

Excel Center for Adults saw a increase in total graduation for the 2015-16 school year (61 students).²¹ Approximately 44 percent were economically disadvantaged and 13 percent were ESL students.

Ethnic demographics for the 2014-15 school year saw a majority of graduates among Hispanic/Latino students (54 percent). African American students reflected 29 percent of student enrollment while White students made up approximately 15 percent. The subsequent school year saw a decrease in graduation rates among Hispanic/Latino and White students. Inversly, there was an increase among African American students.

DROPOUT RATES

There were approximately 75 percent females and 25 percent males among the graduating class of the 2014-15 school year. However, gender demographics among male graduates (80 percent) and female graduates (20 percent) drastically shifted for the 2015-16 school year, showing a 55 percent increase in males and an approximate 55 percent decrease among female graduates.

Lastly, the age range among students for the 2014-15 school year was between 20 and 49 years of age.²² While the age range among students for the subsequent 2015-16 school year was between 26-50 years of ages.²³ The average graduate was 33 years of age for the 2014-15 school year and 35 years of age for the 2015-16 school year.

DROPOUT RATES 2014-2015	FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY			STATE ACCOUNTABILITY		
	Leaver	Total	%	Leaver	Total	%
All Students	175	349	50.1	103	232	44.4
American Indian	*	<100	100	*	<100	100
Asian	*	<100	50	*	<100	66.7
African American	51	103	49.5	26	66	39.4
Hispanic	104	201	51.7	63	132	47.7
Pacific Islander	*	<100	100	*	<100	100
White	*	<100	33.3	*	<100	27.3
Multiracial	*	<100	62.5	*	<100	50
At-Risk Students	*	<100	50	*	<100	43.5
Economically Disadv.	145	280	51.8	87	186	46.8
Special Education	*	*	*	*	*	*
ELL	*	<100	23.3	*	<100	15.2
CTE	*	*	*	*	*	*
Migrant	*	*	*	*	*	*
Title I	*	*	*	*	*	*

Texas uses the National Center for Education Statistics dropout definition. Under this definition, a dropout is a student who is enrolled in a public school in Grades 7-12 who (i) *who does not return to public school the following fall*; and (ii) *is not expelled*; and (iii) *does not: graduate, receive a GED certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.*

The table on the right reflect both state and federal accountability.²⁴ Dropout rates for state accountability purposes are calculated with statutory exclusions. Of the seven criteria for exclusion, the following directly apply to The Excel Center for Adults: (i) *students previously reported to the state as a dropout*; and (ii) *a student*

²¹ Data Source 2015-16 The Excel Center for Adults

²² Ages determined as of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 commencement dates.

²³ Most likely as a result of opening The Excel Center-Subchapter D

²⁴ Data Source Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2014-15

in attendance but who is not in membership for purposes of average daily attendance (i.e. students for whom school districts are not receiving state FSP funds).

Of ethnic groups with over 100 students, both federal and state accountability data columns report the highest dropout rates are among Hispanic students. African American students were the second highest ethnic group on both federal and state data reports (50 percent and 39 percent, respectively).

Dropout data for the 2015-16 school year is not available at the time of this report. In response, The Excel Center for Adults has initiated local data-collection for the purpose of ascertaining reasons/barriers that promote leaver status.

A full list of leaver reasons has been provided in Appendix A; however, common reasons include (i) *employment*; (ii) *inability to commit to necessary attendance*; and (iii) *family responsibilities and commitments*.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

The Excel Center staff is comprised of teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Of the staff, approximately 67 percent are teachers, 12 percent are administrators, and 21 percent are support personnel. There are approximately 46 percent males and 54 percent females. An approximate breakdown of ethnicity of teachers is as follows: 18 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, and 63 percent White.²⁵

Based on the 2015-2016 PEIMS data submitted, staffing for The Excel Center for Adults was reported under The Excel Center - Subchapter D.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION 2014-15		
Staff Type	Count	%
Total Staff	16.4	100.0%
Professional Staff		
Teachers	10.9	66.5%
Professional Support	3.5	21.4%
School Leadership	2.0	12.2%
Total Ethnic Minority Staff	7.4	45.3%
Teachers by Ethnicity		
African American	2.0	18.3%
Hispanic	2.0	18.3%
White	6.9	63.4%
American Indian	0.0	0.0%
Asian	0.0	0.0%
Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0%
Two or More Races	0.0	0.0%
Teachers by Sex		
Males	5.0	45.7%
Females	5.9	54.3%

INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

While there are many industry certifications available in Texas,²⁶ The Excel Center for Adults offers six certifications with an additional five that are offered in collaboration with Austin Community College (ACC). Students are encouraged to dual-enroll in Goodwill Career & Technical Academy (GCTA), which offers the

²⁵ Data Source 2014-15 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)

²⁶ [Career and Technical Education Industry Certification Guide, Texas Education Agency](#)

industry certificates in the following programs: *Acute Care, Administrative Assistant, Construction Fundamentals, Linux Programming, Microsoft Office Specialist, and a Nurse Assistant Program.*

The Excel Center for Adults also offers the following specialized courses through ACC: *Accounting Bookkeeping, Certified Apartment Maintenance, CompTIA A+ and Network+, and National Apartment Leasing Professional (NALP).*



CHAPTER 5. COMPLIANCE WITH TEC §29.259

TEC CHAPTER 29, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Pursuant to TEC §29.259, Subsection L, the Texas Education Agency must prepare and deliver to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and presiding officer of each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over public education or economic development a report that (i) *evaluates any adult education program operated under a charter granted under this section*; and (ii) *makes recommendations regarding the abolition, continuation, or expansion of the pilot program.*

Upon careful research and inquiry, and in accordance with TEC §29.259; this report finds that all applicable guidelines have been met by the Texas Education Agency and Goodwill Industries of Central Texas.

An itemized list of statutory requirements are below:

- ✓ **Establishment of the Adult Education Pilot Program.** The commissioner of education published RFA 701-14-108 for the express purpose of authorizing the adult high school diploma and industry certification charter school pilot program.
- ✓ **Authorization of the Adult Education Pilot Program Charter School.** The commissioner of education, based on an application submitted by Goodwill Industries of Central Texas; authorized a charter to operate as The Excel Center for Adults in compliance with TEC §29.259.
- ✓ **Educational Program Objectives.** The Excel Center for Adults operates an open-enrollment charter school to allow eligible students the opportunity to take courses to earn their high school diploma and/or take industry courses that can lead to industry certification.
- ✓ **Participant Eligibility Requirements.** The contract for charter expressly limits student enrollment to include:
 - A maximum of 150 students; and
 - Individuals between 19 and 50 years of age; who
 - Have failed to complete the curriculum requirements for high school graduation; or
 - Have failed to perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument required for high school graduation.
- ✓ **Development of an Appropriate Assessment Tool.** TEA designated a standardized secondary exit-level assessment using either STAAR or the TAKS assessment with a crosswalk to the STAAR provided by Pearson. Additionally, the Excel Center for Adults is registered under the alternative

education accountability procedures for evaluation under Chapter 39, whereby the commissioner shall use academic criteria established by commissioner-rule that appropriately measure the specific goals of the school.

- ✓ **Funding Sources.** Funding has been allocated in compliance with TEC §29.259.
 - Adults 26 years of age or older are funded through general revenue funds.
 - Adults between the ages of 19 and 26 are funded through the Foundation School Program.
- ✓ **Program Evaluation.** The Division of Charter School Administration has coordinated and prepared a program evaluation report to be delivered to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, and presiding officer of each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over public education or economic development.

CHAPTER 6. APPLICABILITY OF STATUTE

The primary impetus for Senator Duncan’s vision of an adult education pilot program is undoubtedly commanded by provisions set forth in TEC §29.259. Consequently, this evaluation report is intended to provide information on the development, operation, current outputs, and compliance of the program pursuant to those commanding provisions. However, The Excel Center for Adults is considered an open-enrollment charter school; and while not expressly authorized through TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D, the charter contract is subject to most operational, instructional, and district-governance provisions set forth therein. In addition, The Excel Center for Adults is subject to provisions outlined in TEC Chapter 39, Subchapter B, C, D, E, F, G, and J. The culmination of which is intended to hold the educational program to high expectations of accountability and operational standards while demonstrating student achievement (within and beyond) TEC §29.259.

The following sections are provided to illustrate the role and applicability of statute in ongoing expectations for high-quality and viability of The Excel Center for Adults throughout the various stages of its life cycle.

TEC CHAPTER 12, SUBCHAPTER D

The figure to the right outlines a select list of topics regulated by TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D and applicable to Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, as

TEC CHAPTER 12

SUBCHAPTER D

Applicability to The Excel Center for Adults

The following is a list of selected topics under TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D. It is not intended to reflect the totality of sections applicable to The Excel Center for Adults.

- Open Meetings and Public Information §12.1051
- Local Government Records §12.1052
- Public Purchasing and Contracting §12.1053
- Conflict of Interest §12.1054
- Nepotism §12.1055
- Membership in Teacher Retirement System §12.1057
- State Funding [for students 19-25] §12.106
- Status and Use of Funds §12.107
- Tuition and Fees Restrictions §12.108
- Renewal of Charter [contingent on legislative continuation] §12.1051
- Basis for Charter Revocation §12.115
- Admission §12.117
- Annual Evaluation §12.118
- Performance Framework; Annual Evaluations §12.1181
- Liability of Members of Governing Body §12.122
- Minimum Qualifications for Principals and Teachers §12.129

the charter holder for The Excel Center for Adults. Going forward, many of the operational standards will be assessed through those statutory minimums. Specifically, the definition set forth in TEC §12.1141(c); The Excel Center for Adults constitutes an open-enrollment *dropout recovery school*. Consequently, and in the absence of legislative abolition, all future renewals of the charter will be determined pursuant to TEC §12.1141(c). The result of which is a discretionary consideration of renewal. The discretionary consideration process for dropout recovery schools must take into consideration academic criteria established by the commissioner of education that recognize growth in student achievement as well as education attainment.

TEC CHAPTER 39, PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY

TEC Chapter 39, is the statutory directive for accountability standards to a multitude of components within the state educational portfolio— including but not limited to, academic assessments, accreditation, interventions, sanctions, distinctions, reporting, and financial viability. This section is provided to outline specific provisions set forth in Subchapters B, C, D, and E.

SUBCHAPTER B – ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC SKILLS

Subchapter B establishes the development and (or) adoption of appropriate criterion-referenced assessment instruments that are designed to assess essential knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. Adult educational services are presented with a unique obstacle among students who were eligible to take earlier state-assessments during their first term as a high school freshman. Consequently, the Texas Education Agency has contextualized Subchapter B to include administration of either the (i) *STAAR assessment*; or (ii) *TAKS assessment* among Excel Center students. It is important to note that scores from the TAKS assessment are cross-walked with the state assessment that each student was eligible to take during their first term as a high school freshman *i.e. TEAMS, TAAS, and TAKS*.

SUBCHAPTER C – ACCREDITATION

Subchapter C directs the commissioner of education to issue a determination of accreditation. A lack of accreditation in the state of Texas may have lasting effects on post high school success, job eligibility, and school funding. The Excel Center for Adults is subject to Subchapter C regulations on accreditation and probation. Accreditation determinations will reflect, but not limited to, (i) *performance on achievement indicators*, (ii) *performance under the financial accountability rating system*, (iii) *compliance with statutory requirements*, and (iv) *SBOE requirements*.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

2014-2015
-48 Graduates-

No Test Required
2 students

TEAMS
4 students

TAAS
10 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

17 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAKS
5 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

10 students
[passed after enrollment]

2015-2016
-61 Graduates-

No Test Required
6 students

TEAMS
1 student
[passed prior to enrollment]

2 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAAS
15 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

25 students
[passed after enrollment]

TAKS
6 students
[passed prior to enrollment]

6 students
[passed after enrollment]

SUBCHAPTER D – FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Excel Center for Adults is subject to the annual Financial Integrity Rating of Texas (FIRST). Established by TEC [§39.082](#), the purpose of the FIRST rating is to ensure that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools are held accountable for the quality of their financial management practices and achieve improved performance in the management of their financial resources. Fifteen financial indicators form the basis of FIRST- including, but not limited to, (i) *administrative cost expenditures*; (ii) *accuracy of submitted financial information*; (iii) *any financial vulnerabilities or material weaknesses in internal controls*; and (iv) *current assets to current liabilities ratios*.²⁷

“Getting my diploma changed my life because it set the example for my children.”
-2016 Graduate

For their initial year of operation, The Excel Center for Adults received an initial score of 98, translating to a superior rating of A.²⁸

SUBCHAPTER E – ACCREDITATION, INTERVENTIONS AND SANCTIONS

School districts, including open-enrollment charter schools, are subject to intervention(s) and sanction(s) for failure to comply with accreditation criteria, academic performance, and financial accountability standards. Consequently, the Excel Center for Adults is subject to any of the following measures— including, but not limited to, (i) *conservatorship*; (ii) *management team*; (iii) *board of managers*; and (iv) *formal sanctions*.²⁹

TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE (TAC)

TAC [§129.1025](#) requires every Texas school district to adopt an attendance accounting system that includes procedures to ensure the accurate recording and reporting of student attendance data. The Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH) contains the official attendance accounting requirements that all public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in Texas must meet.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

LIMITATIONS

Both the inherent reporting obstacles of serving students over 26 years of age and the migration of younger students into The Excel Center Subchapter D; created unintended data complications for the 2015-16 school year. Adults over the age of 22 are ineligible for funding as *Special Education* or *Title I* students. Similarly, adults over the age of 25 are ineligible for funding as (i) *At-Risk*; (ii) *ELL*; (iii) *Career and Technology*; (iv) *Bilingual*; (v) *English as a Second Language*; and (vi) *Gifted and Talented* students. These organizational and financial realities thus suggest a rationale for migrating students of eligible-age into The Excel Center Subchapter D where funding would be available for students who qualify for special services. Still, it presents unique limitations to both this evaluation and longitudinal data collection efforts among adults of ineligible age.

“What we’ve done here, we’ve started a movement. Not just for ourselves, but for the people in generations to come.”
-2016 Graduate

²⁷ See 19 TAC [§109.1001](#)

²⁸ FIRST Rating for the 2014-2015 school year was based on 7 financial indicators,

²⁹ See TEC [§39.102](#)

MEETING PUBLIC AND ECONOMIC NEED

This evaluation has outlined demonstrable need for adult education and industry certification in the state of Texas. Senate Bill (SB) 1141, and subsequently TEC §29.259, laid forth a statutory pathway that enabled Goodwill Industries of Central Texas to develop, operate, and facilitate Senator Duncan’s original vision. The Excel Center for Adults, while limited in available data, has produced fruitful outputs to merit the continuation of its charter. Retention among adults in drop-out recovery/adult education programs will always be inherently difficult; however, the Center has exhibited strong leadership, staff, and educational models that produced 48 graduates in its first year and 61 graduates in the subsequent school year. As a result, there is strong evidence to suggest these individuals have increased their average income by at least \$7,652 per year as a result of obtaining their high school diploma. The state of Texas has also arguably created \$835,000 in additional annual spending revenue among these graduated individuals. Still the greatest observable outputs reside in the personal and emotional growth reported among both current students and graduates of The Excel Center for Adults. One graduate said *“getting a high school diploma changed my life because it gave me so much confidence.”*

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT, SHORT & LONG TERM VIABILITY

This report has outlined several statutory safeguards to ensure accountability, viability, and quality among both traditional school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. Available data for The Excel Center for Adults exhibit favorable compliance with all applicable standards. Still, going forward, these standards and oversight will ensure the health and viability of its operations and the educational enrichment of its clientele.

Demonstrable program outputs and current volume in enrollment suggests short-term success and viability. The decision to migrate younger students to The Excel Center Subchapter D was most likely the best choice from an operational and financial perspective; as well as, creating additional seats for adults 26-50 years of age. The result of which is likely to favor an increase in graduation outputs, as the data demonstrates most graduates fell within the 26-50 age range. Long term viability will be contingent on public need for adult educational services. At present, there are no formal indications to suggest a significantly foreseeable decrease in the demand for programs and services established in TEC §29.259. The Excel Center for Adults has demonstrated consistent enrollment numbers and superior financial operations. The likely result of which will be viable services across the lifecycle of its charter.

CHAPTER 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with TEC §29.259, the Texas Education Agency (agency) is required to make a recommendation regarding the abolition, continuation, or expansion of the adult education pilot program. This evaluation report formally recommends immediate continuation of the adult, high-school diploma and industry certification charter program. Analysis of the available data, policies, and operational narratives have been synthesized to incorporate the following supportive recommendations for the *Texas Legislature*:

- Increase the student enrollment cap from 150 students to 300 students;
- Provide for the maintenance and the extension of funding for all adult students 19-50 years of age as if they are all eligible for Foundation School Program (FSP) funding for the attainment of a high school diploma and industry certification;
- Designate a funding stream for the additional funding needed to serve special populations such as: At-Risk; Limited English Proficient; Special Education; and Parents with children under the age of 5; and

- Amend current language in TEC §29.259 to allow students with a high school equivalency certificate to enroll in the program, expanding the availability of a diploma to all students age 19-50.

In addition, the agency proposes the following supportive recommendations for the *Excel Center for Adults*:

- Diversify available industry certificates to align with a shift in Texas industries - including architecture & construction; business management & administration; finance; health science; hospitality & tourism; information technology; insurance; law, public safety, corrections & security; manufacturing; service industries; and transportation;
- Contract with Austin Community College (ACC) to guarantee opportunities for students who wish to pursue higher education and (or) complete industry certification(s); and
- Increase staff diversity to ensure student demographics are reflected across organizational staffing and faculty.

Appendix A

2015-2016 Leaver Reasons - District 227827	
Issues	Description
Employment	Chose to pursue employment over school; needed to work an extra job(s) due to financial reasons, or wanted to spend time looking for work.
Pregnancy	Pregnancy related issues (student declined PRS services or did not qualify)
No Contact/No Show	Student stopped attending school. Life Coaches tried multiple avenues to contact and engage (including home visits) but could not locate. In some instances, students changed address/contact info without notification.
Violated Attendance Contract	Formal contract set up for student due to excessive absences which student violated.
Course Completer	Student completed courses mid-term and stopped coming.
Behavioral/expelled	Expulsion from school due to major incident or suspension or time off from school due to ongoing behavioral issues.
Legal/incarceration	Incarceration in jail or prison. Also includes legal issues impeding school--such as probation requirements, and student being on the run to evade legal obligation.
Housing Stability	Experiencing risk for homelessness where student could not commit school due to needing to stabilize housing. Also includes potential moving locations/financial.
Personal/commitment	After consideration, student decided that they could not commit to school due to other priorities in life and/ or needing to take time off to address issues before returning.
Family barrier (Conflict/death)	Student experienced death of close family member and needed to take time off because of this. Also includes serious family conflict issues such as domestic violence.
Moved out of service area/ inconvenient location	Student either moved completely out of the service area (out of state/country/city) or to a location of the city where the student deemed this inconvenient for commuting to school.
Personal medical	Dealing with chronic or acute medical issues. Often this was the result of a sudden medical procedure (such as a surgery) or diagnosis which rendered the student unable to attend school.

Child medical	Student's minor child experiencing chronic or acute illness that required continued care of student as guardian.
Caregiver for sick family member	Caregiver for elderly or chronically ill/disabled family member.
Childcare	Unable to secure childcare either due to being waitlisted or not meeting criteria for local childcare services, including Exploration Center... and student was also unable to secure childcare via local personal support avenues (family/friends).
GED	Student chose to pursue GED in lieu of HS diploma.
Transportation Barriers	Experiencing transportation barriers which include student living in an outlying city/area of Austin where bus line did not go, excessively long commute to school due to traffic, and/or barriers with current transportation such as not owning a vehicle, not being able to pay vehicle costs or having a vehicle that was not in working condition.