

TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY

APRIL 2011

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News from the Texas Education Agency

STATE BOARD FOR EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

Most educator preparation programs receive full accreditation

Ninety percent of Texas educator preparation programs in 2009-2010 earned full accreditation to prepare, train, and recommend candidates for certification to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

Accreditation status is determined by meeting a 70 percent passing rate on the certification exams. The pass rate will go up to 75 percent for 2010-2011 and to 80 percent by 2011-2012.

In the future, full accreditation of educator preparation programs will be based on four performance standards that will include: passing rates on educator certification exams; teacher appraisals completed by school administrators; the improvement of student achievement of students taught by beginning teachers for the first three years following certification; and compliance with SBEC requirements regarding the frequency, duration, and quality of field supervision of beginning teachers during their first year in the classroom.

An educator preparation program is assigned one of five statuses by the SBEC: Accredited, Accredited-Not Rated, Accredited-Warned, Accredited-Probation, or Not Accredited-Revoked. A program is assigned an Accredited-Not Rated status if it is a new preparation program or if the program has finishers, but no test scores. A program is rated Accredited-Warned if it fails to meet the performance standards; fails to meet the standards in any two gender or ethnicity demographic groups; and fails to meet the standards for a gender or ethnicity demographic group for two consecutive years.

Of the 172 teacher preparation programs currently in operation in Texas, 155 programs earned a rating of Accredited, 16 programs received Accredited-Not Rating, and one program, Prairie View A&M University, received a status of Accredited-Warned.

Educator preparation programs that do not meet the accountability standards are required to submit corrective action plans. The board voted to require 13 educator preparation programs to submit action plans due to their low passing rates and small numbers in certain demographic groups.

One educator preparation program called Steps to Teaching Alternative Certification Program (ACP) located in Pharr was placed on probation and the board initiated the process to revoke the program due to ongoing concerns regarding admission criteria, curriculum, program delivery, candidate support, program staff training and low pass rates on certification examinations.

Over a period of seven years, SBEC and the Texas Education Agency have made five monitoring or assistance visits to the program and conducted one desk audit. Despite ongoing support, extensive technical assistance, and monitoring, the program's continued failure to correct serious program deficiencies warranted placing the program on probation. The board will consider revoking the program at its June 17 meeting.

The accreditation status for each educator preparation program can be found at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=5887&menu_id=2147483671&menu_id2=794.

Important UPDATE

Beginning with this issue, the *Texas Education Today* newsletter will only be available online at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=276&menu_id=692.

The newsletter is published after each meeting of the State Board of Education.

To be notified when a new edition is issued, you may sign up for an electronic notification at <http://miller.tea.state.tx.us/list/> and select *Texas Education Today* from the set of listserv options.

TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

State Board approves revision of Technology Applications curriculum

The State Board of Education gave final approval to a substantial revision and expansion of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Technology Applications for kindergarten through eighth grade, as well as to 13 high school courses at its April 15 meeting.

Because of the evolving and expanding nature of technology, the board is considering ultimately increasing the number of high school level technology application classes from the **current eight** to a total of 19.

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

- Digital Forensics
- Game Programming and Design
- Mobile Application Development
- Robotics Programming and Design
- Digital Design and Media Production
- Digital Art and Animation
- 3-D Modeling and Animation
- Digital Communications in the 21st Century
- Digital Video and Audio Design
- Web Communications
- Web Design
- Independent Study in Technology Applications
- Independent Study in Evolving/Emerging Technologies

The board delayed adopting standards for six high school courses until July so board members can continue to review and consider input they received during the public comment period. Those courses are: Fundamentals of Computer Science;



Computer Science I, II, III; Discrete Mathematics; and Web Game Development.

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

More information about the curriculum standards update is available at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=8192>.

The new curriculum standards will be implemented in 2012-2013. These replace standards in use in Texas classrooms since 1998.

EMPLOYMENT

New online tool links Texas teachers to job opportunities

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has joined forces with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to help teachers who are looking for new jobs. A new web portal has been created and placed on TEA's [TheBestTeachInTexas.com](http://www.tea.state.tx.us) website, and directly links interested job seekers to available teaching and education related positions found in [WorkInTexas.com](http://www.twc.state.tx.us).

"This website will help dislocated teachers find new teaching positions or perhaps even new careers. It offers school employees and prospective teachers with a quick and comprehensive way to search for new employment," said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

TheBestTeachInTexas.com is TEA's online information site for teachers and prospective teachers and WorkInTexas.com is TWC's free online job-matching resource that includes job

vacancy notices for nearly 150,000 employers.

Among the jobs currently available through the web portal are K-12 teaching and other school positions, post secondary education instructors, speech language pathologists and trainers.

It is recommended that all job seekers register with WorkInTexas.com, one of the state's largest employer and job databases providing a comprehensive, up-to-date listing of jobs throughout Texas. The resource helps identify jobs that match each individual's qualifications and interests.

In addition, the site helps job seekers build their résumés and provides information about job fairs and other career events.

To search for job openings in specific school districts or charter schools, go to <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/districtSearch.aspx>.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Hispanic students now make up majority of students enrolled in Texas public schools

For the first time in modern Texas history, Hispanic students now make up a majority of those enrolled in Texas public schools.

Newly released [enrollment statistics](#) for the 2010-2011 school year show there are 2,480,000 Hispanic students in the public schools, representing 50.2 percent of the total enrollment, which is 4,933,617.

The number and percentage of Hispanic students has been growing for years. The first school year in which the number of Hispanic students surpassed the number of white students in Texas schools was 2001-2002.

Now the number of Hispanic students surpass the combined total for all other student groups. Hispanics also are the largest ethnic group at every single grade level from prekindergarten through 12th grade.

Former state demographer Steve Murdock recently told legislators that “The future of Texas, for anyone looking at this, is tied to our minority population and our young population, and how well they do is really how well Texas is going to do.”

At a [February symposium](#), Murdock also noted that most of the growth came from live births to Texas residents or in-migration from residents of other states. Only about 24 percent of the growth in the overall Texas population came from international immigration, whether legal or illegal.

A report released by the Brookings Institution in April, which examined 1990, 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data, found similar trends nationwide. This study found that:

“New minorities—Hispanics, Asians, and other groups apart from whites, blacks, and American Indians—account for all of the growth among the nation’s child population. From 2000 to 2010, the population of white children nationwide declined by 4.3 million, while the population of Hispanic and Asian children grew by 5.5 million.

“In almost half of states and nearly one-third of large metro areas, child populations declined in the 2000s. White child populations dropped in 46 states and 86 of the 100 largest metro areas, but gains of new minority children forestalled more widespread

overall declines in youth.

“In areas of the country gaining children, Hispanics accounted for most of that growth. Fully 95 percent of Texas’s child population growth occurred among Hispanics. Los Angeles was the only major metropolitan area to witness a decline in Hispanic children from 2000 to 2010.”

Reflecting the changing face of the country’s youth, the U.S. Department of Education decided to broaden reporting categories for ethnic groups. Texas began using the new reporting format in the 2009-2010 school year.

Categories for ethnicity were explicitly separated from racial categories. The USDE requires data to be collected using a two-part question. The first part asks “What is this person’s ethnicity?” and students are identified as either “Hispanic/Latino” or “Not Hispanic/Latino.”

The second part, which provides a wider array of racial categories than were available in the past, asks “What is this person’s race?” Students can now select as many categories as apply from the following groups: black or African American; American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific; white or two or more races.

In the table below, a student identified as “Hispanic/Latino” is counted in this category regardless of responses provided to the question on race. A student identified as “Not Hispanic/Latino” and whose race is identified using only one racial category is counted in the single race category. A student identified as “Hispanic/Latino” and whose race is identified using more than one racial category is counted in the category of “two or more races.”

Enrollment data using the new definitions shows a decline in the number of American Indian, Native Hawaiians and white students attending Texas public schools between 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Some of that change is attributed to changing enrollment trends. But it may also be due in part to the new definitions that give students more flexibility in identifying their racial heritage.

TWO-YEAR ENROLLMENT FIGURES

Ethnicity	2009-2010	2010-2011
American Indian or Alaska Native	26,467	23,602
Asian	162,032	169,338
Black or African American	632,401	637,722
Hispanic/Latino	2,398,684	2,480,000
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific	6,201	6,127
Two or more races	74,366	78,419
White	1,547,693	1,538,409

\$25,000 RICHER**Two Texas educators honored at Milken Educator Awards ceremony**

Two exceptional Texas teachers were honored at the 2011 Milken Educator Forum, *Milken Educators as Ambassadors for Excellence*, with \$25,000 during an inspiring event hailed as the “Oscars of Teaching” by *Teacher Magazine*.

Tracy Spies, principal at Ben Milam Elementary in the Bryan Independent School District, and Rogelio Garcia, a third-grade teacher at James B. Bonham Elementary School in the Dallas Independent School District, were honored at the Milken Educator Awards held on April 9 at the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel in Santa Monica, California.

Spies’ colleagues say she is the ultimate instructional leader who not only understands effective teaching practices, but completely understands how to support, coach and mentor her teachers to make them more effective instructional leaders.

Her school, Ben Milam Elementary, participates in a program called the Teacher Advancement Program or TAP, which is a research-based school improvement model that is designed to attract, retain and motivate the best talent to the teaching profession. Under Spies’ leadership, the TAP program has produced measurable academic improvement for students.

Third-grade teacher Garcia was selected for the Milken award because he is considered a model educator, with a charismatic way about him. Parents love him and, year after year, request him to be part of their child’s life. He forms strong bonds with students so that students do well because they want to make him proud.

Garcia has played a key role in ensuring the success of the campus’ dual language program. He was instrumental in reviewing the new learning standards for English Language Learners, making sure the standards were rigorous and aligned with the state accountability system. Although he has been approached about moving into administration, Garcia, who has taught for 12 years, has declined the opportunity. He says he is devoted to teaching and wants to remain on the front line.

The ceremony honoring the Milken winners was a highlight of the Milken Educator Forum, one of America’s premier education events. The Forum joins award-winning teachers and principals with education leaders to share successful strategies for

strengthening our nation’s K-12 school system.

First presented in 1987, the Milken Educator Awards represent the nation’s largest teacher recognition program in the U.S., having bestowed 2,500 outstanding educators with more than \$62 million in unrestricted cash awards.



Photo provided by the Milken Family Foundation.

Tracy Spies, principal at Ben Milam Elementary School, receives \$25,000 from Milken Family Foundation Co-Founder Michael Milken (left) and MFF Chairman Lowell Milken (right) at the 2011 Milken Educator Forum in California on April 9.



Photo provided by the Milken Family Foundation.

Rogelio Garcia, a teacher at James B. Bonham Elementary School, receives \$25,000 from Milken Family Foundation Co-Founder Michael Milken (left) and MFF Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken (right) at the 2011 Milken Educator Forum in California on April 9.

HONORED

Texas Education Agency receives recognition for TAP program

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was one of three organizations nationwide to receive a surprise honor for the effective implementation of TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement.

Lizzette Reynolds, deputy commissioner for statewide policy and programs, accepted the award on behalf of TEA. The award was presented before 1,500 educators and policy leaders attending a special luncheon in Los Angeles on March 13 at the 11th National TAP Conference: *Changing the Landscape for Educator Support and Evaluation*.

The TAP Award of Distinction honors an organization for distinguished accomplishments and overall implementation of TAP. TAP is an educational reform effort offering teachers multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability and performance-based compensation. The comprehensive implementation of TAP is proven to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. With strong backing from former Education Commissioner Jim Nelson, TAP in Texas began in the 2005-2006 school year.

“The Texas Education Agency has strongly supported TAP from day one, making the system a core priority and developing an infrastructure to expand and sustain it,” said Dr. Gary Stark, president and CEO of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, the non-profit public charity that operates the system and funds the TAP Award of Distinction. “The TEA’s leadership and commitment to TAP have led to significant student achievement growth and have served as a model to follow.”

TAP in Texas has grown from three schools in the Richardson Independent School District in 2005 to 49 schools

across the state in 2010-2011. Seventy-five schools are expected to implement TAP next year.

The TAP team in Texas, led by Executive Director Tammy Kreuz, provides ongoing high-quality training and technical assistance to TAP schools through a staff of executive master teachers and regional coordinators. The state staff takes the lead in

identifying and preparing new schools to enter TAP, ensuring fidelity to the key elements of the reform, and constantly evaluating ways to further strengthen implementation.

Representatives from Texas TAP schools are often featured at national TAP Conferences, TAP Summer Institutes (TSI) and other events throughout the year. They are also highlighted in national training videos and other materials that help TAP schools across the country to effectively implement the reform system. Texas TAP also

presented to The Education Trust’s national conference last year in Washington, D.C.

The TEA has provided financial support for TAP’s state-level infrastructure and seed money for additional TAP schools within the state. In 2007, TAP was included as an eligible initiative to receive state funds under the District Awards for Teaching Excellence (DATE) grant program. In addition, TAP is funded by federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants.

TEA joins the Louisiana Department of Education and the South Carolina State Department of Education as the only TAP Award of Distinction recipients this year.

Launched in 1999, TAP impacts more than 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students nationwide. For more information on TAP, visit www.tapsystem.org.



Photo provided by Milken Family Foundation.

Lizzette Reynolds, deputy commissioner of statewide policy and programs at the Texas Education Agency, accepts the TAP Award of Distinction from NIET President and CEO Gary Stark (left) and NIET Chairman and TAP Founder Lowell Milken.

STUDENT CENTERED

Dual credit courses prove to be a valuable option for students

A recent study commissioned by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) shows that enrollment in courses for dual credit is increasing across Texas high schools and such courses are perceived by dual credit program administrators as providing rigorous instruction in core academic subjects. It also recommends that the state should do more to ensure increased student access to quality courses for dual credit.

The study, which looked at three years of data, showed that total state enrollment of public high school students in courses for dual credit rose from 71,803 in 2007-2008 to 94,232 in 2009-2010, an increase of 31 percent.

Conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., the study further found that student performance in courses for dual credit was generally positive. “Virtually all students (99.9 percent) who enrolled in courses for dual credit were reported by their high school as completing these courses, and most (94 percent or more across different subject areas) also received passing grades for the affiliated high school course. At least 95 percent of students who were enrolled in courses for dual credit in 2009-2010 also met the basic proficiency standards for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in all subject areas on the 2010 TAKS.”

As a result of these findings and more, the study recommends that the legislature “consider the state’s role in ensuring that there is an adequate supply of courses and programs for dual credit — adequate in amount and adequately distributed to eligible high schools students in the state — so that each student has the opportunity to earn 12 semester credit hours of college before graduating high school.”

The study states that Texas should develop a way to estimate how much demand there is for dual credit programs and courses.

“The state also might play a more extensive role such as developing and providing courses and programs for which there is a need, or encouraging or funding through competitively awarded contracts these and other supply-side activities,” the report stated.

A total of 15 institutions of higher education (IHEs) — 12 community colleges, and three universities — that are major providers of courses for dual credit were selected for participation in the study. In addition, 48 high schools and their corresponding districts also were selected. Administrators from all 15 participating IHEs completed surveys. A total of 36 administrators from selected school districts and 34 administrators or staff from selected high schools completed surveys.

Courses for dual credit are college courses offered by an IHE for which high school students receive simultaneous academic credit from both the college and the high school upon successful course completion.

To offer these courses, Texas school districts and IHEs create

contractual agreements, which can vary widely among the participants in terms of their details and degree of explicitness. The IHE may have separate agreements with multiple school districts, each with different terms. Similarly, a school district may have agreements with more than one IHE. Currently, more than 90 percent of courses for dual credit are offered by Texas community colleges.

According to the study, “cost agreements also vary from district to district.

“Some IHEs support dual credit programs by reducing or waiving tuition and fees for dual credit students; some districts pay for the students, either out of local funds or from their high school allotment; and some communities have established privately funded scholarship programs for dual credit activities. When these funding sources are not available, students and parents pay out-of-pocket for the courses.”

Summary of Key Findings

The study found that:

- Within the state as a whole, a wide variety of courses for dual credit is available to students in both academic and career or technical areas. An analysis of enrollment in courses for dual credit by subject area revealed that approximately 70 percent of courses taken by high school students were in core academic subject areas such as social studies/history (31 percent), English language arts (26 percent), mathematics (8 percent), and science (4 percent); 20 percent of courses were in career or technical education and computer science. Approximately 6 percent of the courses fell into the category of “other.”

- Overall, survey respondents reported that courses for dual credit were consistently rigorous across courses and that courses for dual credit offered on high school campuses were as rigorous as those offered on college campuses. Among high school respondents who provided comparative ratings of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and courses for dual credit, 42 percent reported that AP courses and courses for dual credit were equally rigorous, 45 percent reported that AP courses were more rigorous than courses for dual credit, and 13 percent reported that courses for dual credit were more rigorous than AP courses.

Among high school survey respondents who provided comparative ratings of International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and courses for dual credit, 50 percent reported that IB courses and courses for dual credit were equally rigorous, 38 percent reported that IB courses were more rigorous than courses for dual credit, and 13 percent reported that courses for dual credit were more rigorous than IB courses.

Funding

The study analyzed the revenue and expenditures data for

SAVINGS FOR STUDENTS

Testing fee subsidies available for AP/IB exams

With funding available from the Texas Education Agency, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), and the College Board, testing fee subsidies for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams will continue for 2011 through the AP/IB Incentives Program.

Test fee subsidies and teacher training reimbursements continue to be funded; however, due to budget constraints, the agency will not fund campus awards for students who earn an eligible score on the 2011 exams.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) will continue to pay \$30 of the testing fee for each AP or IB exam taken by an eligible Texas high school student.

To be eligible for this incentive program component, students must have taken an authorized AP or IB course, or be recommended by their principal to take the exam. TEA pays its \$30 share of the examination fee directly to the College Board for AP exams or to the district for IB exams. Campuses and districts should not collect this portion of the exam fees from the students.

Grant funds from the USDE will further reduce the AP and IB exam fees by another \$18 for students who qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program, and the College Board will provide a \$22 fee reduction per

exam for students with financial need. See the table below for final costs to students taking the 2011 AP or IB exams.

For more information about the AP/IB Incentives Program, go to the TEA Advanced Academics website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3822>.

<i>All Texas Students</i>			
AP exam cost	\$87	IB exam cost	\$92
TEA subsidy	\$30	TEA subsidy	\$30
Total cost to student	\$57	Total cost to student	\$62
<i>Texas students who qualify for financial assistance</i>			
AP exam cost	\$87	IB exam cost	\$92
TEA subsidy	\$30	TEA subsidy	\$30
USDE subsidy	\$18	USDE subsidy	\$18
College Board waiver	\$22		
Testing site fee waiver	\$8		
Total cost to student	\$9	Total cost to student	\$44

Study recommends expanding the availability of dual credit courses

the delivery of courses for dual credit to high school students at school districts and community colleges in Texas through an exploratory analysis based on existing data from THECB and TEA as well as supplemental financial data collected directly from the study sample of IHEs, districts, and high schools. These data were used to reconstruct dual credit expenditures and revenues and then to estimate the cost of courses for dual credit.

The study found that “dual credit program funding/revenue are estimated at approximately \$180 million for the 2009–2010 academic year. The state of Texas covered the majority (61 percent) of costs associated with courses for dual credit for high school students through state funding (e.g., Foundation School Program, State Compensatory Education funds, High School Allotment funds, formula and discretionary grants, etc.) to districts (36 percent) and state appropriations to community colleges (25 percent).

“A substantial proportion (32 percent) of state funds used by districts to support dual credit programs went toward tuition and fees (19 percent) and textbooks (13 percent).”

Based on the study sample, the average program cost per credit hour attempted for courses for dual credit at IHEs was about \$125, with 87 percent of the cost representing course delivery costs and 13 percent for administrative costs. At high schools

the average program cost per credit hour was \$149, virtually all of which related to instructional payroll (85 percent) and textbooks (15 percent).

Within the study sample, costs at four-year universities were higher at \$189 per credit hour than community colleges at \$120.

Legislation

Currently there are at least three bills pending in the Texas Legislature pertaining to dual credit programs.

Senate Bill (SB) 1619 extends a provision in which a school district is not required to pay a student’s tuition or other associated costs for a dual credit course. The rule was to expire Sept. 1, 2011. SB 1619 changes the date to Sept. 1, 2013.

SB 149 requires school districts to annually report to the TEA the number of district students, including career and technical students, who have participated in courses for dual credit and other such courses.

SB 850 would stop funding for courses for dual credit that will not transfer, such as physical education courses. Under the proposed bill, funding would be limited to core curriculum courses, foreign language and career and technical education courses that apply to a certificate or associate’s degree at the IHE.

A complete copy of the study can be found on the web at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147499147>.

State Board Actions

The State Board of Education met April 15 and took the following actions.

SECOND READING

At second reading and final adoption, the board:

- Repealed the old rules for the percentage allotment for gifted/talented education as changed by law. The new percentage is referenced in a different section of the administrative code.

IN OTHER ACTION

In other action, the board:

- Ratified the purchases and sales for the Permanent School Fund (PSF) for the months of December 2010 through February 2011 in the amounts of \$1,100,040,498 and \$1,111,553,560, respectively.
- Approved an extension of the global custody and securities lending services contract with BNY Mellon for the PSF authorizing a three-year extension as allowed by the contract beginning Sept. 1, 2011, and ending Aug. 31, 2014, and authorized contract execution by the commissioner of education.
- Approved an extension of the investment management services for international index fund contract with BlackRock Investment Management, LLC for the PSF authorizing two consecutive two-year extensions as allowed by the contract and authorized contract execution by the commissioner of education. The first extension period shall be from Sept. 1, 2011 through Aug. 31, 2013, and the second extension period shall be from Sept. 1, 2013 through Aug. 31, 2015.
- Approved an extension of the real estate consultant services agreement with Courtland Partners for the PSF authorizing two consecutive one-year extensions as allowed by the contract and authorizing contract execution by the commissioner of education.

The first extension period shall be from Sept. 2, 2011 through Aug. 31, 2012, and the second extension period shall be from Sept. 1, 2012 through Aug. 31, 2013.

- Voted 8-6 with one abstention to extend for four years the investment counsel services for the PSF with NEPC and authorized contract execution by the commissioner of education. The contract will end Aug. 31, 2015.
- Approved the reappointment of MSgt Elizabeth Morales to a two-year term of office on the Lackland Independent School District Board of Trustees from April 15, 2011 through April 14, 2013.
- Voted to penalize publisher Houghton Mifflin Harcourt \$12,000 for making unauthorized updates to instructional materials adopted under Proclamation 2010. The publisher updated adopted materials for English Language Arts, grade 1; reading, grades 2-8; and Literature I-IV without board approval.
- Adopted six products recommended by the commissioner of education under the Midcycle 2011 Proclamation. The board also required publishers to make the corrections listed in the “Report of the Commissioner of Education Concerning Required Corrections of Factual Errors” for materials adopted under the proclamation. The materials must also meet all established manufacturing standards and specifications.
- Granted all publishers permission to update their assessment preparation workbooks adopted under Proclamation 2011 by removing material specific to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills and to replace it with material related to the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. All updates must be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.
- Voted to execute an agreement with Prudential Real Estate Investors necessary to make an investment commitment of up to \$125 million in PRISA subject to continued due diligence and negotiation of fund terms for the PSF. The board also voted to reopen the Request for Qualifications for Real Estate Investment Managers for the Texas PSF RFQ #701-09-027(A).

- Voted to split the 7 percent mandate for risk parity discretionary manager for the PSF between AQR Capital Management LLC and Bridgewater Associates, LP and authorized contract execution by the commissioner of education. To the extent investments by the selected risk parity managers, in accordance with the RFP and the implementing documentation, constitute investments that are listed in Rule §33.25(b) of Title 19, Chapter 33 of the Texas Administrative Code, the board approved the transactions in accordance with Rule §33.25(b).

- Approved the following appointments:
 - ❖ T. Hardie Bowman to the Committee of Investment Advisors to the PSF.
 - ❖ Lawrence Allen Jr. to the Board of Trustees of the Texas Growth Fund.

- Enjoyed hearing the pre-kindergarten students from

Mainland Preparatory Academy of LaMarque read two children's books.

- In separate action from the full board, the Committee on School Initiatives reviewed 15 Generation 16 charter applications that had been deemed incomplete by agency staff. The committee directed staff to send two of those applications, for El Paso Country Day Charter School and Excellence in Leadership Academy, forward for external review and evaluation.

This brings to 19 the number of Generation 16 applications which will be forwarded for external review and evaluation. Applications which receive an average of at least 75 percent of the total possible points will be scheduled for interviews with the committee members on Aug. 30 and 31.

The Generation 16 charters are scheduled to be considered for award at the board's September meeting. By July 1, there will be at least nine open slots for new charter applicants.

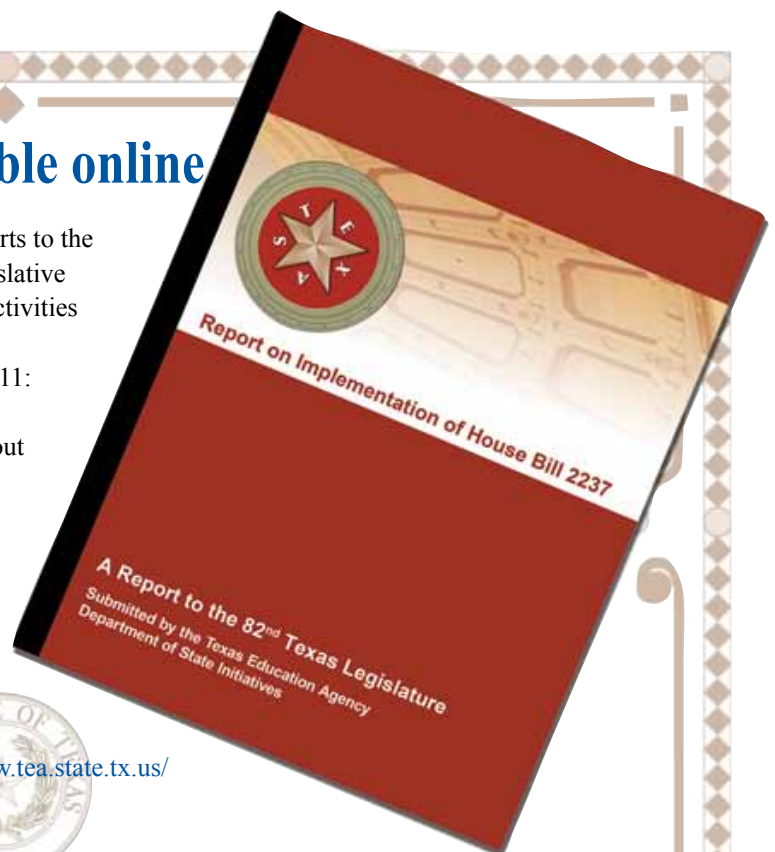
Legislative reports now available online

The Texas Education Agency has posted several new reports to the 82nd Legislature. These reports, published prior to every legislative session, reviews and analyzes agency programs, initiatives, activities and legislation.

The following reports have been posted as of February 2011:

- A Review of High School Completion Rates and Dropout Prevention for Students Identified with Limited English Proficiency
- Report on Implementation of House Bill 2237
- Research Study of Texas Dual Credit Programs and Course

For these and other reports, go to <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/LegislativeReports/>



STATE ASSESSMENTS

New information regarding implementation of the STAAR™ program

House Bill 3, passed by the 81st Texas Legislature, required the development of a new state assessment program. The result of that legislation is the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) program.

STAAR is a more rigorous assessment program that will provide the foundation for a new accountability system for Texas public education. The following information is based on current legislation.

Beginning in spring 2012, STAAR will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The STAAR program at grades 3–8 will assess the same subjects and grades that are currently assessed on TAKS.

At high school, however, grade-specific assessments will be replaced with 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history.

With the new testing program, current test administration policies have been reevaluated and modified to ensure that they fit the new structure and purpose of the STAAR program. The following information provides updates to current policies and is intended to assist in preparations for the spring 2012 STAAR administrations:

Time Limits—TEA will establish a four-hour time limit for both the STAAR EOC assessments and the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments for the 2012 spring test administration. A four-hour time limit should provide sufficient time for the majority of students to complete the test. At the high school level, the four-hour time limit will not preclude campuses from having two testing sessions within a given day. If two sessions are desired, early start times can be offered, sessions can overlap, or test sessions can extend beyond the typical school day. The agency will review the four-hour time limit for STAAR after the spring 2012 administration to determine if the policy needs to be reconsidered or adjusted.

Make-up Testing—Current plans for the STAAR program include offering make-up testing opportunities for all grades and subjects. Make-ups are planned for assessments given during all administrations, including summer administrations. Please note that the decision to allow make-up administrations in summer 2012 is different than what is currently indicated on the state testing calendar.

Dictionaries and Calculators—The STAAR program has new policies for dictionary and calculator use based on the new

curriculum requirements. Dictionaries must be made available to all students taking STAAR reading assessments at grades 6–8; STAAR writing assessments at grade 7; and STAAR English I, II, and III assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L). Calculators must be available to all students taking STAAR Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, chemistry, physics, and biology assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L). Detailed information on the use of dictionaries and calculators can be found at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/studassmt042511.html>.

Embedded Reference Materials—Reference materials (e.g., formula charts) for STAAR math and science assessments and graph paper for the STAAR math assessments will be included in test booklets. These materials will be printed on perforated pages so that students can remove them and use them during the test administration.

Grade 3 Answer Documents—Students taking STAAR grade 3 reading and math assessments will now record their responses on a separate answer document. Grade 3 students will no longer record their answers to test items in a scorable test booklet.

Dyslexia Accommodations—Current dyslexia accommodations for the TAKS program are limited to grades 3–8. However, for the STAAR program, TEA is expanding these testing policies to include high school students with dyslexia and other similar reading disabilities. Students will be allowed to take the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments as well as the grades 3–8 reading assessments with accommodations, such as the oral reading of item stems/answer options and extended time. These accommodations represent two of the three accommodations in the current dyslexia bundle. The only accommodation that will no longer be provided is the proper-nouns lists. More information about these accommodations as well as others that will be available to students will be provided in the future.

As TEA continues to work on the implementation of the new STAAR program, we are requesting information from those in the field to help guide STAAR decisions. To participate in the STAAR survey, go to <http://www.texasassessment.com/STAARsurvey>.

Additional information about STAAR will be provided as it becomes available. For more information and resources, go to the STAAR resources pages on the Student Assessment website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>.

TAKS RESULTS

Most students meet TAKS promotion requirements

The vast majority of Texas fifth and eighth-grade students passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) mathematics and reading tests, meeting one of the requirements for promotion to the next grade.

Results released April 26 show that 87 percent of the fifth-grade students who took the TAKS reading exam in English passed it on their first try, as did 76 percent of those who took the test in Spanish.

Eighty-six percent of those tested in English passed the fifth-grade math test, while 49 percent of those testing in Spanish passed.

This represents a two percentage point increase in the passing rate on the English reading exam over last year, while the passing rate on the mathematics test remained the same as in 2010. Those testing in Spanish had a three-percentage-point increase in the passing rate on the reading test and five-percentage-point increase on the math test.

At eighth grade, 89 percent of the students passed the reading test this year and 80 percent passed the math TAKS. The test is only available in English at this grade level. In 2010, 91 percent of eighth-grade students passed the reading test, while 80 percent passed the math test.

Students must pass both tests, as well as their classes, at these two grade levels in order to be promoted to the next grade under the state's Student Success Initiative.

Students who failed the exam on the first administration have two more testing opportunities. The math test for both grades will be given on May 17 and June 28. The reading test will be offered on May 18 and June 29.

Children who failed the tests will be offered additional instruction to help them strengthen their skills. Students who do not ultimately pass the math and reading TAKS will be retained in their current grade unless an appeal of the retention is successful.

TERM OF OFFICE

Robert Scott reconfirmed as commissioner of education



Robert Scott was reappointed commissioner of education by Gov. Rick Perry to a second four-year term and was officially confirmed by the Senate on March 30. Scott's four-year term runs concurrent with the governor's term of office. Scott was first appointed to serve as commissioner in October 2007.

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For information about this publication, contact:
Division of Communications
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
(512) 463-9000
www.tea.state.tx.us

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