

Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



Image courtesy of KXAS-TV/NBCDFW.com.

Weather havoc

Winter weather caused havoc in hundreds of Texas schools in January and February. Snow and ice – or the threat of those conditions – forced districts from the coast to the panhandle to close school or start late on numerous school days. As one social media wag noted, if Texas were Superman, ice would be kryptonite. Only one thing was certain during this stretch of winter weather,

whatever bad weather decision a superintendent made, it was sure to be second guessed by someone in the community. Now that temperatures are rising and the first bluebonnets of spring are being spotted, many administrators are debating whether to make up the “snow days” or apply for a missed instructional day waiver. See information on the waiver process on page 7.

New graduation program - approved

The State Board of Education gave final approval to the state’s new high school graduation program, which gives students flexibility to follow their academic interests. [[complete story on page 2](#)]

Advanced placement numbers double

The number of Texas graduates taking at least one Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) Exam has more than doubled during the past decade. [[complete story on page 4](#)]

Permanent School Fund value soars

The Permanent School Fund reached a record high value and posted the highest return of any major state of Texas investment fund for the fiscal year. [[complete story on page 5](#)]

End-of-Course passing rate rises

Approximately 76 percent of students - who are currently in their junior year of high school - have passed the assessments they have taken and are on track to graduate under requirements set by the Texas Legislature in House Bill 5 [[complete story on page 6](#)]

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TEA listservs

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SBOE

SBOE gives final approval to new graduation program

The State Board of Education gave final approval Jan. 31 to the state's new high school graduation program, which gives students added flexibility to follow their academic interests.

The Texas Legislature last year created the new 22-credit Foundation High School Program, which allows students to earn performance acknowledgments and four-credit endorsements in specific subjects but left decisions about many details of the plan to the State Board.

Over the course of a four-day board meeting, the board considered 34 amendments to the graduation plan and approved most.

Math debates captured much of the attention.

Under the state law, students following the Foundation High School Program must earn three credits of math that include Algebra I and Geometry as well as a third course. Students may select the third course from a long list of mathematics courses. The board expanded the options further by directing the development of two new courses called Algebraic Reasoning and Statistics. The two new courses are expected to be available for districts to offer beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

Students who want to earn the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) endorsement must take Algebra II, chemistry and physics as well as four additional courses in the STEM area.

Students who hope to gain automatic admission to the state's public universities under the top 10 percent rule also must meet requirements that include earning credit for Algebra II or meeting performance requirements on a college readiness assessment.

Under the new graduation plan, a speech credit satisfied by a Communications Applications class will no longer be a required credit for all students. However, districts will be required to ensure that students learn key communications skills such as delivering clear verbal messages and choosing

effective nonverbal behaviors. Districts may incorporate these skills into an existing class, such as English, or continue to require a separate communications class.

The Communications Applications class had been a Texas graduation requirement since the mid-1990s.

Many key changes approved in January clarified the courses students must take to earn an endorsement in STEM, Business and Industry, Public Services, Arts and Humanities or Multidisciplinary Studies. Numerous course combinations can be used to earn these endorsements.

The board:

- Clarified that students must take a coherent sequence of four credits from one or two disciplines (art, music, theater or dance) to earn an Arts and Humanities endorsement and may not earn the endorsement simply by taking introductory courses.
- Agreed that students would earn a Public Services endorsement, rather than a STEM endorsement, if they complete a coherent sequence of courses in health sciences.
- Added computer science courses as a route to obtain a STEM endorsement, while other technology applications courses, such as web communications, 3-D Modeling and Animation and Digital Video and Audio and Design, would apply to a Business and Industry endorsement.
- Added advanced journalism courses in newspaper and yearbook as options for earning a Business and Industry endorsement. Additionally, students wishing to take classes such as Communications Applications, creative writing or literary genre can earn an Arts and Humanities endorsement.

◆ See **Graduation program**, page 3



Graduation program *continued*



Under the new graduation program, students may earn performance acknowledgments by demonstrating outstanding performance. One way to earn an acknowledgment is

by earning a score of 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement test or a score of 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate examination. Originally, the board set the higher score requirements but adjusted those standards after listening to public comments.

Students currently in the 8th grade – the class of 2018- will be the first group required to graduate under the Foundation High School Program.

Current high school students remain under the previous three graduation plans – the Minimum High School Program, the Recommended High School Program and the Distinguished Achievement Program. However, these students may opt to move to the Foundation Program.

The rule detailing the new graduation plan is found on the TEA HB 5 webpage, as are other resources such as PowerPoint presentations.



www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769806149

TEA

SB 2 mandatory revocation of six charters to proceed

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has notified six open-enrollment charter schools that the revocation process of their charter – established under Senate Bill 2 – will continue.

Six open-enrollment charter schools have met the legislative criteria for mandatory revocation under legislation passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature. Those schools include:

- American Youthworks (Austin)
- Azleway Charter School (Tyler)
- Honors Academy (Farmers Branch)
- Jamie's House Charter School (Houston)
- Koinonia Community Learning Academy (Houston)
- Richard Milburn Academy (Suburban Houston Campus)

Senate Bill 2 requires mandatory revocation of a charter by the Commissioner of Education if a charter holder has failed to meet academic or financial accountability performance ratings for the three preceding school years. Failure can include

three years in one specific area (academic or financial), or any combination of the two.

For the purposes of revocation, the initial three school years where academic performance ratings were considered included 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. The school years where financial performance ratings were considered included 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.

The six schools received notice of revocation from TEA in December. Each school subsequently submitted a request for an informal review regarding the decision to revoke. Informal reviews were conducted, and the six schools were notified that the decision to revoke has been upheld.

The six revocations actions have now been sent to the State Office of Administrative Hearings for a final hearing. Individual hearing for the six schools are scheduled for March and April. The decision of the administrative judge will be final and cannot be appealed. If upheld by an administrative judge, revocation for all six would be effective June 30, 2014.



TEA

Number of Texas students taking Advanced Placement® has more than doubled over the last decade

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams announced Feb. 11 that the number of Texas graduates taking at least one Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) Exam has more than doubled during the past decade.

In addition, the number of low-income graduates taking at least one AP Exam has more than quadrupled, and the number of Hispanic/Latino graduates taking AP has nearly tripled over the last ten years. This expansion has resulted in a significant increase in the number of qualifying AP Exam scores typically required for college credit.

“Texas has made great strides in increasing AP access to a broader, more diverse group of students reflective of the changing demographics of our state,” said Commissioner Williams. “Our state ultimately benefits each year we see increased participation in the number of students participating and succeeding in the AP program.”

According to the College Board’s 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation, Texas students in the Class of 2013 again made a strong showing. The report shows that the number of Texas students who scored 3 or higher on an AP exam (52,167) in 2013 was greater than the number of all Texas high school students who took an AP exam in 2003 (48,500).

Additional Texas AP highlights for the Class of 2013 in comparison to the Class of 2003 include:

	Class of 2013	Class of 2003
Public high school graduates who took an AP Exam	35.9%	20.4%
Public high school graduates who scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam	18.5%	11.9%
Hispanic/Latino graduates who took at least one AP Exam	42.5%	29.6%
Hispanic/Latino graduates who scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam	36.9%	28.7%
Low-income graduates who that took at least one AP Exam	49.9%	23.1%
Low-income graduates who scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam	43.9%	20.2%

In the Class of 2013, 50,584 low-income graduates took at least one AP Exam during high school – *more than four times the number* of low-income graduates who took an AP Exam in the class of 2003.

In the Class of 2013, 43,031 Hispanic/Latino graduates took at least one AP Exam during high school – *nearly three times the number* of Hispanic/Latino graduates who took an AP Exam in the class of 2003.

In the Class of 2013, 9,147 African-American graduates took at least one AP Exam during high school (compared to 2,780 in the class of 2003).

In the Class of 2013, 2,487 African-American graduates scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam (compared to 853 in the class of 2003).

In the Class of 2013, 36,728 white graduates took at least one AP Exam during high school (compared to 25,445 in the class of 2003).

In the Class of 2013, 22,663 white graduates scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam (compared to 15,422 in the class of 2003).

Source: College Board

◆ See **Advanced Placement**, page 5



Advanced Placement *continued*

"Texas is obviously committed to broadening AP access to more low-income and minority students," said Trevor Packer, the College Board's senior vice president who leads the Advanced Placement Program. "We congratulate them on their successes and encourage them as they move forward to ensure that all students have the same opportunity to reach their full potential."

Research shows that students who succeed in rigorous course work, such as that offered by AP,

are developing college-level knowledge and skills while still in high school. These students are more likely than their peers to earn college degrees on time, which gives them an opportunity to save significant amounts of money.



The 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation and the state supplement for Texas are available at: apreport.collegeboard.org/

TEA

Permanent School Fund hits record high value



The Permanent School Fund, the second largest educational endowment in the country, reached a record high value in 2013 and posted the highest return of any major state of Texas investment fund for the fiscal year.

Created by the state in 1854 with a \$2 million

investment, the endowment topped \$29 billion in market value by the end of December.

In fiscal year 2013, which ended Aug. 31, the fund earned a return of 10.16 percent. That was the highest return earned by any major state of Texas investment fund. As a result of recent strong returns, the Permanent School Fund was also the best performing major state fund over a three-year period ending on Aug. 31, 2013, with a return of 11.07 percent and a total value of \$27.2 billion.

"Last year was a golden year for the Permanent School Fund," said Pat Hardy, chair of the State

Board of Education's Committee on School Finance/Permanent School Fund. "The board's careful and prudent investment of the fund's increasingly diverse portfolio resulted in top-of-the-line returns and that's great news for our public schools," she said.

The fund helps Texas schools and the state's citizens in two ways. A distribution from the fund is made every year to help pay a portion of education costs in each school district. During the 2012-2013 biennium, the fund distributed more than \$2 billion to the schools. Since 1960, it has distributed more than \$23 billion to the schools.

The fund also provides a guarantee for bonds issued by local school districts and this important support will soon be extended to charter schools. As a result of the fund maintaining the AAA bond rating through the global financial crisis, qualified districts are able to pay lower interest rates when issuing bonds.

At the end of 2013, the fund's assets guaranteed \$55.2 billion in school district bonds, providing a cost savings to 810 public school districts.



The latest annual report for the fund is available at www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147489178&menu_id=2147483695.



TEA

Cumulative end-of-course passing rate rises to 76 percent

The Texas Education Agency announced Jan. 21 that approximately 309,000 students in the Class of 2015 have taken all or most of the end-of-course (EOC) assessments required for graduation. Of that number, approximately 76 percent of students - who are currently in their junior year of high school - have already passed the assessments they have taken and are on track to graduate under requirements set by the Texas Legislature in House Bill 5.

The cumulative passing rates reflect results from the December 2013 administration of EOCs. In addition, the increased percentages reflect students who have passed English I and English II EOCs based on HB 5 transition rules established by the commissioner of education.

"We should be proud that the majority of high school students in Texas continue to successfully complete the end-of-course assessments now required for graduation," said Commissioner Michael Williams. "With fewer assessments and greater flexibility provided to school districts under House Bill 5, Texans should expect those numbers to continue to improve."

Current highlights for students in the Class of 2015 include:

- There are approximately 309,000 students who have taken all or most of the EOC assessments required for graduation.
- Of the 24 percent of the students who have not passed all tests taken, about 43 percent of those need to successfully complete only one more assessment.
- There are about 224,000 students who have taken Algebra I, biology, English I, and English II with only U.S. history remaining. Students typically take this history course during their junior year.

HB 5 combined the English reading and writing tests into one assessment. The statute allows a transition for students who have already taken one or more of the earlier exams.

- Under the transition rule, students who earn a combined scale score of 3750 on the English I reading and writing tests or on the English II reading and writing tests are credited with passing the exams.
- Since spring 2012, there are 44,350 students who did not pass both English I reading and writing but passed via the commissioner's HB 5 transition rules.
- There are 34,547 students who did not pass both English II reading and writing but passed via the commissioner's HB 5 transition rules.

The December test administration marked the last time that the reading and writing exams were given separately. Beginning in May, there will be a combined reading and writing exam.

For the December 2013 STAAR EOC administration, which largely involved retesters, passing rates were as follows:

Exam	Percent Passed	Number of Students Tested
U.S. history	67%	8,281
Biology	42%	46,366
English I Reading	37%	109,970
English II Reading	35%	52,039
English II Writing	33%	93,715
Algebra I	30%	67,020
English I Writing	15%	153,375

Under House Bill 5, the number of EOCs required to graduate was reduced from 15 to five. Students that have not passed English I or II reading or writing will be required to take the new combined assessments beginning in spring 2014.



The latest statewide summary reports are available at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769809035.



TEA

Districts asked to submit bad weather waivers in March

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is asking school districts and charters seeking waivers for bad weather days for this school year to submit their requests in March.

Snow, sleet and icy conditions have impacted districts statewide over the last several weeks resulting in the cancellation of instructional days. As a result, the agency anticipates an influx of waiver requests.

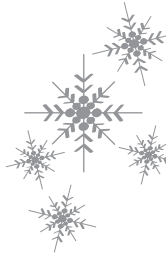
The March timeframe allows the full impact of winter weather to be assessed by school districts and charters on their 2013-2014 school year calendars.

School districts and charters in Texas must build two "makeup days" for school closures into their adopted school calendar. If dates for the

designated makeup days have already passed, schools are still required to make up at least two of the scheduled instructional days lost. The makeup day must be at least seven hours in length (including intermissions and recesses).

It is the local school district's responsibility to make its school calendar for the school year. TEA does not direct any school district or charter on the specific days to identify or designate as makeup days in their school calendar. That is strictly a local decision.

Waiver requests submitted to the agency will be reviewed by the commissioner of education. A decision will be provided in a timely fashion. If a district receives a lost-instructional day waiver, it does not lose any state funding for that day.



SBOE

Instructional materials adoption, distribution rules approved

Numerous amendments to the rules regarding the adoption and distribution of instructional materials were approved during the January meeting of the State Board of Education.

Primary among those changes was requiring that all portions of proposed books to be reviewed by at least two panel members to ensure that all instructional materials are given a thorough investigation. This formalizes the typical process of having multiple reviewers for submitted material. Other changes would allow panelists to submit majority and minority reports about proposed materials to the board and would limit board members' communication with reviewers so as not to unfairly influence them.

Another amendment will allow publishers to edit content based on concerns raised during a public hearing and requested by a majority of the board members.

Further, the board now requires that the copies of written comments and lists of factual errors be posted on the Texas Education Agency website in

summary form and that during public hearings, priority will be given to those who registered prior to the deadline. The board will continue to allow people to register on the day of the hearing.

The board also approved Proclamation 2015, which advertises for bids on instructional materials covering social studies, grades K-12; mathematics, grades 9-12; fine arts; three Career and Technical Education courses for which students may receive mathematics credit; and one Career and Technical Education course for which students may receive a fine arts credit.

Materials under Proclamation 2015 are slated for adoption in November 2014 for use in schools beginning in the 2015-16 school year.



TEA

25 Texas schools nominated for 2014 Blue Ribbon honors

The Texas Education Agency announced on Feb. 21 the nomination of 25 Texas public schools for national 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools recognition. Founded in 1982, Blue Ribbon Schools is a U.S. Department of Education program that recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels.



The nominated schools in Texas are listed in the following table.

School District	School Name
Avalon ISD	Avalon School
Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD	Early College High School
	McCoy Elementary School
Conroe ISD	Geisinger Elementary School
Clear Creek ISD	Bay Elementary School
	Lavace Stewart Elementary School
Dallas ISD	Henry W. Longfellow Career Exploration Academy
	Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
	Middle College High School
	School of Business & Management at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center
Eagle Pass ISD	Liberty Elementary School
El Paso ISD	Cielo Vista Elementary School
	Transmountain Early College High School
Fort Worth ISD	Charles Nash Elementary School
Garland ISD	Routh Roach Elementary School
	Walnut Glen Academy For Excellence
Houston ISD	Houston Academy For International Studies
Kerrville ISD	Nimitz Elementary School
KIPP Inc. Charter	KIPP Houston High School
	KIPP Sharp College Prep (Houston)
Mason ISD	Mason Elementary School
Saltillo ISD	Saltillo School
San Angelo ISD	Santa Rita Elementary School
Sudan ISD	Sudan High School
Waller ISD	Fields Store Elementary School

All schools that have been nominated for the 2014 honor were selected as exemplary high performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Each school has an economically disadvantaged population of 40 percent or greater.

The nominated schools must now complete a rigorous application process through the U.S. Department of Education. Announcements of the national award winners will be made in September 2014. Schools that receive the award are recognized at the Blue Ribbon School conference in Washington, D.C.



SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met Jan. 28 – 31, 2014. 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/

SBOE

Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

The State Finalists for the 2013 Presidential Awards in Mathematics and Science Teaching were recognized at the January 2014 SBOE meeting in Austin.



2013 PAEMST Math Finalists

Pictured left to right are: **Amy Ferguson**, Churchill High School, North East ISD, San Antonio; **Jessica Caviness**, Coppell High School, Coppell ISD; **Ruth Westbook**, Carroll McMath Middle School, Denton ISD; **Penny Smeltzer**, Westwood High School, Round Rock ISD; and **Jo Ann Bilderback**, State Mathematics PAEMST Coordinator for the TEA.



2013 PAEMST Science Finalists

Pictured left to right are: **Irene Pickhardt**, State Science PAEMST Coordinator for TEA; **Michalle McCallister**, Cole Middle/High School, Fort Sam Houston ISD; **Mark Misage**, Westlake High School, Eanes ISD; **Kim Wootton**, New Tech High School, Coppell ISD; and **James Manley**, Coyle Middle School, Garland ISD.



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