

# Texas High School Completion and Success Preliminary Report on Programs Authorized by House Bill 2237



Submitted in fulfillment of HB 2237 Section 18 (80th Texas Legislature) by the

**Office for Planning, Grants, and Evaluation**

**Texas High School  
Completion and Success  
Preliminary Report on Programs  
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**Submitted in Fulfillment of HB 2237 Section 18 (80<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature)**

**Prepared by  
Office for Planning, Grants, and Evaluation  
Texas Education Agency**

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**Texas Education Agency**

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This report is available at the Texas Education Agency's website:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/planeval/index.html>

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Evaluation findings regarding the Technology-Based Supplemental Instruction Pilot Program were based on findings reported by the Texas Center for Educational Research under contract to TEA. A full interim evaluation report related to this project can be found on the Division of Evaluation, Analysis, and Planning website (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/>).

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Purpose of Report**

Section 18 of House Bill (HB) 2237, passed by the 80th Texas Legislature, directs the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to deliver to the Legislature a preliminary report on December 1, 2008, and a final report on December 1, 2010, regarding the impact assessment or evaluation of programs for which grants have been awarded under Subchapter L, Chapter 39, Texas Education Code (TEC). The present document constitutes the preliminary report in fulfillment of this mandate. It begins with an explanation of the legislative context of the report and TEA's reporting approach. The report provides a breakdown of grant award allocations for fiscal year 2008 associated with HB 2237 and/or funded by Rider 53 of Article III of the General Appropriations Act (80th Texas Legislature), descriptions of funded programs to be reported on, and preliminary evaluation findings to date. It concludes with an overview of the anticipated scope of the final report due December 1, 2010.

### **Legislative Context**

HB 2237 is an extension of previous initiatives funded in the 78th and 79th Texas Legislatures that focused on dropout prevention and the promotion of college and career readiness. HB 2237 authorized the creation of programs specifically designed to implement and support high school completion and college and career readiness initiatives.

The 80th Texas Legislature also passed Rider 53, which significantly increased the amount of funding for programs focusing on these two critical areas of need. A total of \$28.71 million per year for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 was appropriated for high school reform strategies by Rider 53(a). Also, \$25 million per year for the same biennium was

appropriated for programs targeting students at risk of dropping out of high school by Rider 53(b).

High School Completion and Success Initiative Council

HB 2237 authorized the creation of a High School Completion and Success Initiative Council (Council). The goal of the Council is to identify strategic priorities and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness, coordination, and alignment of high school completion and college/workforce readiness efforts. On March 11, 2008, a Strategic Plan was adopted by the Council that designated and recommended the use of federal and state funds for five key strategies: Comprehensive Whole School Reform, Targeted Student Interventions, Effective Teachers and Leaders, Technical Assistance, and Research and Evaluation. Funding for fiscal year 2008 for each of the strategies that resulted in grants is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Key Strategies under HB 2237**

Key Strategies	Total FY 2008 Funding Level
Comprehensive Whole School Reform	\$19,280,955
Targeted Student Interventions	\$21,519,824*
Effective Teachers and Leaders	\$8,817,070
Technical Assistance	\$2,883,687
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$52,501,536</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, 2008

Notes: Remaining funds will be allocated to project activities consistent with HB 2237 specifications. Grants under the Research and Evaluation strategy are subsumed within the Council's four other key strategies and are not discussed separately in this report.

\* Amounts include FY 2008 funds allocated to Technology-Based Supplemental Instruction Pilot Program, which was funded from state administrative funds.

Five Key Strategies of the Council

1) Comprehensive Whole School Reform models include grants awarded to secondary campuses and public school districts to support innovative high school improvement programs that prepare students for postsecondary success. This key strategy includes

grants such as Early College High Schools (ECHS), Texas High School Redesign and Restructuring (HSRR), and the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Initiative.

2) Targeted Student Interventions are designed to improve student outcomes by addressing a particular issue or providing services to a specific group of students with common interests or similar needs. This key strategy includes programs such as the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program, Grants for Student Clubs, and the Ninth Grade Student Transition program.

3) Effective Teachers and Leaders programs address the shortage of highly effective educators and leaders trained and experienced in high school reform. Programs within this key strategy are targeted to provide teachers and leaders with critical skills needed for transforming underperforming high schools. This strategy contains programs such as the Mathematics Instructional Coaches (MIC) pilot program and Professional Development Activities for Teachers and Administrators.

4) Technical Assistance grants provide support for grantees in the implementation of grant programs and are designed to ensure that grantees have access to research-based practices; technical assistance, such as coaching and training; professional development; and access to a professional learning community. ECHS Technical Assistance and Support, T-STEM Technical Assistance and Support, Continuation Grant, and HSRR Technical Assistance are all grants included in this key strategy. As such, these initiatives are not programs in and of themselves, but rather serve as support for programs.

5) Research and Evaluation activities employ systematic, empirical methods to test hypotheses and justify general conclusions. Because many of the grants authorized under HB 2237 include an evaluation component, grants under the Research and Evaluation strategy are subsumed within the Council's four other key strategies and are not discussed separately in this report.

### **Approach to Assessment of Program Impact**

Under Section 18 of HB 2237, TEA was directed to assess the impact of programs for which grants are awarded under Subchapter L, Chapter 39, TEC, on five key outcomes: student achievement, high school completion, college readiness, teacher effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, as well as any other factors the commissioner of education determined relevant. Given the option to include other factors, an approach to allocating resources among program assessments was developed. Criteria were established by which Subchapter L grant initiatives were selected for a basic impact assessment of relevant Section 18 outcomes, a more comprehensive evaluation, or descriptive reporting only. In the latter category were certain initiatives funded by Rider 53 that were excluded from impact assessment or evaluation efforts because they were deemed either not subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18, or not programs that directly impacted teachers or students (such as technical assistance to districts).

Thus, grant-funded HB 2237 initiatives listed in the present report fall into one of three categories: 1) programs subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18 that are receiving or will receive an impact assessment; 2) programs subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18 that are receiving or will receive a comprehensive evaluation; or 3) initiatives that are not considered programs or not subject to the reporting

requirements of Section 18, which therefore will not be evaluated or assessed for impact.

## **Findings**

At the time of this report, programs subject to impact assessment or a comprehensive evaluation have been implemented for less than one year. To determine the impact of a given grant program on targeted populations, however, at least one full year of program implementation is required – and three to five years of implementation are considered optimal for valid assessment (Constas & Sternberg, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Therefore, only findings from programs subject to comprehensive evaluations are discussed in this 2008 preliminary report.

Preliminary implementation findings from three Targeted Student Interventions (Collaborative, Intensive Summer Programs [ISP], and Technology-based Supplemental Instruction pilot program [R-Tech]) and one Effective Leaders and Teachers program (MIC pilot program) are summarized below.

### *Preliminary Findings*

- The Collaborative pilot program has six district grantees, each planning to provide an array of services within a multi-pronged strategy to address the dropout problem in their respective communities. In total, Collaborative grantees expect to serve 1,655 students in 15 schools, most of whom are identified as at risk of dropping out of school, by increasing graduation, reducing dropout, increasing job skills, and providing employment opportunities for student participants. All six Collaborative grantees have formed partnerships with community nonprofits and other community-based organizations that will offer

four general types of services: academic support services, workforce skill development, student and family support services, and attendance improvement. Altogether, \$1,359,468 in grants were awarded for the Collaborative Cycle 1 grantees, and grantees contributed an additional \$490,175 in matching funds to bring the total expected expenditures for this program above \$1.8 million. All six grantees also addressed the sustainability of the Collaborative program in their grant applications. All Collaborative grantees have similar goals, but the different strategies they are using to achieve these goals will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of various dropout prevention strategies.

- The ISP pilot program was awarded to 29 school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. On average, each ISP grantee plans to serve 355 students. The ISP programs will be composed of an average of 33 teachers. The majority of ISP projects (82.8%) plan to increase student readiness for college-preparatory English language arts (ELA), reading, mathematics, and science by offering a range of remediation and/or acceleration activities. Other shared program activities include professional development for teachers, parental involvement activities, and college counseling. On average, ISP grantees requested \$139,781 from TEA to cover the costs of their programs, which is slightly less than the maximum allowed of \$150,000 for each program.
- The R-Tech pilot program was awarded to 64 rural Texas districts. Across R-Tech districts, 115 schools are participating in the R-Tech program, including 63 high schools, 48 middle schools, 3 K-12 campuses, and 1 elementary school. Analysis of grantee applications for the R-Tech program indicated that most districts plan to implement R-Tech at both the high school and middle school

levels (78%). Nearly all districts are focusing R-Tech services on math instruction (98%), and somewhat fewer districts plan to implement R-Tech in ELA (91%), science (89%), and social studies (86%). Fewer than half of the districts (48%) plan to use R-Tech funds to provide instruction in languages other than English. A majority of districts plan to use R-Tech funding to provide remediation and tutoring (94%), and smaller percentages are planning for distance learning (66%), dual credit coursework (55%), and credit recovery programs (50%). The most popular vendors were A<sup>+</sup>nyWhere Learning System and PLATO Learning – about 14% of districts selected each vendor. A majority of districts will provide supplemental instruction after school (72%) and before school (57%). Districts plan to allow students access to R-Tech services through school computer labs (59% of districts), libraries (32%), and learning centers (17%).

- The MIC pilot program was awarded to 29 district grantees, which will serve mathematic teachers from 97 Texas schools. Of the 15 district grantees that reported baseline data, they plan to have an average of 25 teachers and administrators participating in MIC at the beginning of the first year of their grant project. Twenty-five grantees reported that they anticipate having an average of 30 teachers participating in MIC by the end of both Year 1 and Year 2 of the grant. In partnership with a service provider, all grantees are planning to use a combination of coaching strategies and professional development activities within their MIC program to improve teacher effectiveness and performance outcomes of students. An average of \$158,128 was requested by grantees to implement MIC program activities.

## **Future Reporting**

The 2010 final evaluation report, as required by HB 2237, will include implementation findings, program impact on targeted populations, barriers and facilitators of program success, and cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the four programs described above. Findings from comprehensive evaluations of additional programs will also be included in the 2010 report, addressing Comprehensive Whole School Reform programs (HSRR Cycle 4 and 5, ECHS Cycle 2 and 3, and T-STEM Academies) and Targeted Student Interventions (Ninth Grade Student Transition program and Dropout Recovery pilot program).

In addition, findings from programs that will undergo impact assessments will also be included in the 2010 report. These findings will address relevant Section 18-required program outcomes (e.g., achievement, high school completion, college readiness, teacher-effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness). Programs that will receive impact assessments include three Targeted Student Interventions (Grants for Student Clubs, Intensive Technology-Based Academic Intervention pilot program, and Higher Education and Workforce Readiness) and one Effective Leaders and Teachers program (Professional Development Activities for Teachers and Administrators).

Link to full text:

[http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/HighSchoolCollege/HB2237\\_Report\\_c.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/HighSchoolCollege/HB2237_Report_c.pdf)

The cover art titled ***Everyone Can Learn*** by **Rita Yeung**, from Garland High School in the Garland Independent School District, was included in the 2007-2008 Texas PTA Reflections art exhibit. The exhibit featured award-winning pieces displayed at the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Legislative Budget Board from April 21 through August 29, 2008.



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