

Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



Top honors

Economics students from Bellaire High School (Houston ISD) were honored by the State Board of Education in July for taking top honors in the 14th Annual National Economics Challenge. SBOE member Donna Bahorich, far left, Houston, congratulated members (left to right) Jinchen Zou, Ridge Liu, Patrick Girardet, and economics teacher Michael Clark. Not pictured is team member Laura Zhang. The team spent many long hours preparing for the competition by reviewing micro, macro and international economics. The National Economics Challenge is sponsored by the Council for Economic Education in New York.

2014 accountability ratings released

The 2014 state accountability ratings released on Aug. 8 reveal that 90 percent of school districts and charters across Texas have achieved the rating of Met Standard. [\[complete story on page 2\]](#)

Graduation rates mark new all-time high

The Texas on-time graduation rate reached an all-time high of 88 percent. [\[complete story on page 4\]](#)

ESEA waiver sought

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams has sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan seeking an extension of the state's waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). [\[complete story on page 7\]](#)

Graduation toolkit available

A graduation toolkit, available in English and Spanish, explains the state's new high school graduation plan. [\[complete story on page 10\]](#)

Dyslexia handbook approved

The SBOE approved its dyslexia handbook, entitled *The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2014: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders*. [\[complete story on page 12\]](#)

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TEA

Ninety percent of districts, charters earn top ratings

The Texas Education Agency released the 2014 state accountability system ratings on Aug. 8 for more than 1,200 school districts and charters, and more than 8,500 campuses. The ratings reveal that 90 percent of school districts and charters across Texas have achieved the rating of Met Standard.

Districts, campuses and charters receive one of three ratings under the accountability system: *Met Standard*; *Met Alternative Standard*; or *Improvement Required*.

School district ratings (including charter operators) by category in 2014 are as follows:

2014 RATING	DISTRICT	CHARTER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Met Standard/Alternative	949	157	1,106	90.1%
Met Standard	949	124	1,073	87.4%
Met Alternative Standard	N/A	33	33	2.7%
Improvement Required	76	35	111	9.0%
Not Rated	0	10	10	0.8%
TOTAL	1,025	202	1,227	100.0%

“Texans should be pleased to see the vast majority of districts, charters, and campuses are meeting the standards set in the second year of the state accountability system,” said Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. “While the 2014 numbers are strong, the work continues in districts across our state to meet and exceed increasing state standards and the expectations of their local communities.”

The 2014 ratings are based on a system that uses various indicators to provide greater detail on the performance of a district or charter and individual campuses throughout the state. The performance index framework includes four areas:

- **Student Achievement** – Provides a snapshot of performance across all subjects.
- **Student Progress** – Measures year-to-year student progress by subject and student group.
- **Closing Performance Gaps** – Tracks advanced academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the lowest performing racial/ethnic student groups.
- **Postsecondary Readiness** – Emphasizes the importance of earning a high school diploma that provides students with the foundation necessary for success in college, the workforce, job training programs, or the military.

In this second year of this accountability system, all four performance indexes include additional measures of academic performance. In addition, Index 4 (Postsecondary Readiness) includes a new measure of postsecondary success based on the percent of graduates who achieve college readiness standards in both English language arts and mathematics.

A district or campus must meet the target on all indexes for which it has performance results. For 2014 only, high schools/K-12 campuses and alternative education campuses and charter districts are not being evaluated on Index 2 (Student Progress) due to the transition to a single reading and writing assessment for English I and English II. In 2013, reading and writing were tested separately.

♦ See **Ratings**, page 3



Ratings *continued*

Under the 2014 state accountability system, campus ratings (including charter campuses) by category and school type are as follows:

2014 RATING	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HS	K-12	TOTAL	PERCENT
Met Standard/Alternative	4,112	1,510	1,388	268	7,278	84.9%
Met Standard	4,112	1,503	1,175	246	7,036	82.1%
Met Alternative Standard	0	7	213	22	242	2.8%
Improvement Required	443	143	103	61	750	8.7%
Not Rated	69	53	272	152	546	6.4%
TOTAL	4,624	1,706	1,763	481	8,574	100.0%

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of Met Standard are also eligible for distinction designations. Distinction designations are awarded to campuses based on achievement in several performance indicators relative to a group of 40 campuses of similar type, size, and student demographics. Distinction designations can be earned by campuses in the following areas:

- Academic Achievement in Reading/English Language Arts;
- Academic Achievement in Mathematics;
- Academic Achievement in Science;
- Academic Achievement in Social Studies;
- Top 25 Percent: Student Progress;
- Top 25 Percent: Closing Performance Gaps; and
- Postsecondary Readiness.



More than 4,400 campuses that achieved the Met Standard rating earned some type of distinction designation. Four hundred campuses earned a distinction designation in all of the distinction categories that were evaluated for the campus. A complete listing of these districts can be found on the Texas Education Agency website.

“Earning a distinction is not easy,” said Commissioner Williams. “Any school earning one or more distinctions should be recognized in its community for the outstanding work taking place on that campus.”

In addition, districts and charters are eligible to receive a distinction designation for postsecondary readiness. Postsecondary readiness is the only distinction at the district level. Twenty-six school districts and charters earned this distinction for 2014. Districts and charters earning a postsecondary readiness distinction include:

Carroll ISD	Gruver ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Sharyland ISD
Cisco ISD	Harmony School of Science (Houston)	Lovejoy ISD	South Texas ISD
Clifton ISD	Harmony Science Academy (Waco)	Martins Mill ISD	Uplift Education-North Hills Preparatory (Irving)
Falls City ISD	Highland Park ISD (Dallas)	Medina Valley ISD	Uplift Education-Williams Preparatory (Dallas)
Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts	Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD	Mumford ISD	Valley View ISD
Glasscock CO ISD	Kerrville ISD	Richardson ISD	Wimberley ISD
Glen Rose ISD		School of Science & Technology (Leon Valley)	

◆ See **Ratings**, page 4

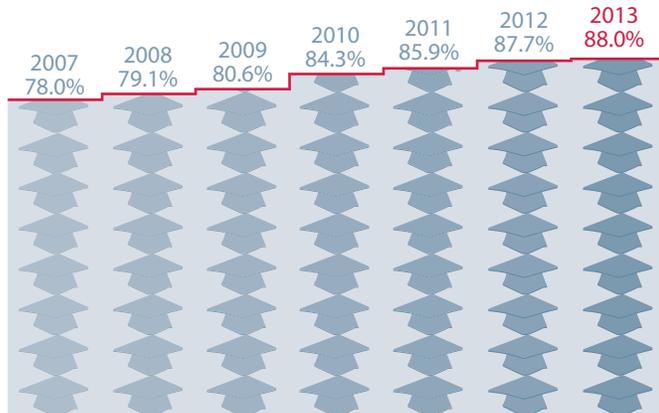


TEA

New high school graduation marks set by Class of 2013

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams announced Aug. 5 that the Texas high school on-time graduation rate has set another all-time high, reaching 88 percent for the Class of 2013.

The graduation rate for the Class of 2013 is 0.3 percentage points higher than the previous record set by the Class of 2012 and marks the sixth consecutive year the rate has increased.



Out of 328,584 students in the Class of 2013 Grade 9 cohort, 88 percent graduated. An additional 4.6 percent of students in the Class of 2013 continued in high school the fall after their anticipated graduation date and 0.8 percent went on to receive GED certificates.

“The Class of 2013 continues an ongoing trend of success in the classroom which has translated into more high school diplomas,” said Commissioner Williams. “With additional flexibility now provided

♦ See **Graduation Rates**, page 5

Ratings *continued*

District and Campus Ratings (percent)		
DISTRICTS	2013	2014
Met Standard/Alternative	92.5	90.1
Improvement Required	6.5	9.0
CAMPUSES		
Met Standard/Alternative	84.2	84.9
Improvement Required	9.1	8.7

The 2014 ratings – with the additional measures for academic performance – remained fairly stable compared to 2013. Districts, charters and campuses can appeal a rating. All ratings are final in October.

Educators, school board members, business and community representatives, professional organizations, and legislative representatives from across the state provided assistance and advice to the Texas Education Agency during development of the current accountability system.

Independent of the state’s accountability system, House Bill 5 (passed last year by the 83rd Texas Legislature) requires all school districts to evaluate the district’s performance and the performance of each campus in regard to community and student engagement. Although these locally-assigned ratings must be posted on district websites by Aug. 8 (coinciding with the release of state ratings), they are separate from the state accountability ratings.

The Texas Education Agency will post the state-assigned academic and financial ratings, as well as the locally-determined community and student engagement ratings, on the agency’s website by Oct. 1.

To assist parents and the general public, the Texas Education Agency has produced a video that offers a quick overview of the State Accountability System and what goes into the annual ratings of schools, districts and charters. The video can be viewed at: youtu.be/cbEgrdijuc8.



To view the 2014 state accountability ratings for districts, charters and campuses (plus distinction designations earned at the campus and district level), visit the Texas Education Agency website at ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2014/index.html.



Graduation rates *continued*

to school districts, we should expect graduation numbers to remain strong with all students better prepared for life after high school in college, the workplace or military.”

The latest graduation figures are among the findings highlighted in the Texas Education Agency’s report, *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2012-13*. Other notable graduation findings from the report include:

- Across racial/ethnic groups, the graduation rate for the Class of 2013 reflects all-time highs for Hispanic (85.1 percent) and African-American (84.1 percent) students.
- Asian students in Texas had the highest graduation rate (93.8 percent) in the Class of 2013 Grade 9 cohort.
- White students posted the second highest graduation rate (93 percent).
- Females in the Class of 2013 Grade 9 cohort had a higher graduation rate (90.3 percent) than males (85.9 percent).
- The graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students in the Class of 2013 Grade 9 cohort was 85.2 percent, an increase of 0.1 percentage points over the Class of 2012. In comparison, the graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students in the Class of 2007 Grade 9 cohort was 68.8 percent.

Commissioner Williams noted that Texas has seen graduation rates increase steadily for African-American, Hispanic and white students since the Class of 2007. During that time, the graduation rate difference between white students and African-American and Hispanic students has narrowed – but a gap still exists.

“As a state, we continue making progress in our shared goal of educating every student,” said Commissioner Williams. “While the graduation trend continues to be strong, these figures also tell us there is still more work to do in closing the achievement gap.”

Class Year	African-American	Hispanic	White
2013	84.1	85.1	93.0
2012	83.5	84.3	93.0
2011	80.9	81.8	92.0
2010	78.8	78.8	91.6
2009	73.8	73.5	89.7
2008	71.8	70.8	88.8
2007	70.7	68.5	88.2

The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the federal entity with primary responsibility for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States. In 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature passed legislation requiring dropout rates be computed according to the NCES dropout definition.

A dropout is defined as a student who is enrolled in public school in Grades 7-12, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not: graduate, receive a GED certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.

The Texas Education Agency report shows that the longitudinal dropout rate for the Class of 2013 Grade 9 cohort was 6.6 percent, an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the Class of 2012, with the rate for Asian students at 3.0 percent, white students at 3.5 percent, Hispanic students at 8.2 percent and African-American students at 9.9 percent.

Out of 2,189,442 students who attended Grades 7-12 in Texas public schools during the 2012-13 school year, 1.6 percent were reported to have dropped out that year, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from 2011-12.

Other dropout findings from the report include:

- For the 2012-2013 school year, the number of dropouts in Grades 7-12 decreased to 34,696, a 4.4 percent decrease from the 36,276 students who dropped out in 2011-12.

◆ See **Graduation Rates**, page 6



SBOE

Financial concerns delay instructional materials adoption

Concerned that school districts may struggle to pay for new instructional materials that are scheduled for implementation in fall of 2015, the State Board of Education voted to push its adoption of Proclamation 2016 instructional materials back by one year.

The estimated projected cost of materials called for in Proclamation 2016 is \$78 million. This action would make that funding available for districts and charter schools to spend on instructional materials for subjects called for in Proclamation 2015: high school math; social studies, grades K-12; and fine arts, grades K-12.

"It's an action we need to take for the good of our schools," said State Board of Education member Marty Rowley of Amarillo.

The financial concern has arisen as districts are adjusting to major changes made through Senate Bill 6 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011. Prior to SB 6, all instructional materials were paid for and owned by the state. SB 6 established an instructional materials allotment (IMA) that provides each district and charter school with a sum of money available annually for instructional materials and technology.

Districts and charter schools use their IMA funds to purchase instructional materials, which they then own. Any money unspent in one year by a district or charter school can be carried over to the next year.

SB 6 also eliminated the established maximum price that could be charged for each instructional material product. This has made accurately predicting the price of new materials difficult. The pricing structure is also much more fluid because materials may be available in printed books, electronic formats, or software licenses.

To address districts' concern about funding, the board voted to delay the call for new instructional materials for Languages Other Than English and Special Topics in Social Studies including Ethnic Studies by one year. These materials were originally scheduled to be implemented in 2016. The SBOE now plans to call for these instructional materials in conjunction with Career and Technical Education (CTE) materials in Proclamation 2017.

SBOE member Thomas Ratliff of Mount Pleasant said this postponement was purely a financial decision. "We've all heard about the razor thin margin districts are on to buy books. We need to look at the pacing of how we do things," he said.

Graduation rates *continued*

- A total of 3,187 students dropped out of Grades 7-8, and 31,509 dropped out of Grades 9-12. The Grade 7-8 and Grade 9-12 annual dropout rates were 0.4 percent and 2.2 percent, respectively.
- Across racial/ethnic groups, the 2012-13 Grade 7-12 dropout rates showed Asian students at 0.6 percent, white students at 0.8 percent, Hispanic students at 2.0 percent and African-American students at 2.3 percent.
- The Grade 7-12 dropout rate for males (1.8 percent) exceeded the rate for females (1.3 percent) in 2012-13. More males dropped out from Grade 9 (5,029) than from any other grade. By contrast, more females dropped out from Grade 12 (4,161) than from any other grade.



To read the complete *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2012-13* report, visit the TEA website at www.tea.state.tx.us.



TEA

ESEA waiver sought to extend pilot evaluation program

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams has sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan seeking an extension of the state's waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In the letter, he also notified Secretary Duncan that the state would be adding an additional year to the pilot program for the new teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

On Sept. 30, 2013, Texas was approved for the federal waiver from specific provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) through the 2013-2014 school year contingent upon implementation of the new teacher and principal evaluation system. In May, as part of the terms of the state's conditional waiver, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) updates to the state's plan for implementing the new teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

The evaluation systems will be piloted in school districts and charters beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Commissioner Williams has decided to extend the pilot operation of the two systems for an additional year to allow time for system refinement.

"Texas educators understand the need to update the current evaluation system to one that better reflects what's occurring in today's classroom," said Commissioner Williams. "If Texas is to develop an evaluation system that truly supports our teachers, we need time to complete the pilot year and then utilize the constructive feedback we will receive from our school districts, charters and educators."

Elements of the new Teacher Evaluation and Support System were designed utilizing extensive input from the state's teachers, principals, and

superintendents and will replace the current state-recommended instrument for evaluating teachers – the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) – which has been in place since 1997.

Eighty percent of the new Teacher Evaluation and Support System is weighted on elements – such as multiple classroom observations, ongoing learning community feedback, and teacher self-assessments – that are currently commonplace in many high-performing campuses across Texas. The new system will encourage annual evaluations with multiple informal observations and walk-throughs and at least one formal observation.

The remaining 20 percent will be reflected in a student growth measure at the individual teacher level, providing data that will help to inform teachers, in conjunction with observation and self-assessment data, about their strengths and potential areas of focus for professional development. That data will come from value-add scores, student learning objectives, portfolios, or district-level pre- and post-tests.

"If Texas is to develop an evaluation system that truly supports our teachers, we need time to complete the pilot year and then utilize the constructive feedback we will receive from our school districts, charters and educators."

-Commissioner Michael Williams



For an overview of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, visit txcc.sedl.org/our_work/tx_educator_evaluation/index.php.



TEA

Majority of 2015 Class finished with STAAR® EOCs

A majority of high school students (81 percent) in the Class of 2015 – the first class graduating under State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) testing requirements – has already successfully passed all five required STAAR end-of-course exams before reaching their senior year, according to figures released by the Texas Education Agency.

Under House Bill 5 passed by the Texas Legislature last year, Texas students are now required to pass five end-of-course exams – Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology and U.S. History – to receive a high school diploma.

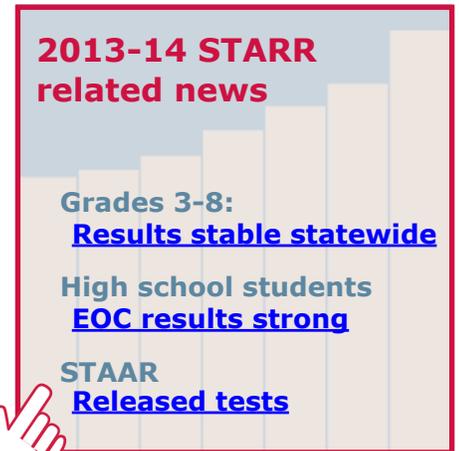
Heading into the 2014–2015 school year, most high school seniors in Texas have already taken and passed all five end-of-course exams. Commissioner of Education Michael Williams noted that of the 19 percent of students in the Class of 2015 still short of the state requirement, roughly half need to pass just one more end-of-course exam.

“More than eighty percent of students in the Class of 2015 face no state-mandated tests during their senior year,” said Commissioner Williams. “With that academic success in hand, superintendents can now focus remediation efforts on the fewer than 20 percent of students still in need of passing end-of-course exams while ensuring that all students can graduate and achieve beyond high school.”

Of the 8.6 percent in the current Class of 2015 still needing to pass just one more end-of-course exam, most still need to pass the English II exam. The remaining subjects (in descending order of the tests student still need to pass) include U.S. History; English I; Algebra I; and Biology.

Passing rates reflect results from various tests administrations including Spring 2012, Summer 2012, Winter 2012, Spring 2013, Summer 2013, Winter 2013 and Spring 2014. Students in the class of 2015 needing to pass one or more STAAR end-of-course exam will have three additional opportunities to do so prior to their scheduled graduation in Spring 2015.

At this same point during the state’s prior testing program (the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills or TAKS), 28 percent of students in the first class graduating under TAKS had not successfully completed their testing requirements for graduation at the end of their junior year.



Class of 2015 End-of-Course Exam Passing Rates		
	Number of STUDENTS	Percent
Passed All End-Of-Course Exams (5)	233,294	81.0
One End-Of-Course Exam Still Needed	24,726	8.6
Two End-Of-Course Exams Still Needed	16,040	5.6
Three or More End-Of-Course Exams Still Needed	13,805	4.8
TOTAL	287,865	100.0



To review test results, visit the Pearson website at tx.pearsonaccess.com/tclp/portal/tclp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pa2_analytical_reporting_page.



TEA

TEA launches federal grant flexibility initiative

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has launched a federal grant flexibility initiative aimed at providing increased flexibility to grantees, including school districts, charter schools, education service centers, colleges and universities and non-profit entities that receive certain federal education grants administered through TEA.

The flexibility initiative is made up of new policies related to how TEA administers, manages and monitors federal grants. The policies are designed to give grantees greater flexibility in how they administer federal grant funds so that they can close student achievement gaps by operating effective programs that are based upon locally identified needs. Closing the student achievement gaps in Texas has been designated an agency and state priority by Commissioner of Education Michael Williams and is a component of the state's accountability system for school districts, campuses and charters.

"Closing the achievement gaps among our student groups is a challenge faced not only in Texas, but also every state across the country," said Commissioner Williams. "By providing greater flexibility on the use of certain federal funds, our state provides an avenue for greater student achievement in every classroom."

The TEA Office for Grants and Federal Fiscal Compliance is primarily responsible for the initiative, but is working closely with other TEA

departments, as well as local educational agencies, education service centers and other community stakeholders to develop and implement policies that are as beneficial to federal grant sub-recipients as possible. Specific policy changes focus on:

- Allowing more discretion at the local level;
- Providing clear guidance with examples and models;
- Removing barriers that are unnecessary and burdensome;
- Improving performance and program outcomes;
- Ensuring that grant funds are spent in accordance with program statute and regulations; and
- Strengthening accountability for federal dollars and providing more transparency.

In addition, a major component of this initiative is the promotion of Title I, Part A schoolwide programs. TEA is encouraging school districts and charter schools to take advantage of the flexibility offered by this program model, which allows campuses to use Title I, Part A funds to improve the academic achievement of all students on a campus. The program also eases several statutory and regulatory requirements, and allows a campus to consolidate its funds into a single budget pool to give options that work best for them based upon their local needs.

To learn more about the federal flexibility initiative, visit the TEA website at:

www.tea.state.tx.us/grants/federalflexibility/.



TEA

Graduation toolkit available to students, parents and schools

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams announced Aug. 11 that the Texas Education Agency, in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Workforce Commission, has made available a graduation toolkit for students, parents and school counselors.

The toolkit provides essential information regarding the new graduation plan under House Bill 5, which was passed by the Texas Legislature last year. House Bill 5 provides for a more flexible graduation program for all students who enter high school beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Commissioner Williams believes that information and early planning are now critical steps for all students and parents in preparing for high school and beyond.

“Students now have more choices, which means parents and students must begin exploring their high school options as early as eighth grade,” said Commissioner Williams. “This toolkit, which is available in English and Spanish, offers an excellent overview of the new state graduation requirements and endorsements, as well as vital information for postsecondary plans for college or the workforce.”

The graduation toolkit provides a summary of the state’s new graduation plan and descriptions of the five potential endorsements that can now be offered by high schools, as well as a checklist to begin planning for high school and beyond.

The toolkit offers students and parents an overview of the benefits to pursuing the Distinguished Level of Achievement graduation plan. House Bill 5 called on the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Workforce Commission to collaborate in touting

the Distinguished Level benefits. Benefits of the Distinguished Level include:

- Allowing a high school graduate to compete for top 10 percent automatic admission eligibility at any Texas public university;
- Positioning a high school graduate who is financially qualified to be first in line for a Texas Grant to help pay for university tuition and fees; and
- Ensuring a high school graduate will be a more competitive applicant at the most selective colleges and universities.



“It is critical for students and parents to be well informed on the changes to high school graduation plans so they can make thoughtful decisions early,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes. “This toolkit is designed to guide students and families through the benefits of each pathway to increase the likelihood

of preparation and success in college and the workforce.”

The toolkit also includes information on various workforce resources provided through the Texas Workforce Commission. All these resources are geared toward assisting students and parents in planning for any postsecondary goals for college or career.

“I encourage students, parents, and school counselors to use this toolkit as a starting point for discussions about their students’ future endeavors,” said Texas Workforce Commission Chairman Andres Alcantar. “This excellent resource will assist Texas students as they plan their high school years and postsecondary careers.”



The graduation toolkit is available online for electronic use or printing. To view the graduation toolkit, visit www.tea.state.tx.us/brochures/.



SBEC

New appointments to State Board of Educator Certification

Gov. Rick Perry recently appointed two new members to the State Board for Educator Certification.



Susan Simpson Hull, the superintendent of the Grand Prairie ISD, is active in many statewide and national education organizations, including the American and Texas Associations of School Administrators, the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, the

Texas Council of Women School Executives, the Center for Quality Leadership School Research Nexus, and the Center for Reform of School Systems. Locally, Hull also serves as a member of the Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce and Greater Grand Prairie Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She is also a service member of the Grand Prairie Rotary Club, and a board member of Brighter Tomorrows of Grand Prairie, Lifeline Shelter for Families Inc. and Grand Prairie YMCA.

Hull received a bachelor's degree and master's degree in education administration and psychology from Texas A&M University-Commerce, and a doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M University.

Hull will serve a term to expire Feb. 1, 2017.



Leon Leal of Grapevine, owns Abba Staffing and Consulting, Inc. and Abba Professional and is active in many local educational endeavors. He serves as a member, past vice president and past secretary of the Grapevine-Colleyville ISD Board of Trustees, and a member and

past 2005 Bond Planning Committee chairman of the Grapevine-Colleyville Education Foundation Board of Directors. Leal is also president and founder of the Grapevine Youth Wrestling Board and volunteers for the Grapevine High School College Go Center. Previously, Leal was a trustee and member of the Baylor Regional Medical Center at Grapevine Finance and Growth and Quality committees, an officer for the Grapevine Youth Baseball Board, a member of the Grapevine Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and a volunteer for Keep Grapevine Beautiful.

Leal received a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma. He will serve a term to expire Feb. 1, 2017.

SBOE

Charters backed by Bond Guarantee Program for first time

The \$30 billion Texas Permanent School Fund (PSF) recently backed charter school bonds for the first time through its Bond Guarantee Program.

This backing gives the charter school bonds the equivalent of a AAA rating, which allows the schools to issue the bonds at the lowest possible interest rate, saving the charters money.

The PSF Bond Guarantee Program has backed more than \$112 billion in bonds issued by independent school districts since the program began in 1983.

It began accepting applications from charter holders in March.

The first charter schools bonds issued with the PSF backing were from Eagle Advantage Schools Inc., LifeSchool of Dallas, Riverwalk Education Foundation Inc. and Kipp Inc.

Charter holders apply to the Texas Education Agency with the amount of bonds they want to issue. After preliminary approval by the commissioner of education, the bonds must be approved by the attorney general within 180 days of the date of the TEA letter granting the approval. The bonds are then issued for sale.

Legislation creating the Bond Guarantee Program for charters schools was initially passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011 and then refined in 2013 to allow for the guarantee of refinanced bonds.

In May and June, additional applications to receive preliminary approval were Harmony Public Schools, Idea Academy Inc. and Trinity Basin Preparatory.



SBOE

Simulation shows struggles of those with dyslexia

During its July meeting, the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved updates and changes to its dyslexia handbook, entitled *The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2014: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders*. The handbook serves as a guide to districts regarding SBOE-approved procedures concerning dyslexia and related disorders and provides guidelines for school districts to follow as they identify and provide services for students with dyslexia.

The handbook also includes the most up-to-date information regarding the state’s dyslexia statutes and their relation to federal laws.

Handbook revisions include the addition of references to technology resources that were required by Senate Bill 866, 82nd Texas Legislature, 2011, and updates to state and federal law. First written in 1986, this latest version marks the seventh time the handbook has been updated and revised to reflect the latest knowledge about dealing with this learning disability that makes reading and writing difficult.

Board members also had the chance to experience first-hand the issues faced by students with dyslexia. Representatives from the Richardson Independent School District’s Dyslexia Program presented a hands-on learning exercise called Experience Dyslexia, a simulation in which board members rotated through six different stations and discovered what it is like for someone with dyslexia to read and write.

At one station, board members read a book in which the letters of the English alphabet had been changed to symbols. The correct meaning of each word was provided once in English; members could

help each other remember the words, but could not turn back to a previous page to reference the correct meaning.

“The comprehension, it’s all gone,” said Dr. Martha Dominguez (District 1) after she completed the exercise. “What happens to our dyslexic or English Language Learner (ELL) students?”



At the end of the exercise, Shannon Suess, the director of dyslexia for Richardson ISD, asked board members how they felt.

“Tired,” said Tincy Miller (District 12).

“Frustrated,” said Marisa Perez (District 3).

“Horrible,” said Lawrence Allen (District 4).

“We’ve had you for 30 minutes and this is how you feel,” Suess said. “Our children come to us for seven hours a day. We ask them to walk through the doors of our schools with a smile on their face. Think about how our children feel every single day between August and June. Think about what our children go through every day. What can we do?”

The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2014: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders can be a starting point when identifying and assisting students and their families.



The handbook is available online at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4434.



SBOE

Board training

Newly elected or appointed school board members must receive an orientation to the Texas Education Code (TEC) within the first 120 days of service, and an orientation to the local school district goals and priorities within 60 days of taking office, according to updated rules approved by the State Board of Education in July.

The revisions make it clear that both orientations should also be open to any sitting board member who chooses to attend.

The orientation of local goals and policies must now be at least three hours in length and is required to cover:

- curriculum and instruction;
- business and finance operations;
- district operations;
- superintendent evaluation; and
- board member roles and responsibilities.

The orientation on the TEC should include a basic overview of the law and relevant board legal obligations. Topics should include, but are not limited to, parental rights and responsibilities along with orientation on the Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction (TEC §28.004).

In addition to the orientation training sessions, board members and the superintendent must participate each year in a team-building session. The updated team-building requirements must include a review of the roles, rights and responsibilities of a local board as outlined in the framework for governance leadership.

**Texas Teachers of the Year**

The SBOE heard from the 2014 and 2013 Texas Secondary Teachers of the Year at its July meeting. The 2014 recipient, Monica Washington, pictured with SBOE member Thomas Ratliff, Mt. Pleasant, is an 11th grade English teacher at Texas High School in the Texarkana ISD. Jeremy Wagner, the 2013 recipient, pictured with SBOE member Marty Rowley, Amarillo, is an eighth-grade mathematics and science teacher at Heritage Middle School in the Frenship ISD.

Portrait unveiling

SBOE Chair Barbara Cargill and student artist Michelle Jacobsen are on hand to help former Commissioner of Education Robert Scott unveil his official portrait. Painted by Jacobsen, a 2014 graduate from the Eanes Independent School District, the painting now hangs in the board room at the Travis State Office Building.



SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met July 15 – 18, 2014. Summaries of actions taken by the SBOE can be found on the Texas Education Agency's website at www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/actions/

Beach Art

Most Texas public schools in session by Aug. 25

Summer is winding down - enjoy those last few days of summer vacation. Most Texas public schools will be back in session the week of Aug. 25. Good luck to all our returning educators and students and have a great school year!

Miakoda Nutt
Castle Hill Elementay
North East ISD

Artwork from the 2014 Adopt-a-Beach competition, sponsored by the Texas General Land Office and on display at the Texas Education Agency through Sept. 5, 2014



Texas Education Today may be found online at www.tea.state.tx.us/tet/

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