

August 8, 2017

News from the Financial Compliance Division

Official Notification of Preliminary 2016-2017 School FIRST Ratings

Your school district's preliminary 2016–2017 School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) rating is now available online. To access your district's School FIRST rating:

- access the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website: <http://tea.texas.gov/>,
- click the Finance and Grants webpage tab link: http://tea.texas.gov/Finance_and_Grants/,
- click the Financial Accountability link,
- click the School FIRST link, and
- click the School District FIRST Ratings link.

Basis for School FIRST Rating

Your district's rating is based on an analysis of the district's financial data for fiscal year 2016 (the fiscal period ended June 30, 2016, or August 31, 2016, depending on the ending date of your district's fiscal year). We determined your district's rating using the financial indicators specified in 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §109.1001(e).

Please carefully review your district's preliminary School FIRST rating and the data associated with each of the 15 indicators.

Opportunity for Appeal

If your district wants to appeal an adverse issue it identifies in the preliminary rating, your district may submit a written appeal with supporting evidence to the Financial Accountability Section. For the appeal to be considered, we must receive it by **September 8, 2017**. Send any appeal to the following address:

Texas Education Agency
Financial Accountability Section
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

The financial accountability rating system is required to apply the rules uniformly. Therefore, an error by a district in recording data or submitting data through the TEA data collection and reporting system is not a valid basis for appealing a preliminary rating and 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 that section, we will consider only an appeal that would result in a change to your district's rating.

Final School FIRST Rating and Required Reporting

We will issue final ratings to school districts after we have reviewed any submitted appeals. Final 2016–2017 School FIRST ratings are anticipated to be released in October 2017.

Within two months of the release of its final School FIRST rating, your district must announce and hold a public meeting to distribute a financial management report that explains the district's rating and its performance under each indicator for the current and previous year's ratings. The report also must provide the financial information described in 19 TAC §109.1001(o)(3). We encourage your district to include in the report additional information

that will be beneficial to stakeholders, especially information explaining any special circumstances that may have affected the district'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 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 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 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 School FIRST rating, please contact Rita Bunton at (512) 936-3712 or by email Rita.Bunton@tea.texas.gov or Yolanda Walker at (512) 463-0947 or by email at Yolanda.Walker@tea.texas.gov.