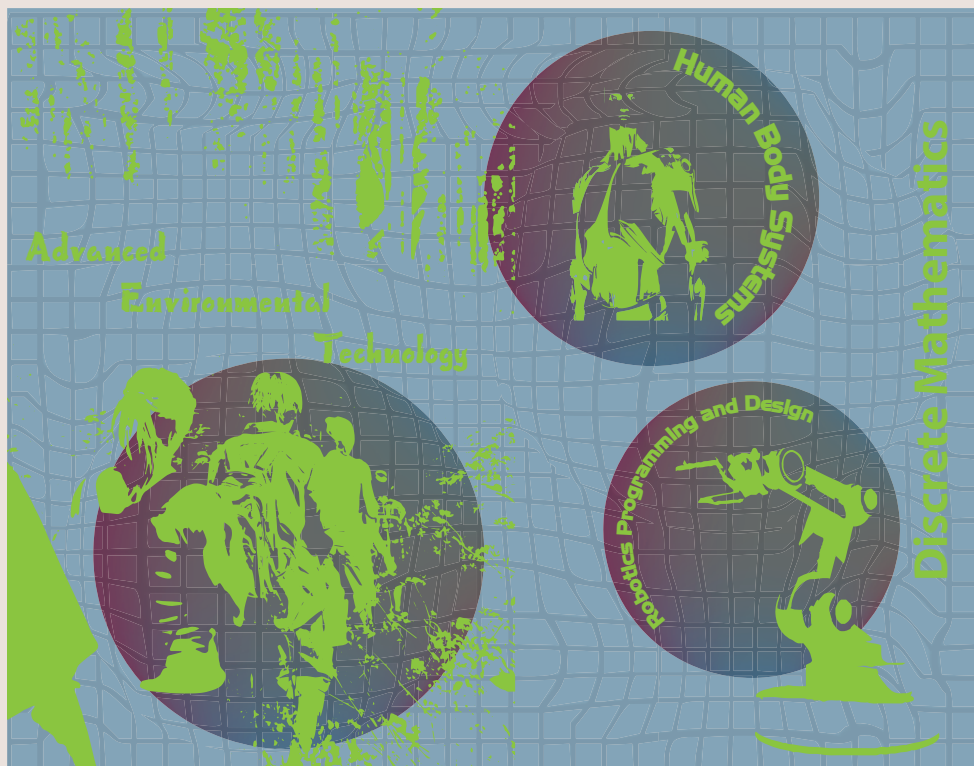


Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



SBOE gives preliminary approval to more math and science options

Texas high school students will have additional course options that can be used to meet math and science graduation requirements under a plan tentatively approved by the State Board of Education in April.

If given final approval at the board's July meeting, students would be able to earn math credit if they take and pass Robotics Programming and Design; Principles of Engineering; Digital Electronics; or Discrete Mathematics.

◆ See **Course Options**, page 6

Performance

2013 accountability system announced

Commissioner of Education Michael L. Williams announced on April 23 four components that will be part of the new 2013 state accountability system for school districts, campuses and charters in Texas. The first ratings under this system will be issued by the Texas Education Agency on Aug. 8. [complete story on page 2]

STAAR

Test release date accelerated

Commissioner of Education Michael L. Williams announced on March 12 he is accelerating the scheduled release dates for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®), with all general assessments to be released in August following statewide administration of the tests this spring. [complete story on page 4]

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Social Media



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Performance

Commissioner unveils new accountability system

Commissioner of Education Michael L. Williams announced on April 23 four components that will be part of the new 2013 state accountability system for school districts, campuses and charters in Texas. The first ratings under this system will be issued by the Texas Education Agency on August 8, 2013.

"I have heard the criticism of the previous accountability system, with its overemphasis on a school's lowest performing areas and its blind spot to what a district or charter might be doing well," said Commissioner Williams. "The new system makes use of multiple indicators to provide parents and taxpayers a more detailed overview of the successes, as well as areas of necessary improvement, for each school district, charter and campus."

The revised system will still use student assessments, but also makes use of additional indicators to provide parents and taxpayers greater detail on the performance of a district or charter and each individual campus throughout the state. The 2013 accountability system will use a performance index framework that considers four areas (including student groups that are part of that index):

- **Student Achievement** – Represents a snapshot of performance across all subjects, on both general and alternative assessments, at an established performance standard. (All Students)
- **Student Progress** – Provides an opportunity for diverse campuses to show improvements made independent of overall achievement levels. Growth is evaluated by subject and student group. (All Students; Student Groups by Race/Ethnicity; English Language Learners; Special Education)
- **Closing Performance Gaps** – Emphasizes advanced academic achievement of the economically disadvantaged student group and the lowest performing race/ethnicity student groups at each campus or district. (All Students; Student Groups by Race/Ethnicity)
- **Postsecondary Readiness** – Includes measures of high school completion, and beginning in 2014, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR[®]) performance at the postsecondary readiness standard. This measure emphasizes the importance of students receiving high school diplomas that provide the foundation necessary for success in college, the workforce, job training programs or the military. (All Students; Student Groups by Race/Ethnicity; English Language Learners; Special Education)

The new system makes use of multiple indicators to provide parents and taxpayers a more detailed overview of the successes, as well as areas of necessary improvement, for each school district, charter and campus.

District and campuses with students in Grade 9 or above must meet targets on all four indexes. Districts and campuses with students in Grade 8 or lower must meet targets on the first three indexes (excluding Postsecondary Readiness).

Districts, campuses and charters will receive one of three ratings:

- **Met Standard** – Met accountability targets on all indexes for which they have performance data in 2013
- **Met Alternative Standard** – Met modified performance index targets for alternative education campuses or districts

◆ See **Accountability System**, page 3



Accountability System *continued*

- **Improvement Required** – Did not meet one or more performance index targets

For eligible campuses that achieve the rating of Met Standard, distinction designations in the following areas will also be assigned for outstanding academic achievement in reading/English language arts and mathematics:

- Top 25 Percent Student Progress
- Academic Achievement in Reading/English language arts
- Academic Achievement in Mathematics

These distinction designations will be based on campus performance in relation to a comparison group of campuses.

"It's important to note that while the new system bases accountability on a index framework, the state will emphasize the importance of closing achievement gaps and addressing the needs of all students in Texas," said Commissioner Williams. "Those districts and campuses that are leaders in improving achievement for all its students will be easily identified under this system."

Because all aspects of the performance index framework cannot be fully implemented at this time, 2013 will be considered a transition year. Accountability advisory groups will reconvene later this year to finalize recommendations for accountability ratings criteria for 2014 and beyond.

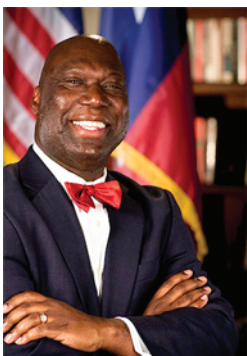
In addition, work will continue on the conversion of this new system into an A-F rating system for 2014.

Williams acknowledged various aspects of the state accountability system are currently being discussed by the Texas Legislature. Any changes in bills passed during the legislative session can and will be incorporated into the system.

For a detailed overview of all components of the 2013 state accountability system, visit the Texas Education Agency website at ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/index.html.

Leaders

Williams and Cargill confirmed by Texas Senate



Williams

The Texas Senate in a unanimous vote formally confirmed the nomination of Michael L. Williams as the state's Commissioner of Education on March 27. Named to the position by Gov. Rick Perry in September 2012, Commissioner Williams'

appointment required Senate confirmation.

As commissioner of education, Williams heads the Texas Education Agency, which oversees pre-K through high school education in both public and charter schools. Williams is the first African-

American to serve as commissioner of education in the state's history.



Cargill

Barbara Cargill was confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Senate as chair of the State Board of Education on Feb 21.

Cargill, R-The Woodlands, was first appointed to the top spot by Perry July 1, 2011 and re-appointed to a full two-year term on Feb. 1, 2013.

Cargill was first elected to the 15-member SBOE in November 2004 and has twice been re-elected.



Testing

STAAR test scheduled release dates accelerated

The Texas Education Agency will accelerate the scheduled release dates for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®), with all general assessments to be released in August following statewide administration of the tests this spring, Commissioner of Education Michael L. Williams said.

“As we have rolled out the STAAR assessments, some have viewed the inability to see the actual tests as a reason to invalidate the entire process,” said Commissioner Williams. “I have heard those concerns and am accelerating the release of all the assessments while maintaining the validity of results for the upcoming spring administration.”

Under the Texas Education Code and State Board of Education rule, primary test forms must be released every three years. Williams’ directive makes all general STAAR assessments – some of which were not scheduled for release until 2014 or beyond – available for review by this summer. The STAAR Modified assessment is not part of this accelerated release, but will be made available in 2014, as currently scheduled.

“I hope the release of these assessments eliminates some of the concern surrounding STAAR,” said Commissioner Williams. “In reviewing these tests,

I believe parents will find attainable expectations coupled with a high level of rigor that is tied directly to course content in every grade level.”

Release of the general assessments adds to a list of STAAR materials that have already been made available by the TEA. Items previously released include sample STAAR test questions, STAAR English I writing scoring guides and essays, STAAR Grade 4 writing scoring guides, and STAAR Grade 7 writing scoring guides.

At the commissioner’s direction, the following 2013 STAAR assessments will be released:

- ◇ Grades 3-8 – Math, Science, Reading, Writing, Social Studies
- ◇ High School Math – Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II
- ◇ High School Science – Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- ◇ English I Reading, English II Reading, English III Reading
- ◇ English I Writing, English II Writing, English III Writing
- ◇ World History, World Geography, U.S. History

CSCOPE Review

Ad Hoc Committee oversees CSCOPE product review

Reacting to concerns about a widely used content management system called CSCOPE, State Board of Education Chair Barbara Cargill has appointed a CSCOPE Ad Hoc Committee that will oversee a review of this product’s content.

CSCOPE, which was created by Texas Education Service Centers with assistance from content experts, is now used in 875 public school districts, charter schools and private schools in Texas. These primarily small districts and charters educate 34 percent of the state’s total student population.

Neither the State Board of Education nor the Texas Education Agency was involved in the development

of CSCOPE. However concern about some of the content and privacy issues sparked the creation of the ad hoc committee, which held its first meeting on March 29.

The committee in April solicited nominations from people who would like to serve on review panels for social studies, the first content area to be reviewed. The panels will be composed of parents, educators, curriculum specialists, business professionals and other stakeholders.

A step-by-step [guide](#) for the review has been created.

◇ See **CSCOPE**, page 5



CSCOPE *continued*

Results of the review will be given to the CSCOPE governing board for its consideration. As the review is voluntarily and non-binding, it will be up to the CSCOPE governing board to decide whether to take any actions based on the results.

CSCOPE review committee members are:

Marty Rowley, Chair
SBOE member, R-Amarillo

Mavis Knight
SBOE member, D-Dallas;

Pat Hardy
SBOE member, R-Fort Worth;

Tom Maynard
SBOE member, R-Florence;

John Bass
Executive Director
Region 16 Education Service Center, Amarillo;

Clyde Steelman, Jr.
Executive Director
Region 11 Education Service Center, Fort Worth and;

Elizabeth Abernethy
Executive Director
Region 7 Education Service Center, Kilgore.

Accomplishment

National History Day winners honored by SBOE

Winners in the 2012 National History Day Contest were recognized at the April State Board of Education meeting for their accomplishments.

The national contest was held in College Park, Maryland. Students were required to conduct extensive primary and secondary source research on a topic of historical significance, and which promotes pride in each student participant's heritage, in our nation's history and place in the world.

The theme for 2012 was "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History."



Honored for their accomplishments were:

Junior Division

Group Performance Category – First Place:
Noel Grisham Middle School, Round Rock ISD
Revolutionizing Revolutions:
What Gandhi Taught Us About Political Defiance
• Jonathan Holle • Luke Victor
• Christian Isenhour • Cyrus Yasrebi
• Steven Mathew

Group Website Category – First Place:
Noel Grisham Middle School, Round Rock ISD
Title IX: Empowerment Through Education
• Smrithi Mahadevan • Priya Ramamoorthy
• Maanasa Nathan • Kavya Ramamoorthy

Individual Performance Category – Second Place
Rockport-Fulton Middle School, Aransas County ISD
Mustard Gas: From Weapon of Death to Promise of Life
• Jake Manlove

Group Exhibit Category – Third Place
Noel Grisham Middle School, Round Rock ISD
Tear Down This Wall
• Niti Malwade • Khira Patel
• Hamsini Nathan • Srija Reddy
• Devika Patel

Group Documentary Category – Third Place
Greenhill School, Addison, Texas
From Poison to Pure Joy: The Revolution in Milk Safety
• Henry Roseman • Sidarth Subramanian

Senior Division

Individual Documentary Category – Third Place
Nimitz High School, Aldine ISD
A Long-Awaited Revolution
• Aric Barnes

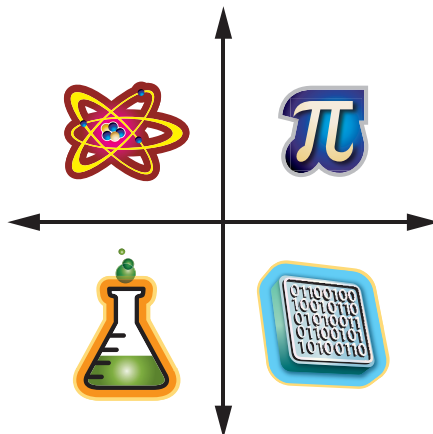


Course Options *continued*

Students could earn science credit for Veterinary Medical Applications, Advanced Environmental Technology or Human Body Systems, under the plan approved on first reading.

This would expand the math and science course offerings available to students as early as the 2013-2014 school year if given final approval at the board's next meeting.

The robotics course is currently a technology applications course, while the Discrete Math, Principles of Engineering, Digital Electronics and Human Body Systems classes are innovative courses. The remaining two courses are Career and



Technical Education courses.

Under current rules, students who are pursuing the Recommended High School Program or the Distinguished Achievement Program must obtain four credits in math and science.

Several bills are now being considered by the Texas Legislature that would dramatically alter the current graduation plans. If approved, the board will work to

make additional changes to the graduation plans over the coming year.

Current graduation plans may be viewed at www.tea.state.tx.us/graduation.aspx.

Accolades

Recognition programs now accepting nominations

Do you know a school volunteer or a business partner that deserves recognition?

Nominations are being accepted until May 31 for the two State Board of Education volunteer recognition programs.

The SBOE's Employers for Education Excellence and Heroes for Children awards recognize both businesses and individuals that work with and support public education in Texas.



The Employers for Education Excellence program, established in 2007, recognizes

Texas employers that encourage and support staff participation and voluntarism in the public schools.

Any Texas employer is eligible to win the award, including private companies, nonprofit organizations, and state, local, federal and educational entities.

Complete program details and nomination form are available at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147500174.

The Heroes for Children award recognizes 15 outstanding volunteers each year who have given generously of their time to Texas schools. School districts, campuses, individuals and organizations can submit nominations. This award recognizes individuals.



Full details about the program and the nomination form are available at www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4140.

For additional information, please contact:

DeEtta Culbertson
deetta.culbertson@tea.state.tx.us
 512/463-9839.



Curriculum

SBOE gives final approval to Fine Arts TEKS

Newly revised Fine Arts curriculum standards will be in use in Texas classrooms in the 2015-2016 school year.

The State Board of Education gave final approval to the revised standards on April 19. The curriculum standards outline the topics to be covered in art, music, dance and theater classes.

The current standards, called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), have been in use in the state’s classrooms since 1998.

Four basic strands –observation and perceptions, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance and critical evaluation and response – provide broad, unifying structures for organizing therevised Fine Arts knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire.

Some of the more significant updates occur at the middle school level where courses will be based on a student’s proficiency level, rather than grade level. Another set



of revisions creates standards for dance instruction in the middle schools. Currently, dance standards only exist at the high school level.



Before giving final approval to the standards, the board amended them to make it clear that distinct Middle School Jazz Ensemble 2 and 3 classes continued to exist.



The proposal also increases the number of Fine Arts classes available at the high school level. Some of the proposed new courses are Musical Theatre and Technical Theatre.



Fine Arts classes are consistently popular electives for Texas students. Although nationally, some claim there is a decline in Fine Arts classes in public schools, this year in Texas 101,630 students were enrolled in Music I-IV band classes for example, and 64,815 were enrolled in Dance I-IV.



The final Fine Arts TEKS will be posted on the Texas Education Agency website at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147499973 once they are updated to reflect amendments made most recently by the board.



Student Performance



The Keller High School Chamber Singers, Keller ISD, performed for the SBOE at the April 2013 meeting. The choir is under the direction of choral director Chi-Chi King and Alexander Carr, assistant choral director.

Processes

National group to review Texas charter schools

As numerous charter school-related bills swirl about in the closing days of the 83rd Texas Legislature, a national expert discussed the positive aspects of the current process for awarding open-enrollment charter schools with the State Board of Education.

William Haft, vice president for Authorizer Development of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), spoke to the members of the board's Committee on School Initiatives.

The committee oversees the process for and recommends applicants to the SBOE for awarding of the charter.

Haft will also be conducting a review for the Texas Education Agency of the current charter processes for authorization, monitoring, renewing and closure of under-performing charter schools.

That review is scheduled to get under way in early summer.

Heather Mauzé, director of the division of charter school administration at the Texas Education Agency, said Haft and the NACSA offered to provide the review to help the agency and the board improve on an already strong process.

"He was very positive about our current practices," Mauzé said. "Mr. Haft complimented the state's strong four-part process for granting charters. However, there is always room for improvement and it's always a good practice to review your system and strive for excellence."

Overall Haft had praise for the current authorization system. He pointed out that the strengths include:

- the completeness check to be sure that the charter applications contain all necessary documents and background information.
- the selection of external reviewers through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process;
- a substantive internal review process by Texas Education Agency staff;
- comprehensive individual reviews of the applications; and,
- interviews by the committee of the finalists.

He pointed out that the application process requires specific evidence in key areas such as community support and evidence of strong leadership for applicants.

Applicants are also required to show financial capacity and a strong innovative educational plan for the students of the proposed school.

Haft said the board could improve in some areas such as focusing more on the substantive part of the application versus the technical compliance. He also suggested aligning those substantive requirements with the training for the external reviewers, the rating system and the interview process.

Under the current system, the board authorizes the creation of charters, while the commissioner of education oversees charter amendments, renewals and revocations.

When asked how the Texas system of authorizing charters compares with other states, Haft said the only two states that were comparable in size and scope were California and Arizona.

In California though, Haft explained, school districts are counted as charter authorizers as well as the state education board. In all, California has over 100 different charter school authorizers.

Arizona, he said, was structured very similar to Texas with one authorizing board.

Haft told the board that he would start his evaluation of the Texas charter school system in June or July beginning with a desk audit and request for information and data. From there, he would go on to interview staff, stakeholders and board members.

The review will also include a focus group survey of the personnel at the charter schools.

Haft's final report will provide the agency and the board with an overview of the best practices and strengths of the Texas charter school system, along with recommendations for improvement.



Government

Keeping up with the Legislature

Though there are only a few days left in the 83rd session of the Texas Legislature, you may still keep up with the final legislative activity by visiting one of the links listed on the right.



The 83rd session concludes on May 27.

General links to the legislature

www.capitol.state.tx.us/

Legislative calendar & agendas by date

www.capitol.state.tx.us/MnuCalendars.aspx

House of Representatives

www.house.state.tx.us/

Texas Senate

www.senate.state.tx.us/

House committee & chamber meetings

www.capitol.state.tx.us/Committees/MeetingsHouse.aspx

Senate committee & chamber meetings

www.capitol.state.tx.us/Committees/MeetingsSenate.aspx

In Other Action

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met April 17 – April 19, 2013. Summaries of actions taken by the SBOE can be found on the Texas Education Agency’s website at www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/actions/

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