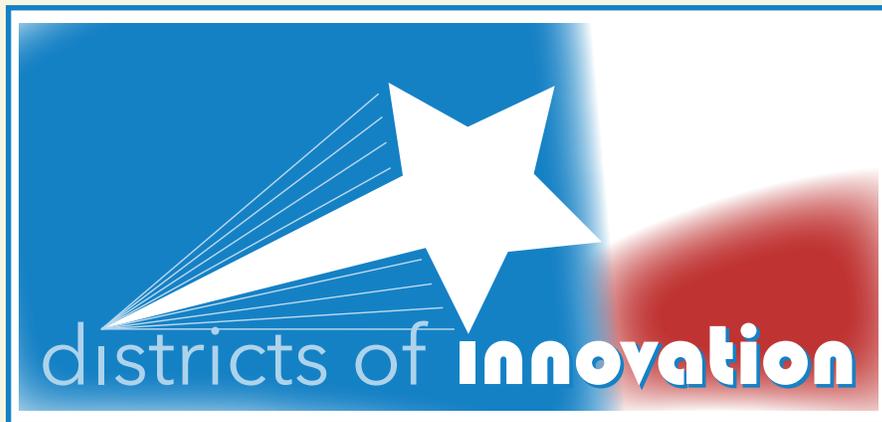


Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



Districts of Innovation

Nineteen districts, as of Aug. 2, have completed the process to become Districts of Innovation. Passed by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015 and signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott, House Bill 1842 created this new designation, which provides a district exemption from certain sections of the Texas Education Code. Each week additional districts are achieving this designation. Their individual [innovation plans](#) are posted on the Texas Education Agency website.

Charter approvals

Two Generation Twenty-One charter school applicants successfully completed the final step of the state's application process and are slated to begin operation in Texas in the 2017-2018 school year [[complete story on page 3](#)]

Student heroes

The State Board of Education (SBOE) recognized 15 Texas public school students as the 2016 Student Heroes for their outstanding volunteer efforts at their schools and communities. [[complete story on page 4](#)]

Survey on Assessment and Accountability

More than 27,000 Texans provided feedback through an online survey and community meetings on the state's assessment and accountability systems. [[complete story on page 5](#)]

SBEC appointments

Gov. Greg Abbott made four appointments to the State Board for Educator Certification [[complete story on page 9](#)]

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TEA on Social Media



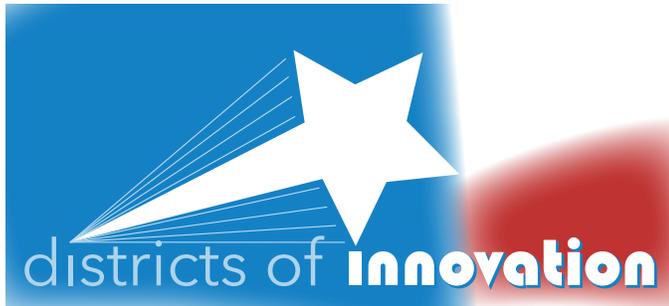
TEA listservs

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TEA

Commissioner Morath receives first District of Innovation notifications



Commissioner of Education Mike Morath recently announced that 19 public school districts have adopted a local innovation plan and formally notified him of that vote. Notification to the Commissioner marks completion of the new District of Innovation designation process.

Passed by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015 and signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott, House Bill 1842 created the District of Innovation designation, which provides a district exemption from certain sections of the Texas Education Code. A district that completes the process possesses the District of Innovation designation for five years.

As of Aug. 2, the 19 districts that have completed the District of Innovation process and notified the Commissioner are:

- Big Spring
- Canton ISD
- Dripping Springs ISD
- El Paso ISD
- Harlingen CISD
- Keene ISD
- Los Fresnos CISD
- Lytle ISD
- Mabank ISD
- Mansfield ISD
- Northside ISD
- Palmer ISD
- Point Isabel ISD
- Roscoe Collegiate ISD
- San Antonio ISD
- Slidell ISD
- Spring Branch ISD
- Terrell ISD
- Victoria ISD.

“The District of Innovation designation provides our districts with added flexibility that’s specific to each community,” said Commissioner Morath. “This initial wave of notifications is just the beginning of what will be many districts that elect to go through this innovative process.”

School districts are eligible for District of Innovation designation if the district has an academic accountability rating of “Met Standard.” In addition, certain procedures for adoption must be followed, including creation of an innovation plan, gathering of community input (including public hearings), and a final two-thirds majority approval vote by the locally elected board of trustees. Notification to the Commissioner marks the final step in the process.

For those that complete the District of Innovation process, allowable exemptions include (but are not limited to) length of the school day; class size; educator certification; teacher contracts; and designation of a campus behavior coordinator.

Although the District of Innovation designation provides certain exemptions and flexibilities, a district cannot exempt itself from specific sections of the Texas Education Code, including requirements related to (but not limited to): district governance; curriculum; the state assessment system; the state accountability system; school finance and federal requirements in state law outside of the Education Code.

The Texas Education Agency has established a page on its website to provide a list of those districts that have completed the

District of Innovation process. The page will be updated as additional districts formally notify the Commissioner. It will also provide a direct link to each district’s locally adopted innovation plan.

To learn more about District of Innovation process (and see the current list of school districts that have completed that process), visit the TEA website at tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/General_Information/Innovation/Districts_of_Innovation/.

“The District of Innovation designation provides our districts with added flexibility that’s specific to each community.”

– Commissioner Mike Morath



TEA

Two Generation Twenty-One charter school applicants complete process

Two Generation Twenty-One charter school applicants successfully completed the final step of the state's application process and are slated to begin operation in Texas in the 2017-2018 school year once any contract contingencies are met. The two are Compass Rose Academy (San Antonio) and Goodwater Montessori School (Georgetown).

Under Senate Bill 2 passed in 2013 by the 83rd Texas Legislature, the Commissioner of Education is given the authority to grant new open-enrollment charters in Texas and must notify the State Board of Education of those that are approved. A majority of the state board members present and voting may veto any new charter

approved by the Commissioner within 90 days of the Commissioner's decision.

During its July 22 meeting in Austin, state board members vetoed the application of Athlos Academy of Texas, which had proposed operation in Denton. This charter applicant had been among three originally granted Commissioner approval in June.

Once contracts are signed with these two entities, the state will have 182 charter holders. To learn more about open-enrollment charter schools in Texas and the application process, visit the Texas Education Agency website at tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Charter_Schools/.

SBOE

Student champions



**2016
National
Economics
Challenge
Champions**

**Bellaire High School
Houston ISD**

Congratulations to the team of economics students from Bellaire High School (Houston ISD) who were recognized at the July SBOE meeting for winning the 16th Annual National Economics Challenge. Education Commissioner Mike Morath joined with SBOE Chair Donna Bahorich in the congratulating the team. Pictured left to right are, Morath, Laura Ewing, Texas Council on Economic Education; Michael Clark, Bellaire teacher and team coach; Amy Fan, Antony Yun, Suneal Vemuri, Bahorich, Catherine Rinhart, Program Director for the Texas Council on Economic Education. Not pictured is team member Liana Wang.



SBOE

Student heroes receive recognition for good deeds

The State Board of Education (SBOE) recognized 15 Texas public school students as the 2016 Student Heroes for their outstanding volunteer efforts at their schools and communities.

"I want to congratulate and praise these outstanding boys and girls who have given so much to their fellow students and their communities throughout Texas," said Donna Bahorich, State Board of Education chair. "It fills me with pride to know that in Texas public schools we have students who look beyond their own needs to provide help and support to others."

The 2016 Student Heroes are recognized for assisting with local fundraising efforts, creating

programs to protect human rights, mentoring and for overcoming personal obstacles to give back to their communities or for just being a friend. Students at all grade levels were recognized during district events with a certificate designating them as a Student Hero by their SBOE member and local school officials.



Read more about the 2016 Student Heroes at tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Press_Releases/2016/Student_heroes_receive_recognition_for_good_deeds/.

To learn about the Student Heroes Award visit tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Awards/Student_Heroes/.

SBOE

Three new vendors allowed for High School Equivalency exam

The State Board of Education voted July 22 to adopt final amendments to current rule, paving the way toward allowing multiple test providers for the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE) by fall 2016.

The amendments update the rules related to the administration of high school equivalency exams to reflect allowing multiple providers as well as offering both paper-based and computer-based testing formats, accommodations for applicants with documented disabilities and court-ordered examinations. They also include an increase to the state's administration fee from \$15 to \$25, which will be used to redesign the statewide data system to allow for multiple vendors. The amendments to the rule are expected to become effective in August.

Marking a shift from the use of a single testing provider to three, the board voted at its Jan. 29 meeting to allow three vendors – Data Recognition Corporation, Educational Testing Service and GED Testing Service – to offer exams for the TxCHSE. Once approved, the contracts will be in place for a

period of three years, with the option of two single year extensions.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff informed the SBOE at its July meeting that they are currently working with each vendor to finalize contracts. The new contracts will begin as soon as TEA has minimal components in place to offer the TxCHSE using multiple vendors. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the current provider, GED Testing Service, remains effective until Oct. 8, 2016, with a two-week termination option included should all components be in place earlier.

TEA staff informed the SBOE that they expect the new data system to be operational by Aug. 30, but that staff will ensure that the system is operational before enacting the two-week termination option.

The Texas Education Code authorizes the SBOE to provide for the administration of high school equivalency examinations. The SBOE has given the TEA the authority to administer the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency. TEA is the only agency in Texas that is authorized to issue a certificate of high school equivalency.



SBOE

Texans provide feedback on assessment and accountability systems

More than 27,000 Texans provided feedback through an online survey and community meetings on the state’s assessment and accountability systems and offered suggestions for the future development of the two key programs.

These findings, from the online survey, as well as comments from about 700 Texans who attended nine meetings around the state were collected into a report called *Texans Speak: Public Feedback on Assessment and Accountability Systems*. The State Board of Education on July 22 approved the report and directed that it be forwarded to the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability for its consideration. The commission is recommending changes in the two programs to the 2017 Texas Legislature.

State Board Chair Donna Bahorich, who spearheaded the efforts to gather this information, summarized the report findings this way:

“Texans believe we have too many tests, schools are spending too much time preparing for the state assessments, and too much class time working on the preparation. They want more immediate tests results.”

Here is a sampling of some of the findings gathered from the survey:

- The most widely supported goal of the state assessment program is to assess student learning and progress.
- All survey groups felt strongly that state tests should not be administered and preferred to have students only take national tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the SAT and the ACT. The support for using national tests ranged from 73 percent support from parents to 56 percent of those in the “other” category.

- Seventy-eight to 91 percent of each survey group favors decreasing the number of state assessments.
- Eighty-four percent or more of each survey group agrees there should be decreased schoolwide emphasis on practice and preparation for state assessments.
- Ninety-one percent of public school educators and 83 percent of higher education employees say the assessments should provide immediate feedback.
- In contrast to long-standing state law, no survey group supports tying grade-level promotion or high school graduation to state assessment results. Every class since the Class of 1987 has been required to pass state tests to graduate, while grade-level promotion requirements have been in effect for some grades since the 2002-2003 school year. Students opposed this requirement by 86 percent. The strongest support for retaining these provisions came from business leaders but only 24 percent of this group backed the current requirement.
- All groups strongly disagree (58 to 81 percent) with using test results as a tool to partially determine teacher performance.
- Opinions about the goal of the academic accountability rating system is divided. For example, 46 percent of the public school educators surveyed say the accountability system should be used to identify high-

| Streamlining standards to reduce the amount of content taught each year | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Responses |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Educator | 7,754 52.3% | 3,612 24.3% | 1,825 12.3% | 1,264 8.5% | 354 2.3% | 14,809 61.6% |
| Parent or community leader | 2,854 39.5% | 1,757 24.3% | 1,265 17.5% | 867 12% | 480 6.6% | 7,223 30% |
| Business leader | 30 35.2% | 11 12.9% | 13 15.2% | 18 21.1% | 13 15.2% | 85 0.3% |
| Student | 214 42.8% | 127 25.4% | 94 18.8% | 41 8.2% | 24 4.8% | 500 2% |
| Institution of higher education employee | 129 35.8% | 79 21.9% | 57 15.8% | 63 17.5% | 32 8.8% | 360 1.4% |
| Other | 366 34.9% | 253 24.1% | 220 20.9% | 139 13.2% | 70 6.6% | 1,048 4.3% |

♦ See Survey, page 6



Survey continued

and low-performing schools, but 39 percent disagree with this use. The most divided group are business leaders with 44 percent supporting the use of accountability ratings to identify the highest and lowest performing schools and 44 percent opposing this usage.

- Fifty-eight percent or more of all the survey groups agree that the goal of the accountability system should be used to identify areas of support needed for underperforming schools and school districts.
- Sixty percent of parents support moving to a computer-based, adaptable assessment that will show student progress and learning gaps, a move favored by 53 percent of educators.
- All survey groups, ranging from a high of 97 percent for educators to 77 percent for business leaders, favor finding better ways to assess students with special needs.
- Seventy-seven percent of educators and 68 percent of students favor streamlining the state education standards to reduce the amount of content taught each year. The State Board has already begun this work.

The full [report](#) is available on the Texas Education Agency website. Additional information about the [Next Generation Commission](#) is also available online.



TEA email updates

As you prepare for the start of the new school year, it's a great time to sign up for the Texas Education Agency's email lists. About 60 topics are available. You can sign up for one or all at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXTEA/subscriber/new>.

Some of the more popular lists include:

- *To the Administrator Addressed* correspondence list, which sends you notifications when letters from the agency are posted;
- *Press Releases*, which sends you breaking news from the agency;
- *Student Assessment* notification list, which provides critical information about policy changes and updates; and
- *Special Education Updates*, which provides the latest information on state and national policy issues.

Subscriptions are free and available to all.



Upcoming Legislative Hearings

Interim hearings will be held on the following dates to discuss public education issues.

- Aug. 3 Senate Committee on Education
- Aug. 16 Senate Committee on Education
- Sept. 13 Senate Committee on Education
- Sept. 14 Senate Committee on Education

All committee hearings may be watched via live stream at www.senate.state.tx.us/bin/live.php.



TEA

13 of 17 STAAR exams passing rates rise for grades 3-8

After four years of seeing little change, the 2016 results for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR[®]) for grades 3-8 are on the rise. Thirteen of the 17 assessments showed gains – some as much as nine percentage points – when compared to 2015 passing standards.

“Student success on STAAR is generally up this year when compared to last year’s standards, which reflects the day-in, day-out hard work of teachers in the classroom throughout our state,” said Commissioner of Education Mike Morath.

“Despite unanticipated issues associated with the transition to a new testing vendor, Texas students are generating results for a majority of the grades 3-8 assessments that are better than prior years, providing additional confidence in their use,” he

said July 14 when the scores were released.

When held to the 2015 passing standards, the preliminary STAAR results show a nine percentage-point gain on the eighth-grade science assessment and six percentage-point gains on the fifth-grade science exam and the eighth-grade reading assessment. The fourth-grade reading assessment experienced a five percentage-point gain.

However, 2016 marked the first time that the state raised the passing standards on the STAAR. That means students generally had to correctly answer a few more questions this year to pass the test than they did in previous years.

At the higher passing standard, passing rates were up on six assessments and down or flat on 11.

◆ See **STAAR results**, page 8

TEA

New Deputies at TEA

TEA’s new deputy commissioners are left to right, Kara Belew, Finance; A.J. Crabill, Governance; Megan Aghazadian, Operations; Penny Schwinn, Academics; Martin Winchester, Educator Support; and Melody Parrish, Chief Information Officer. Not pictured is Von Byer, General Counsel.



STAAR results continued

Comparison charts of statewide results and summary charts provide greater detail on all STAAR results. To review state-level reports for grades 3 through 8, visit the Texas Education Agency website at tea.texas.gov/staar/rpt/sum/. The data are also available in an Excel file at tea.texas.gov/2012_2016_STAAR_Combined_Summary_Results/.

Because the grades 5 and 8 reading and math tests were administered earlier in the spring than other STAAR assessments, those district level results are available at <https://txreports.emetric.net/DI>. However, the Texas Education Agency does not yet have district or campus-level results for other STAAR assessments but those results have been provided to Texas districts and charters.

STAAR Grades 3-8 Statewide Summary Results All Students – English Language Version Only

| Grade | 2014-2015 | 2015-16 at 2016 Passing Standard | 2016 vs 2015 using 2016 Standard | 2015-2016 at 2015 Passing Standard | 2016 vs 2015 using 2015 Standard |
|-----------------------|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| MATH | | | | | |
| 3 | 77% | 76% | ↓ | 78% | ↑ |
| 4 | 73% | 74% | ↑ | 77% | ↑ |
| 5 | 79% | 79% | ↔ | 81% | ↑ |
| 6 | 75% | 74% | ↓ | 77% | ↑ |
| 7 | 72% | 71% | ↓ | 74% | ↑ |
| 8 | 75% | 73% | ↓ | 79% | ↑ |
| READING | | | | | |
| 3 | 77% | 74% | ↓ | 79% | ↑ |
| 4 | 74% | 77% | ↑ | 79% | ↑ |
| 5 | 78% | 75% | ↓ | 77% | ↓ |
| 6 | 76% | 71% | ↓ | 73% | ↓ |
| 7 | 75% | 72% | ↓ | 75% | ↔ |
| 8 | 78% | 82% | ↑ | 84% | ↑ |
| WRITING | | | | | |
| 4 | 70% | 69% | ↓ | 69% | ↓ |
| 7 | 72% | 70% | ↓ | 74% | ↑ |
| SCIENCE | | | | | |
| 5 | 72% | 75% | ↑ | 78% | ↑ |
| 8 | 70% | 76% | ↑ | 79% | ↑ |
| SOCIAL STUDIES | | | | | |
| 8 | 64% | 65% | ↑ | 68% | ↑ |



SBEC

Four appointed to State Board for Educator Certification

Governor Greg Abbott appointed Rohanna Brooks-Sykes, Arturo J. "Art" Cavazos, Sandie Mullins Moger and Laurie J. Turner to the State Board for Educator Certification for terms set to expire Feb. 1, 2021. The board develops certification and continuing education requirements and standards of conduct for public school teachers.

The governor's office provided the following information about the appointees.

Rohanna Brooks-Sykes of Spring is a related services counselor at Klein High School and is a nationally certified counselor and a licensed professional counselor supervisor. She is a member of the Texas School Counselors Association, Texas Counselors Association (TCA), chair of the TCA Public Policy and Advocacy Committee and former co-chair of the TCA Human Rights Committee. She is chair of the Spring Creek Counseling Association (SCCA) Legislative Committee, member of Klein Unite for Understanding Diversity Council. Brooks-Sykes is former president of SCCA and former member of the Klein District Instructional Development Council and Klein District Improvement Plan: Closing the Achievement Gap. She received a Bachelor of Science in psychology from the University of Houston and a Master of Arts in counseling from Prairie View A&M University.

Arturo J. "Art" Cavazos, Ed.D. of Harlingen is superintendent for the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. He is a member of the University of Texas College of Education Advisory Council, member of FIRST in Texas Board and participated in the National ConnectED Superintendents Summit. He is a member of the Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas High Performance Schools Consortium, University of Texas Cooperative Superintendent Program Executive Board and the Ford Next Generation Superintendents Council. He is also board member and past president of the Boys and Girls Club, board member of Su Clinica Familiar, South Texas Emergency Care Foundation, and member of the Harlingen Chamber of Commerce. He is a former member of the Academic Achievement Distinction Designation Committee and UIL Waiver Review board. Cavazos received a Bachelor of Science in

elementary education and a Master of Education from The University of Texas Pan-American and a Doctor of Education from The University of Texas at Austin.

Sandie Mullins Moger of Houston is a former Houston Community College Trustee for District VI. She is a board member of the West Houston Leadership Institute and former board member of the West Houston Hospital and West Houston Region P-16 Education Council. Mullins co-founded and served as president for Super Neighborhood 17, co-chaired the Business and Education Committee for Houston West Chamber of Commerce and served as a member of the Economic Development, West Houston Public Safety, Governmental Affairs and Teacher of the Year Committees. She also volunteered for the March of Dimes, American Heart Association, American Red Cross, Texas Children's Hospitals, The Collaborative for Children, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and Grace Presbyterian Church. Mullins received a Bachelor of Science in Education from Texas A&M University and a Master of Business Administration in marketing from St. Mary's University.

Laurie J. Turner, Ed.D. of Corpus Christi is an American history teacher at Gregory-Portland Junior High School and former Social Studies Department head. She is president of the Flour Bluff ISD Education Foundation and vice-president and sub-committee member of Corpus Christi Community Outreach. She is a member of the Nueces County Historical Commission, former coordinator for the Collaborative Education Program for Americas and a former Court Appointed Special Advocate. She is also former coordinator for the Safety 1st Campaign, member of the Campus Improvement Committee and Calendar Committee for Gregory Portland ISD. Turner received a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice from the University of Portland, a Masters of Public Administration in public policy from Washington University and a Doctor of Education from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

The new members replace out-going SBEC members Bonny Cain, Brad Allard, Kathryn Everest and Judy Robison.

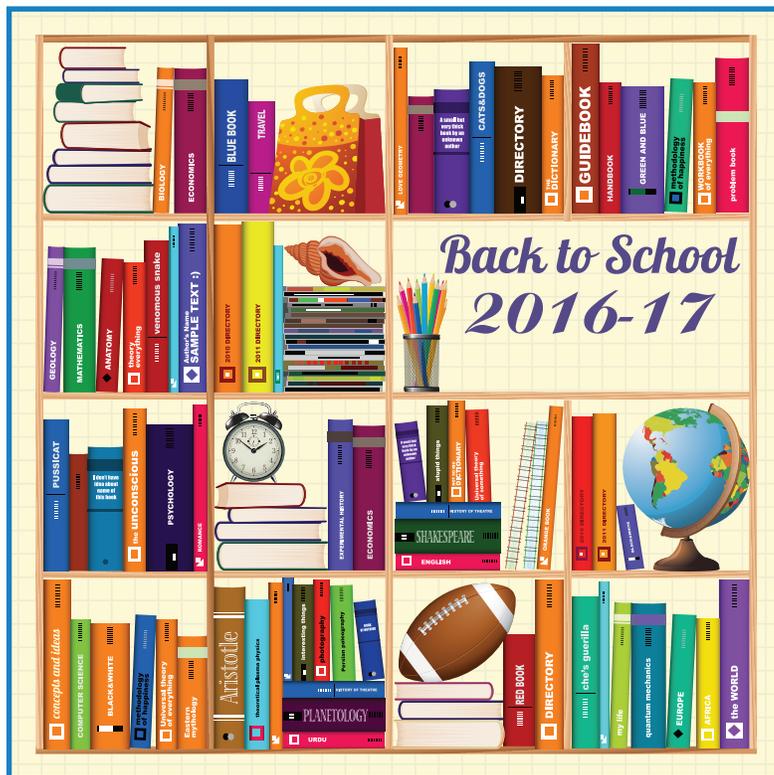


SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met July 19-22, 2016. Summaries of actions taken by the SBOE can be found on the Texas Education Agency's website at tea.texas.gov/sboe/actions/.

Back to school



Texas students head back to school the week of Aug. 22. More than 689,000 teachers and staff will be on hand to greet them. Have a great 2016-2017 school year.



Texas Education Today may be found online at tea.texas.gov/communications/tet.aspx.

State Board of Education



Please visit the SBOE on Facebook and Twitter

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