

September 7, 2017

To the Administrator Addressed:

Subject: Appeal Extension for Preliminary 2016–2017 School and Charter FIRST Ratings

This letter provides notice of a 30-day extension for appeal of the preliminary 2016–2017 School and Charter FIRST ratings for districts and charter schools in counties that fall within Governor Greg Abbott’s disaster proclamation.

Those counties include: Angelina, Aransas, Atascosa, Austin, Bastrop, Bee, Bexar, Brazoria, Brazos, Burlison, Caldwell, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Colorado, Comal, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Grimes, Guadalupe, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kerr, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Leon, Liberty, Live Oak, Madison, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Trinity, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Washington, Wharton, Willacy, and Wilson.

Opportunity for Appeal

If your district or charter school falls within the disaster declaration area and wants to appeal an issue it identifies as adverse in the preliminary FIRST rating, your district or charter school may submit a written appeal with supporting evidence to the Division of Financial Compliance. For the appeal to be considered, we must receive it by **October 9, 2017**. Send appeals to the following address:

Texas Education Agency
Division of Financial Compliance
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

The financial accountability rating system is required to apply the rules uniformly. Therefore, a district’s error in recording or submitting data through the TEA data collection and reporting system is not a valid basis for appealing a preliminary rating and is unlikely to negate concerns raised by the indicator.

Please see 19 TAC [§109.1001\(l\)](#) for the rules regarding the filing of an appeal. As stated in this section, we will consider only an appeal that would result in a change to your district’s or charter school’s rating.

Final School FIRST Rating and Required Reporting

- For districts and charter schools that were not affected by the hurricane, we will issue final ratings after our independent review panel has reviewed any submitted appeals. Final 2016–2017 School and Charter FIRST ratings are anticipated to be released in October 2017.
- For districts and charter schools that were in the identified declared disaster counties, we will issue final ratings after our independent review panel has reviewed any submitted appeals. Final 2016–2017 School and Charter FIRST ratings are anticipated to be released in November 2017.

Within two months of the release of its final School or Charter FIRST rating, your district or charter school must announce and hold a public meeting to distribute a financial management report that explains the district's or charter school's rating and its performance under each indicator for the current and previous year's ratings. The report must also provide the financial information described in 19 TAC [§109.1001\(o\)\(3\)](#). We encourage your district or charter school to include additional information that will benefit stakeholders in the report, especially information explaining any special circumstances that may have affected the district's or charter school's performance under one or more of the indicators.

The first of two required newspaper notices to inform taxpayers of the meeting must be published no more than 30 days and no fewer than 14 days before the public meeting. Your district or charter school may combine the meeting with a scheduled regular meeting of the board of trustees.

For full requirements related to the report and meeting, see 19 TAC [§109.1001\(o\)](#). For a template that your district or charter school can use in developing its financial management report, see the TEA [School FIRST](#) web page.

Accreditation Status

Please note that the TEA considers a district's or charter school's School FIRST rating when assigning an accreditation status, as required by the accreditation status rules in 19 TAC [§97.1055](#).

Contact for Further Information

If you have questions about your district's or charter school's School FIRST rating, please contact Yolanda Walker at (512) 463-0947 or by email at Yolanda.Walker@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

David Marx
Director of Financial Compliance
Office of School Finance