

Chapter 13

Distinction Designations: 2013 and Beyond

Overview of Statutory Requirements

Statute adopted during the 81st Legislative Session in 2009 in House Bill 3 (HB 3), added Subchapter F. Distinction Designations to the Texas public school accountability system, in Chapter 39. Public School System Accountability. This section of the report addresses the requirements for assigning distinctions to districts and campuses, some beginning in 2013, others in 2014.

Statute specifies the following regarding distinctions for districts and campuses that meet the criteria for an acceptable rating:

- Campuses and Districts: A rating of *Recognized* or *Exemplary* based on performance on the STAAR college readiness indicators (§39.202). Possibilities for implementation of these distinction ratings are discussed in Section III of this report. They will not be assigned until 2014 (§39.116(c)(1) and §39.116(d)).
- Campus Distinctions:
 - Campuses ranked in the top 25 percent in annual improvement on STAAR (§39.203(a));
 - Campuses ranked in the top 25 percent in performance gap reduction on STAAR (§39.203(b));
- Campus Distinctions – Determined by Distinction Designation Committees
 - Campuses that satisfy criteria in academic achievement in
 - English language arts,
 - mathematics,
 - science, or
 - social studies (§39.203(c));
 - Campuses that satisfy criteria in fine arts;
 - Campuses that satisfy criteria in physical education;
 - Campuses that satisfy criteria for a 21st Century Workforce Development program;
 - Campuses that satisfy criteria for a second language acquisition program.

The following table describes the use of distinctions with the acceptable/unacceptable ratings.

House Bill 3 Summary Table – Performance Ratings and Distinctions

Performance Ratings Assigned by August 8 each year to districts and campuses. [§39.054]	Distinction Designations Awarded by August 8 each year to districts and campuses with Acceptable performance. [§39.201]	
<i>Acceptable</i>	District	Campus
	§39.202 – Academic Excellence Distinction Designation for Districts and Campuses* The Commissioner of Education (COE) shall establish <i>Recognized</i> and <i>Exemplary</i> ratings for awarding districts and campuses an academic distinction designation. The <i>Recognized</i> and <i>Exemplary</i> ratings criteria include: (1) percentages of students who meet the college-ready standard or annual improvement standard, and (2) other factors for determining sufficient student attainment of postsecondary readiness.	
	Not applicable for districts.	§39.203 – Campus Distinction Designations** (a) COE shall award campus distinction designations if the campus is in the top 25 percent in annual improvement. (b) COE shall award a campus distinction designation if the campus is in the top 25 percent of those demonstrating an ability to close performance gaps. (c) COE shall award a campus distinction designation to campuses that meet the committee-established criteria for the following programs: (1) academic performance in ELA, math, science, or social studies (2) fine arts (3) physical education (4) 21 st Century Workforce Development program (5) second language acquisition program §39.204 – Campus Distinction Designation Criteria; Committees (a) COE shall establish standards and methods for awarding distinction designations to campuses. (b) COE shall establish a separate committee to develop criteria for each distinction designation under 39.203(c).
<i>Unacceptable</i>	None for <i>Unacceptable</i> districts and campuses.	

* The *Recognized* and *Exemplary* ratings for districts and campuses will be assigned for the first time in August 2014.

** The distinction designations for campuses will be assigned for the first time in August 2013.

Stakeholder Advice

Texas has a long history of recognizing high performance by students in academics as well as recognition of schools and districts in dropout prevention and graduation. With HB 3, schools will be rewarded for performance in four new areas: fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition. The criteria and standards for the distinctions under §39.204 will depend on advice and guidance from committees comprised of individuals who practice as professionals in the content area relevant to the distinction designation, individuals with subject matter expertise in the content area relevant to the distinction designation, educators with subject matter expertise in the content area relevant to the distinction designation, and community leaders, including leaders from the business community.

Five committees will begin meeting in early 2011 to guide the agency in developing criteria for the distinctions.

- Distinctions for academic performance (academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies). Advice will be sought from individuals and/or organizations with expertise in each of these subject areas.
- Distinction awards for the fine arts will include advice from external stakeholders and professional organizations such as the Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts (CEDFA).
- Distinction awards for physical education will include advice from external stakeholders and professional organizations such as the State School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) and the Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (TAHPERD).
- Distinction awards for 21st Century Workforce Development programs will include advice from external stakeholders and professional organizations such as the Career and Technology Association of Texas (CTAT), and the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA).
- Distinction awards for second language acquisition programs will include advice from external stakeholders and professional organizations such as Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE) and the Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA).

Other important stakeholder organizations include the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP), the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA), and the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA).

Decisions To Be Made

The following topics summarize a portion of the issues that will be explored during the development process, using the recommendations provided by advisory groups, distinction committees, and public comment.

New Areas for Acknowledgment. Four of the campus distinction designation areas are new: fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition program. These new areas present new challenges for indicator development. For example, in addition to measures of student performance, it is appropriate to consider other types of indicators that measure inputs (such as teacher qualifications), processes (such as successful program implementation), opportunity to learn (such as availability of programs and courses), and participation (such as student enrollment in programs or courses). Indicators should demonstrate that a campus program significantly exceeds minimum requirements and provides students with enhanced opportunities for participation in enrichment programs. Given the difference in structure between elementary and secondary schools, subcategories and/or different criteria may need to be established to differentiate distinctions at elementary campuses versus secondary campuses. Examples that may be considered in indicator development for each of the areas are:

- Fine Arts:
 - Student enrollment in fine arts courses beyond the graduation requirements,
 - Number of opportunities for extra-curricular performances or competitions,
 - Portfolio system for compiling and sharing student performances and accomplishments,
 - Number of certified specialists and amount of time instructing elementary students in art, music, and/or theatre.
- Physical Education:
 - Successful implementation of Coordinated School Health Programs (CSHP) in Kindergarten through Grade 8,
 - Scheduled recess or opportunities for structured play,
 - Specific time devoted to physical activity,
 - Student enrollment in physical education courses beyond the graduation requirements,
 - Fitnessgram results.
- 21st Century Workforce Development Program:
 - Successful implementation of middle school career and technical education (CTE) courses to support further study of CTE in high school,
 - Student enrollment in programs of study in additional CTE clusters beyond minimum requirements,
 - Completion of certifications or licensure,
 - Successful integration of technology applications into all other areas of the curriculum.

- Second Language Acquisition Program:
 - Student enrollment in advanced language classes beyond the required two- or three-year graduation requirement,
 - The number of different languages offered,
 - Performance on advanced placement examinations for languages,
 - Successful implementation of dual language programs in elementary schools.

Data Collection. In order to develop indicators for some of the new areas in which campus distinction designations will be awarded it will be necessary to collect additional data from school districts. Any additional data submission requirements will impose a financial burden on school districts and a cost/benefit analysis will have to be a part of the evaluation of criteria for these indicators.

Data Reporting. Distinction designations will be awarded annually to qualifying campuses at the same time the accountability ratings are released. Options will be explored with the distinction designation committees to determine how to publicly report the data that have been used to determine the distinctions.

Number of Academic Distinctions. Statute states that campuses are eligible to receive distinctions if they satisfy criteria in academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies. This could result in one distinction for academic achievement in all areas, or four distinctions for achievement in each area.

Number of Members for each Committee. Statute states that members include practitioners in each area, experts in each area, educators with expertise in each area, and community leaders. It further specifies that the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house may appoint these members. The commissioner, in consultation with the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house, will determine the membership of the committees.

Timing. Data availability for some distinctions may take multiple years, as new data is collected, standards are finalized for performance in certain areas (e.g. college readiness), and improvement over years can be measured. When necessary, distinction designation committees will develop a plan to address how the additional criteria and/or measures will be phased in following the initial release in 2013.

District vs. Campus Distinctions. Subchapter G, Distinction Designations stipulates that both districts and campuses may earn distinction ratings of *Recognized* or *Exemplary*. However, the other distinctions, listed under §39.203, are only allowed for campuses.

Distinctions Appropriate to all Campuses. Categories of distinctions will be determined that are appropriate to the student enrollment of the campus and the different levels of schools—elementary, middle, and high schools.

Resources

Each distinction committee will meet four times between spring 2011 and spring 2012 and will consist of 10–12 members. The committee members will require reimbursement for lodging, food, and travel expenses. Assuming that each member will require approximately \$400 for these expenses, it is anticipated that the cost for convening the committees will be approximately \$5,000 per meeting. Since each committee will meet four times, the cost for all five committees to meet four times is a total of \$100,000.

Additional resources may be necessary at the local and state level if the distinction designations are expanded beyond current statute. In addition, the development of new measures of distinction will expand current Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data collection requirements and will increase costs for local districts.

Rulemaking Process

Texas Education Code provides the commissioner of education with rulemaking authority. The following references, which deal specifically with distinction designations, will be contained in the *2013 Accountability Manual*, key parts of which will be adopted as rule in summer 2013:

- §39.202. Academic Excellence Distinction Designation for Districts and Campuses. The commissioner by rule shall establish a recognized and exemplary rating for awarding districts and campuses an academic distinction designation under this subchapter.
- §39.203(b) In addition to the distinction designation described by Subsection (a), the commissioner shall award a campus a distinction designation if the campus demonstrates an ability to significantly diminish or eliminate performance differentials between student subpopulations and is ranked in the top 25 percent of campuses in this state under the performance criteria described by this subsection. The commissioner shall adopt rules related to the distinction designation under this subsection to ensure that a campus does not artificially diminish or eliminate performance differentials through inhibiting the achievement of the highest achieving student subpopulation.
- §39.204(a) The commissioner by rule shall establish: (1) standards for considering campuses for distinction designations under Section 39.203(c); and (2) methods for awarding distinction designations to campuses. (b) In adopting rules under this section, the commissioner shall establish a separate committee to develop criteria for each distinction designation under Section 39.203(c).

Timeline for Development of Distinction Designations

2010	
Fall	<p>Committee Selection Process for five committees begins, based on criteria in TEC §39.204:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) (1) individuals who practice as professionals in the content area relevant to the distinction designation, as applicable; (2) individuals with subject matter expertise in the content area relevant to the distinction designation; (3) educators with subject matter expertise in the content area relevant to the distinction designation; and (4) community leaders, including leaders from the business community. and (d) For each committee, the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives may each appoint a person described by each subdivision of Subsection (c).
2011	
Winter	Selection of members for five distinction designation committees finalized.
January - February	<p>Develop Distinction Designation Committee Materials</p> <p>In preparation for the first meeting of each of the committees, TEA staff will conduct planning, background, research, coordination, and indicator development activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Planning (meeting logistics; develop procedures and agendas; establish guidelines and project milestones; internal coordination across key TEA divisions) o Background (description of existing indicator and evaluation systems and relationship to Campus Distinction Designations in each content area) o Research (literature review and survey of other states; identify issues in each area related to indicators and evaluation systems) o Coordination (identify key TEA divisions, external stakeholders, professional organizations, and outside experts for each content area) o Indicator Development (identify possible criteria for each program area and evaluate strengths and weaknesses)
Spring	<p>Convene first distinction designation committee meetings for fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition program committees.</p> <p>The specific tasks and timelines of the committees will vary some from one area to another but all will include the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o review statutory requirements and limitations, Texas state and federal accountability and monitoring systems, and similar systems in other states; o evaluate criteria for distinction designations and recommend additional criteria; o identify measures for each criterion; o identify categories for distinction designations, including level of program (elementary, middle, high school) and campus size (student enrollment); o identify data requirements, data sources, and data collection options; o evaluate accuracy, validity, and feasibility of measures; o address issues unique to the area; o solicit feedback from stakeholders; and o coordinate with the other distinction designation committees.
Summer	<p>Second meeting of distinction designation committee for fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition program committees.</p> <p>Focus on research, feedback, and drafting committee reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Research (address questions and recommendations of the committees, identify data collection options, model proposed criteria) o Feedback (solicit stakeholder feedback and summarize responses for committees)
Early Fall	First meeting of distinction designation committee for academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies committee.
Late Fall	Second meeting of distinction designation committee for academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies committee.

Late Fall	Third meeting of distinction designation committee for fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition program committees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research (address questions and recommendations of the committees, identify data collection options, model proposed criteria) Feedback (solicit stakeholder feedback and summarize responses for committees)
2012	
Winter	Third meeting of distinction designation committee for academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies committee.
Early Spring	Fourth meeting of distinction designation committee for fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development program, and second language acquisition program committees. Each committee will produce recommendations to the commissioner of education for distinction criteria including, indicators, standards, additional features, rules for awarding distinction designations and distinction labels, guidelines for special issues and circumstances, and timeline for implementation or phase-in.
Late Spring	Final meeting of distinction designation committee for academic achievement in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies committee.
Summer	The commissioner of education releases final decisions on criteria and standards for distinction designations.
Summer - Fall	Districts begin submitting data for distinction awards.
2013	
Fall - Winter	Districts continue submitting data for distinction awards.
March	Rulemaking process begins to have standards and procedures for the 2013 Accountability System (including distinction designations) adopted as part of Texas Administrative Code.
Mid-March	Key chapters of manual for 2013 accountability system released.
Early Summer	Data collection and all relevant information for distinction designations final and available to determine distinction designations.
August	First distinction designations are released with the 2013 performance ratings.
2014	
Late Winter	Accountability advisory committee conducts an annual review of the distinction designations following the 2013 release to continue implementation and ensure the system is responsive to change.