework that focuses on four dimensions: knowledge-*

GOODWILL IMPACT OVERVIEW 2015

- Successful Job Placement of 3,827 Goodwill Participants
- Assisted Texas earn \$227.1M through Wages and State Tax Revenue
- Secured 1,178 Collaborative Employers
- Provided 13,297 People with Job-Related Services
- Provided Housing or Prevented Homelessness for 144 Households
- Established/Cultivated 21 Co-Located Partnerships
- Provided Housing or Prevented Homelessness for 144 Households

⁹ The authorizing commissioner of education was Michael Williams, 2012-2015

building, cognitive, personal, and social, ensuring that students acquire the schema necessary to build the critical thinking skills needed to comprehend and interact with new content.¹⁰

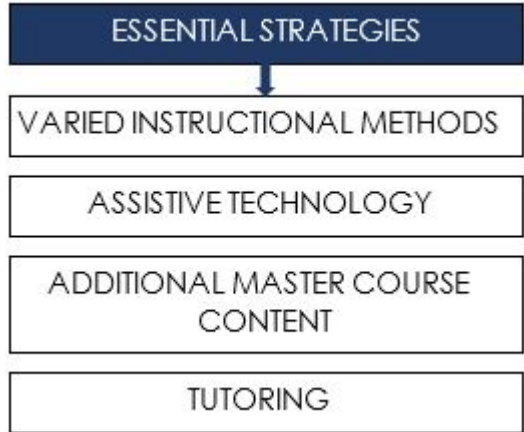


Within this framework, students work on mastering concepts in phases, starting with the guided instruction, then proceeding to group activity, and then finally to independent demonstrations of a skill or competency. Student-to- teacher classroom ratios were proposed to be 18:1 in regular level courses, and 12:1 (or 10:1) in remedial courses.¹¹ Students with special scheduling needs may qualify to earn credit through a research-based, teacher-facilitated individualized online learning environment. Students taking classes online use the APEX system¹². APEX has allowed students to recover credits and complete remedial work. Additionally, the APEX system is aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and encourages deeper

knowledge and application of the instructional material. The academic year includes year-round, 8-week terms with summer and winter breaks to provide students the flexibility and choice between mornings, afternoon, evening, and online classes.

FOCUSED SUPPORTS

The Excel Center provides focused attention to facilitate success among adult students with disabilities. Many of whom are undiagnosed and lack Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that identify areas of accommodations or modifications. Students who self-identify or who are subsequently diagnosed by licensed staff are assigned to receive special education services. These services include supports provided by staff members such as the Special Education Director, the Intervention Specialist, and assigned life coaches. The Excel Center also utilizes essential strategies such as, (i) *varied instructional methods*, (ii) *assistive technology*, (iii) *additional time to master course content*, and (iv) *tutoring* to further meet the educational needs of students who require additional accommodations and supports.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau approximately 10 million Hispanic individuals live in Texas. *“Despite increases in educational attainment for the entire population of Texas, the educational attainment of Hispanic males has actually declined over the past 20 years.”*¹³ The disparities in educational attainment of working age and young Hispanic males and females in the state is the lowest among the five ethnic groups. Given the demographics of the state of Texas, Goodwill anticipated a need for services for English Language Learners (ELLs). To meet these needs, The Excel Center for Adults has bilingual staff and contracts for additional staff when necessary. To meet the additional pedagogical needs of this student demographic, educators complement instruction with online, Spanish resources.

¹⁰ Goodwill industries of Central Texas, The Excel Center, RFA 701-14-801, 2014
¹¹ Classroom ratios are inclusive of the subchapter D open-enrollment students that Goodwill also serves.
¹² May 20, 2016 Goodwill Education Board meeting, members adopted the transition from the APEX system to Compass Learning online platform.
¹³ [The Impact of State Higher Education Inequality](#)

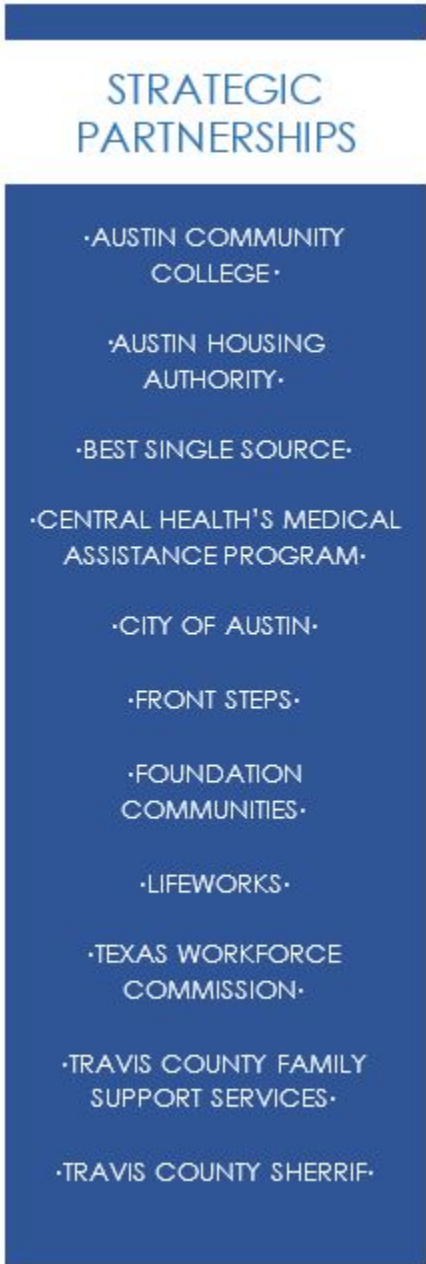
Additionally, the industry certificate programs are well suited for the ELL population due to their self-paced (and skill-based) trainings that contain specific vocabulary and terminology.

Finally, key components of The Excel Center for Adult’s model are their ancillary support systems including: transportation assistance, childcare provisions, and life coaching.

- **Transportation Passes** are offered to students at no cost to ensure their attendance at school.
- **Additional Responsibility of Parenthood** is mitigated for students at The Excel Center for Adults by having an available licensed childcare center on site at no cost.
- **Life Coaches** meet with students on a bi-weekly basis to discuss academic and non-academic issues and needs. These supports and relationships impact students’ educational success.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Goodwill Industries of Texas prioritizes the empowerment of individuals to work. This key tenet is supported and girded by the strategic partnerships that have been established locally, state-wide, and across the nation. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas’ serves as a host agency to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC); this partnership is vital for funding hard to reach populations that would otherwise go unserved or underserved. Due to the diversity of these populations served, the strategic partnerships offer a robust array of supports some of which assist with job placement, housing, and employment. And while job placement is a key piece to the success of Goodwill’s program, the non-profit also realizes the importance of education in an individual’s life. One of the unanticipated results of The Excel Center for Adult’s was the number of graduate students pursuing their college degrees at Austin Community College. Interview response among students indicated many of these services are necessary to provide stability and consistency to ensure sufficient attendance and educational success.



CHAPTER 3. THE EXCEL CENTER –TEC CHAPTER 12 SUBCHAPTER D

In 2014, the Texas Education Agency awarded a charter to Goodwill Industries of Central Texas under TEC Subchapter D. As mentioned the previous chapter, The Excel Center for Adults was established and authorized under TEC §29.259. The result is the current operation of two separate charter schools (The Excel Center for Adults and The Excel Center Subchapter D) within the same facility. At present, students between 17-25 years of age are enrolled in The Excel Center Subchapter D; and students 26-50 years of age are enrolled in The Excel Center for Adults. See Chapter Seven for a comprehensive account of contributions and obstacles created by the migration of younger students into The Excel Center Subchapter D.

CHAPTER 4. OUTCOMES

Data presented in this chapter are limited with respect to state reporting requirements and program ineligibility among adults 26-50 years of age. See Chapter Seven for a detailed account of data limitations and interpretative restraints.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

A total of 132 students were enrolled in The Excel Center for Adults during the 2014-15 school year. Approximately 80 percent were economically disadvantaged¹⁴, and 35 percent were considered at-risk.¹⁵

The Excel Center for Adults saw an increase in enrollment for the 2015-16 school year (147 students).¹⁶ Approximately 49 percent were economically disadvantaged, zero percent were at-risk, and 8 percent were ESL participants.

Ethnic demographics for the 2014-15 school year saw a majority of enrollment among Hispanic/Latino students (59 percent). African American students reflected 28 percent of

STUDENT ENROLLMENT	2014-15		2015-16	
	Total	%	Total	%
TOTAL ENROLLMENT	132		147	
At-Risk Students	46	34.8%	0	0.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	106	80.3%	72	49.0%
Non-Special Education	106	80.3%	72	49.0%
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	0	0.0%	12	0.0%
Non-Special Education	0	0.0%	12	0.0%
Special Education	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Program				
Special Education	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Career and Technical Education	6	4.5%	0	0.0%
Bilingual Education	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
ESL Education	0	0.0%	12	8.2%
Gifted and Talented Education	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Title I	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Military Connected	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Foster care Indicator	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Asian	*	*	*	*
Black or African American	37	28.0%	56	38.1%
Hispanic/Latino	78	59.1%	80	54.4%
Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
White	10	7.6%	12	8.2%
Two or More	*	*	*	*
Gender				
Male	35	26.52%	113	76.9%
Female	97	73.48%	34	23.1%

¹⁴ Economically Disadvantaged Students are defined by the TEA as the count and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance.

¹⁵ Data Source 2014-15 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR); TEA PEIMS Reports

¹⁶ Data Source 2015-16 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR); TEA PEIMS Reports

student enrollment while White students made up approximately 8 percent. The subsequent school year saw a decrease in student

representation among Hispanic/Latino students. Inversely, there was an increase among both African American (38 percent) and White students (8 percent).

There were approximately 73 percent females and 27 males enrolled in the 2014 – 2015 school year. However, gender demographics among males (77 percent) and females (23 percent)¹⁷ drastically shifted for the 2015-16 school year, showing a 50 percent increase in males and an approximate 50 percent decrease among female students. Lastly, the age range among student for the 2014-15 school was between 19 and 49 years of age.¹⁸ However, students ranged from 26-50 years of ages for the subsequent 2015-16 school year.¹⁹

GRADUATION RATES

A total of 48 students graduated from The Excel Center for Adults during the 2014-15 school year.²⁰ Approximately 79 percent

GRADUATION RATES	2014-15		2015-16	
	Total	%	Total	%
TOTAL ENROLLMENT	48		61	
At-Risk Students	7	14.6%	0	0
Economically Disadvantaged	38	79.2%	27	44.3%
Non-Special Education	0	0.0%	0	0%
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	0	0.0%	0	0%
Non-Special Education	0	0.0%	0	0%
Special Education	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Program				
Special Education	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Career and Technical Education	0	0.0%	0	0%
Bilingual Education	0	0.0%	0	0%
ESL Education	8	16.7%	8	13.1%
Gifted and Talented Education	0	0.0%	0	0%
Title I	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Military Connected	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Foster care Indicator	0	0.0%	N/A	N/A
Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	*	*
Asian	*	*	*	*
Black or African American	14	29.2%	19	31.1%
Hispanic/Latino	26	54.2%	32	52.5%
Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
White	7	14.6%	*	8.2%
Two or More	*	*	*	*
Gender				
Male	12	25.0%	49	80.3%
Female	36	75.0%	12	19.7%

were economically disadvantaged, 15 percent were considered at-risk, and 17 percent were ESL students. The

¹⁷ For enrollment and graduation data, any group representing five or less students will not be featured in the graph to protect personally identifiable information due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) rules.

¹⁸ Age determined as of September 1, 2014

¹⁹ Most likely as a result of opening The Excel Center-Subchapter D

²⁰ Data Source 2014-15 TEA PEIMS Reports

Excel Center for Adults saw a increase in total graduation for the 2015-16 school year (61 students).²¹ Approximately 44 percent were economically disadvantaged and 13 percent were ESL students.

Ethnic demographics for the 2014-15 school year saw a majority of graduates among Hispanic/Latino students (54 percent). African American students reflected 29 percent of student enrollment while White students made up approximately 15 percent. The subsequent school year saw a decrease in graduation rates among Hispanic/Latino and White students. Inversly, there was an increase among African American students.

DROPOUT RATES

There were approximately 75 percent females and 25 percent males among the graduating class of the 2014-15 school year. However, gender demographics among male graduates (80 percent) and female graduates (20 percent) drastically shifted for the 2015-16 school year, showing a 55 percent increase in males and an approximate 55 percent decrease among female graduates.

Lastly, the age range among students for the 2014-15 school year was between 20 and 49 years of age.²² While the age range among students for the subsequent 2015-16 school year was between 26-50 years of ages.²³ The average graduate was 33 years of age for the 2014-15 school year and 35 years of age for the 2015-16 school year.

DROPOUT RATES 2014-2015	FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY			STATE ACCOUNTABILITY		
	Leaver	Total	%	Leaver	Total	%
All Students	175	349	50.1	103	232	44.4
American Indian	*	<100	100	*	<100	100
Asian	*	<100	50	*	<100	66.7
African American	51	103	49.5	26	66	39.4
Hispanic	104	201	51.7	63	132	47.7
Pacific Islander	*	<100	100	*	<100	100
White	*	<100	33.3	*	<100	27.3
Multiracial	*	<100	62.5	*	<100	50
At-Risk Students	*	<100	50	*	<100	43.5
Economically Disadv.	145	280	51.8	87	186	46.8
Special Education	*	*	*	*	*	*
ELL	*	<100	23.3	*	<100	15.2
CTE	*	*	*	*	*	*
Migrant	*	*	*	*	*	*
Title I	*	*	*	*	*	*

Texas uses the National Center for Education Statistics dropout definition. Under this definition, a dropout is a student who is enrolled in a public school in Grades 7-12 who (i) *who does not return to public school the following fall*; and (ii) *is not expelled*; and (iii) *does not: graduate, receive a GED certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.*

The table on the right reflect both state and federal accountability.²⁴ Dropout rates for state accountability purposes are calculated with statutory exclusions. Of the seven criteria for exclusion, the following directly apply to The Excel Center for Adults: (i) *students previously reported to the state as a dropout*; and (ii) *a student*

²¹ Data Source 2015-16 The Excel Center for Adults

²² Ages determined as of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 commencement dates.

²³ Most likely as a result of opening The Excel Center-Subchapter D

²⁴ Data Source Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2014-15

in attendance but who is not in membership for purposes of average daily attendance (i.e. students for whom school districts are not receiving state FSP funds).

Of ethnic groups with over 100 students, both federal and state accountability data columns report the highest dropout rates are among Hispanic students. African American students were the second highest ethnic group on both federal and state data reports (50 percent and 39 percent, respectively).

Dropout data for the 2015-16 school year is not available at the time of this report. In response, The Excel Center for Adults has initiated local data-collection for the purpose of ascertaining reasons/barriers that promote leaver status.

A full list of leaver reasons has been provided in Appendix A; however, common reasons include (i) *employment*; (ii) *inability to commit to necessary attendance*; and (iii) *family responsibilities and commitments*.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

The Excel Center staff is comprised of teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Of the staff, approximately 67 percent are teachers, 12 percent are administrators, and 21 percent are support personnel. There are approximately 46 percent males and 54 percent females. An approximate breakdown of ethnicity of teachers is as follows: 18 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, and 63 percent White.²⁵

Based on the 2015-2016 PEIMS data submitted, staffing for The Excel Center for Adults was reported under The Excel Center - Subchapter D.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION 2014-15		
Staff Type	Count	%
Total Staff	16.4	100.0%
Professional Staff		
Teachers	10.9	66.5%
Professional Support	3.5	21.4%
School Leadership	2.0	12.2%
Total Ethnic Minority Staff	7.4	45.3%
Teachers by Ethnicity		
African American	2.0	18.3%
Hispanic	2.0	18.3%
White	6.9	63.4%
American Indian	0.0	0.0%
Asian	0.0	0.0%
Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0%
Two or More Races	0.0	0.0%
Teachers by Sex		
Males	5.0	45.7%
Females	5.9	54.3%

INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

While there are many industry certifications available in Texas,²⁶ The Excel Center for Adults offers six certifications with an additional five that are offered in collaboration with Austin Community College (ACC). Students are encouraged to dual-enroll in Goodwill Career & Technical Academy (GCTA), which offers the

²⁵ Data Source 2014-15 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)
²⁶ [Career and Technical Education Industry Certification Guide, Texas Education Agency](#)

industry certificates in the following programs: *Acute Care, Administrative Assistant, Construction Fundamentals, Linux Programming, Microsoft Office Specialist, and a Nurse Assistant Program.*

The Excel Center for Adults also offers the following specialized courses through ACC: *Accounting Bookkeeping, Certified Apartment Maintenance, CompTIA A+ and Network+, and National Apartment Leasing Professional (NALP).*



CHAPTER 5. COMPLIANCE WITH TEC §29.259

TEC CHAPTER 29, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Pursuant to TEC §29.259, Subsection L, the Texas Education Agency must prepare and deliver to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and presiding officer of each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over public education or economic development a report that (i) *evaluates any adult education program operated under a charter granted under this section*; and (ii) *makes recommendations regarding the abolition, continuation, or expansion of the pilot program.*

Upon careful research and inquiry, and in accordance with TEC §29.259; this report finds that all applicable guidelines have been met by the Texas Education Agency and Goodwill Industries of Central Texas.

An itemized list of statutory requirements are below:

- ✓ **Establishment of the Adult Education Pilot Program.** The commissioner of education published RFA 701-14-108 for the express purpose of authorizing the adult high school diploma and industry certification charter school pilot program.
- ✓ **Authorization of the Adult Education Pilot Program Charter School.** The commissioner of education, based on an application submitted by Goodwill Industries of Central Texas; authorized a charter to operate as The Excel Center for Adults in compliance with TEC §29.259.
- ✓ **Educational Program Objectives.** The Excel Center for Adults operates an open-enrollment charter school to allow eligible students the opportunity to take courses to earn their high school diploma and/or take industry courses that can lead to industry certification.
- ✓ **Participant Eligibility Requirements.** The contract for charter expressly limits student enrollment to include:
 - A maximum of 150 students; and
 - Individuals between 19 and 50 years of age; who
 - Have failed to complete the curriculum requirements for high school graduation; or
 - Have failed to perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument required for high school graduation.
- ✓ **Development of an Appropriate Assessment Tool.** TEA designated a standardized secondary exit-level assessment using either STAAR or the TAKS assessment with a crosswalk to the STAAR provided by Pearson. Additionally, the Excel Center for Adults is registered under the alternative

education accountability procedures for evaluation under Chapter 39, whereby the commissioner shall use academic criteria established by commissioner-rule that appropriately measure the specific goals of the school.

- ✓ **Funding Sources.** Funding has been allocated in compliance with TEC §29.259.
 - Adults 26 years of age or older are funded through general revenue funds.
 - Adults between the ages of 19 and 26 are funded through the Foundation School Program.
- ✓ **Program Evaluation.** The Division of Charter School Administration has coordinated and prepared a program evaluation report to be delivered to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, and presiding officer of each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over public education or economic development.

CHAPTER 6. APPLICABILITY OF STATUTE

The primary impetus for Senator Duncan’s vision of an adult education pilot program is undoubtedly commanded by provisions set forth in TEC §29.259. Consequently, this evaluation report is intended to provide information on the development, operation, current outputs, and compliance of the program pursuant to those commanding provisions. However, The Excel Center for Adults is considered an open-enrollment charter school; and while not expressly authorized through TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D, the charter contract is subject to most operational, instructional, and district-governance provisions set forth therein. In addition, The Excel Center for Adults is subject to provisions outlined in TEC Chapter 39, Subchapter B, C, D, E, F, G, and J. The culmination of which is intended to hold the educational program to high expectations of accountability and operational standards while demonstrating student achievement (within and beyond) TEC §29.259.

The following sections are provided to illustrate the role and applicability of statute in ongoing expectations for high-quality and viability of The Excel Center for Adults throughout the various stages of its life cycle.

TEC CHAPTER 12, SUBCHAPTER D

The figure to the right outlines a select list of topics regulated by TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D and applicable to Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, as

TEC CHAPTER 12

SUBCHAPTER D

Applicability to The Excel Center for Adults

The following is a list of selected topics under TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D. It is not intended to reflect the totality of sections applicable to The Excel Center for Adults.

- Open Meetings and Public Information §12.1051
- Local Government Records §12.1052
- Public Purchasing and Contracting §12.1053
- Conflict of Interest §12.1054
- Nepotism §12.1055
- Membership in Teacher Retirement System §12.1057
- State Funding [for students 19-25] §12.106
- Status and Use of Funds §12.107
- Tuition and Fees Restrictions §12.108
- Renewal of Charter [contingent on legislative continuation] §12.1051
- Basis for Charter Revocation §12.115
- Admission §12.117
- Annual Evaluation §12.118
- Performance Framework; Annual Evaluations §12.1181
- Liability of Members of Governing Body §12.122
- Minimum Qualifications for Principals and Teachers §12.129

the charter holder for The Excel Center for Adults. Going forward, many of the operational standards will be assessed through those statutory minimums. Specifically, the definition set forth in TEC §12.1141(c); The Excel Center for Adults constitutes an open-enrollment *dropout recovery school*. Consequently, and in the absence of legislative abolition, all future renewals of the charter will be determined pursuant to TEC §12.1141(c). The result of which is a discretionary consideration of renewal. The discretionary consideration process for dropout recovery schools must take into consideration academic criteria established by the commissioner of education that recognize growth in student achievement as well as education attainment.

TEC CHAPTER 39, PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY

TEC Chapter 39, is the statutory directive for accountability standards to a multitude of components within the state educational portfolio— including but not limited to, academic assessments, accreditation, interventions, sanctions, distinctions, reporting, and financial viability. This section is provided to outline specific provisions set forth in Subchapters B, C, D, and E.

SUBCHAPTER B – ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC SKILLS

Subchapter B establishes the development and (or) adoption of appropriate criterion-referenced assessment instruments that are designed to assess essential knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. Adult educational services are presented with a unique obstacle among students who were eligible to take earlier state-assessments during their first term as a high school freshman. Consequently, the Texas Education Agency has contextualized Subchapter B to include administration of either the (i) *STAAR assessment*; or (ii) *TAKS assessment* among Excel Center students. It is important to note that scores from the TAKS assessment are cross-walked with the state assessment that each student was eligible to take during their first term as a high school freshman *i.e. TEAMS, TAAS, and TAKS*.

SUBCHAPTER C – ACCREDITATION

Subchapter C directs the commissioner of education to issue a determination of accreditation. A lack of accreditation in the state of Texas may have lasting effects on post high school success, job eligibility, and school funding. The Excel Center for Adults is subject to Subchapter C regulations on accreditation and probation. Accreditation determinations will reflect, but not limited to, (i) *performance on achievement indicators*, (ii) *performance under the financial accountability rating system*, (iii) *compliance with statutory requirements*, and (iv) *SBOE requirements*.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

2014-2015
-48 Graduates-

No Test Required
2 students

TEAMS
4 students

TAAS
10 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

17 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAKS
5 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

10 students
[passed after enrollment]

2015-2016
-61 Graduates-

No Test Required
6 students

TEAMS
1 student
[passed prior to enrollment]

2 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAAS
15 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

25 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAKS
6 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

6 students
[passed after enrollment]

SUBCHAPTER D – FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Excel Center for Adults is subject to the annual Financial Integrity Rating of Texas (FIRST). Established by TEC [§39.082](#), the purpose of the FIRST rating is to ensure that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools are held accountable for the quality of their financial management practices and achieve improved performance in the management of their financial resources. Fifteen financial indicators form the basis of FIRST- including, but not limited to, (i) *administrative cost expenditures*; (ii) *accuracy of submitted financial information*; (iii) *any financial vulnerabilities or material weaknesses in internal controls*; and (iv) *current assets to current liabilities ratios*.²⁷

“Getting my diploma changed my life because it set the example for my children.”
-2016 Graduate

For their initial year of operation, The Excel Center for Adults received an initial score of 98, translating to a superior rating of A.²⁸

SUBCHAPTER E – ACCREDITATION, INTERVENTIONS AND SANCTIONS

School districts, including open-enrollment charter schools, are subject to intervention(s) and sanction(s) for failure to comply with accreditation criteria, academic performance, and financial accountability standards. Consequently, the Excel Center for Adults is subject to any of the following measures— including, but not limited to, (i) *conservatorship*; (ii) *management team*; (iii) *board of managers*; and (iv) *formal sanctions*.²⁹

TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE (TAC)

TAC [§129.1025](#) requires every Texas school district to adopt an attendance accounting system that includes procedures to ensure the accurate recording and reporting of student attendance data. The Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH) contains the official attendance accounting requirements that all public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in Texas must meet.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

LIMITATIONS

Both the inherent reporting obstacles of serving students over 26 years of age and the migration of younger students into The Excel Center Subchapter D; created unintended data complications for the 2015-16 school year. Adults over the age of 22 are ineligible for funding as *Special Education* or *Title I* students. Similarly, adults over the age of 25 are ineligible for funding as (i) *At-Risk*; (ii) *ELL*; (iii) *Career and Technology*; (iv) *Bilingual*; (v) *English as a Second Language*; and (vi) *Gifted and Talented* students. These organizational and financial realities thus suggest a rationale for migrating students of eligible-age into The Excel Center Subchapter D where funding would be available for students who qualify for special services. Still, it presents unique limitations to both this evaluation and longitudinal data collection efforts among adults of ineligible age.

“What we’ve done here, we’ve started a movement. Not just for ourselves, but for the people in generations to come.”
-2016 Graduate

²⁷ See 19 TAC [§109.1001](#)

²⁸ FIRST Rating for the 2014-2015 school year was based on 7 financial indicators,

²⁹ See TEC [§39.102](#)

MEETING PUBLIC AND ECONOMIC NEED

This evaluation has outlined demonstrable need for adult education and industry certification in the state of Texas. Senate Bill (SB) 1141, and subsequently TEC §29.259, laid forth a statutory pathway that enabled Goodwill Industries of Central Texas to develop, operate, and facilitate Senator Duncan’s original vision. The Excel Center for Adults, while limited in available data, has produced fruitful outputs to merit the continuation of its charter. Retention among adults in drop-out recovery/adult education programs will always be inherently difficult; however, the Center has exhibited strong leadership, staff, and educational models that produced 48 graduates in its first year and 61 graduates in the subsequent school year. As a result, there is strong evidence to suggest these individuals have increased their average income by at least \$7,652 per year as a result of obtaining their high school diploma. The state of Texas has also arguably created \$835,000 in additional annual spending revenue among these graduated individuals. Still the greatest observable outputs reside in the personal and emotional growth reported among both current students and graduates of The Excel Center for Adults. One graduate said *“getting a high school diploma changed my life because it gave me so much confidence.”*

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT, SHORT & LONG TERM VIABILITY

This report has outlined several statutory safeguards to ensure accountability, viability, and quality among both traditional school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. Available data for The Excel Center for Adults exhibit favorable compliance with all applicable standards. Still, going forward, these standards and oversight will ensure the health and viability of its operations and the educational enrichment of its clientele.

Demonstrable program outputs and current volume in enrollment suggests short-term success and viability. The decision to migrate younger students to The Excel Center Subchapter D was most likely the best choice from an operational and financial perspective; as well as, creating additional seats for adults 26-50 years of age. The result of which is likely to favor an increase in graduation outputs, as the data demonstrates most graduates fell within the 26-50 age range. Long term viability will be contingent on public need for adult educational services. At present, there are no formal indications to suggest a significantly foreseeable decrease in the demand for programs and services established in TEC §29.259. The Excel Center for Adults has demonstrated consistent enrollment numbers and superior financial operations. The likely result of which will be viable services across the lifecycle of its charter.

CHAPTER 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with TEC §29.259, the Texas Education Agency (agency) is required to make a recommendation regarding the abolition, continuation, or expansion of the adult education pilot program. This evaluation report formally recommends immediate continuation of the adult, high-school diploma and industry certification charter program. Analysis of the available data, policies, and operational narratives have been synthesized to incorporate the following supportive recommendations for the *Texas Legislature*:

- Increase the student enrollment cap from 150 students to 300 students;
- Provide for the maintenance and the extension of funding for all adult students 19-50 years of age as if they are all eligible for Foundation School Program (FSP) funding for the attainment of a high school diploma and industry certification;
- Designate a funding stream for the additional funding needed to serve special populations such as: At-Risk; Limited English Proficient; Special Education; and Parents with children under the age of 5; and

- Amend current language in TEC §29.259 to allow students with a high school equivalency certificate to enroll in the program, expanding the availability of a diploma to all students age 19-50.

In addition, the agency proposes the following supportive recommendations for the *Excel Center for Adults*:

- Diversify available industry certificates to align with a shift in Texas industries - including architecture & construction; business management & administration; finance; health science; hospitality & tourism; information technology; insurance; law, public safety, corrections & security; manufacturing; service industries; and transportation;
- Contract with Austin Community College (ACC) to guarantee opportunities for students who wish to pursue higher education and (or) complete industry certification(s); and
- Increase staff diversity to ensure student demographics are reflected across organizational staffing and faculty.

Appendix A

2015-2016 Leaver Reasons - District 227827	
Issues	Description
Employment	Chose to pursue employment over school; needed to work an extra job(s) due to financial reasons, or wanted to spend time looking for work.
Pregnancy	Pregnancy related issues (student declined PRS services or did not qualify)
No Contact/No Show	Student stopped attending school. Life Coaches tried multiple avenues to contact and engage (including home visits) but could not locate. In some instances, students changed address/contact info without notification.
Violated Attendance Contract	Formal contract set up for student due to excessive absences which student violated.
Course Completer	Student completed courses mid-term and stopped coming.
Behavioral/expelled	Expulsion from school due to major incident or suspension or time off from school due to ongoing behavioral issues.
Legal/incarceration	Incarceration in jail or prison. Also includes legal issues impeding school--such as probation requirements, and student being on the run to evade legal obligation.
Housing Stability	Experiencing risk for homelessness where student could not commit school due to needing to stabilize housing. Also includes potential moving locations/financial.
Personal/commitment	After consideration, student decided that they could not commit to school due to other priorities in life and/ or needing to take time off to address issues before returning.
Family barrier (Conflict/death)	Student experienced death of close family member and needed to take time off because of this. Also includes serious family conflict issues such as domestic violence.
Moved out of service area/ inconvenient location	Student either moved completely out of the service area (out of state/country/city) or to a location of the city where the student deemed this inconvenient for commuting to school.
Personal medical	Dealing with chronic or acute medical issues. Often this was the result of a sudden medical procedure (such as a surgery) or diagnosis which rendered the student unable to attend school.

Child medical	Student's minor child experiencing chronic or acute illness that required continued care of student as guardian.
Caregiver for sick family member	Caregiver for elderly or chronically ill/disabled family member.
Childcare	Unable to secure childcare either due to being waitlisted or not meeting criteria for local childcare services, including Exploration Center... and student was also unable to secure childcare via local personal support avenues (family/friends).
GED	Student chose to pursue GED in lieu of HS diploma.
Transportation Barriers	Experiencing transportation barriers which include student living in an outlying city/area of Austin where bus line did not go, excessively long commute to school due to traffic, and/or barriers with current transportation such as not owning a vehicle, not being able to pay vehicle costs or having a vehicle that was not in working condition.