

DATE:	August 7, 2020
SUBJECT:	Preliminary School FIRST Ratings 2019-2020
CATEGORY:	Accreditation Information
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

Your school district’s preliminary 2019–2020 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 2019 (the fiscal period ended June 30, 2019, or August 31, 2019, 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, 2020**. Send any appeal to the following address:

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

Please see 19 TAC §109.1001(n) 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. **If no appeal is submitted by your district, the preliminary rating becomes the final on the 31st day after the preliminary ratings are released.**

Final School FIRST Rating and Required Reporting

We will issue final ratings to school districts after we have reviewed any submitted appeals. Final 2019–2020 School FIRST ratings are anticipated to be released in November 2020.

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\(q\)\(3\)](#). 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 required newspaper notice to inform taxpayers of the meeting must be published no more than 30 days and no fewer than 10 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\(q\)](#). 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 at Rita.Bunton@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

David Marx, CPA
Director
Financial Compliance