

Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Michael Williams tours schools

Commissioner Williams toured schools in the central, northeast and Dallas-Fort Worth areas. Among the schools visited were: Goldthwaite Elementary School, Goldthwaite Independent School District, Boulter

Middle School and Jack Elementary School (Tyler ISD) and Loflin Middle School (Joshua ISD) where Christal Bookhamer was presented with the 2013 Milken Educator Award.



Texas 8th graders shine

In an inaugural study initiated by the National Center for Education Statistics linking national and international assessments, Commissioner of Education Michael Williams recently noted the strong performance of Texas 8th graders in comparison to students in other countries. [\[complete story on page 2\]](#)

HB 5 graduation requirements update

Graduation requirements are being updated because of changes made by HB 5, a sweeping law approved by the Texas Legislature this spring. That law creates a 22-credit Foundation High School Program that can be supplemented with endorsements and personal acknowledgments. [\[complete story on page 3\]](#)

Charter bond guarantee program

The State Board of Education has given preliminary approval for rules governing a new bond guarantee program designed specifically for charter schools. The program will have an initial bonding capacity of more than \$750 million. [\[complete story on page 4\]](#)

Safe schools, a shared responsibility

The Texas Education Agency recently reminded Texans that everyone in education – including students, parents, teachers, administrators, coaches and staff – play a critical role in identifying and reporting improper educator-student relationships. [\[complete story on page 8\]](#)

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Social Media – TEA



TEA listservs

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TEA

Texas 8th graders' scores shine on international level

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams recently noted the strong performance of Texas 8th graders in an inaugural study linking national and international assessments.

Initiated by the National Center for Education Statistics, this 2011 study has linked the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scale to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) scale so that states can compare the performance of their students with that of students in other countries.

Results for assessments conducted in 2011 showed scores in the top twelve for Texas students taking the 8th grade Mathematics exam - higher than the national scores of the United States, Finland and the overall TIMSS scale average.

"This global study strengthens my belief that Texas students and teachers can compete nationally and internationally when we challenge them and set high expectations," said Commissioner Williams. "While I recognize areas where we still must improve, I am proud of the hard work of our students and teachers in achieving this recognition."

This international comparison study was conducted in 2011 with 8th grade students in all states and U.S. jurisdictions that participated in the NAEP mathematics and science assessments.

The average mathematics score for U.S. public school students was 509. At 515, Texas was one of 36 states with scores in mathematics higher than the TIMSS scale average of 500.

In addition, results for assessments conducted in 2011 showed scores in the top twelve for Texas students taking the 8th grade science exam - 24 points higher than the overall TIMSS scale average.

The average science score for U.S. public school students (525) is higher than the TIMSS average of 500. Texas was one of 47 states with scores in science higher than the TIMSS scale average.

To read the complete NAEP-TIMSS linking study from the National Center for Education Statistics, visit nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.

Rank	Education System	Average Math Score
1	Republic of Korea	613
2	Singapore	611
3	Chinese Taipei (China)	609
4	Hong Kong (China)	586
5	Japan	570
6	Russian Federation	539
7	Israel	516
8	STATE OF TEXAS	515
9	Finland	514
10	United States	509
11	England (Great Britain)	507
12	Hungary	505
	TIMSS Scale Average	500

Rank	Education System	Average Science Score
1	Singapore	590
2	Chinese Taipei (China)	564
3	Republic of Korea	560
4	Japan	558
5	Finland	552
6	Slovenia	543
7	Russian Federation	542
8	Hong Kong (China)	535
9	England (Great Britain)	533
10	United States	525
11	STATE OF TEXAS	524
12	Hungary	522
	TIMSS Scale Average	500



TEA

93 percent of districts and charters earn top rating

The Texas Education Agency on Nov. 7 released the final 2013 state accountability system ratings for more than 1,200 school districts and charters, and more than 8,500 campuses. The final ratings are issued following an appeals process provided to districts and charters who contested district or campus ratings originally announced in August.

Under the final 2013 ratings, almost 93 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 new accountability system: Met Standard; Met Alternative Standard; or Improvement Required. School district ratings (including charter operators) by category in 2013 are as follows:

Rating	District	Charter	Total	Percent
Met Standard/Alternative	979	161	1,140	92.8%
Met Standard	979	126	1,105	90.0%
Met Alternative Standard	N/A	35	35	2.9%
Improvement Required	46	30	76	6.2%
Not Rated	1	10	11	0.9%
Data Integrity Issues	0	1	1	0.1%
TOTAL	1,026	202	1,228	100.0%

To view the 2013 state accountability ratings for districts, charters and campuses, visit the Texas Education Agency web site at ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/index.html.

SBOE

HB 5 changes lead to updates in graduation requirements

Under draft rules given preliminary approval by the State Board of Education in November, speech will no longer be a course required for graduation under the Foundation High School Program and only one endorsement will specifically require students to take Algebra II to complete their graduation requirements.

The board is updating graduation requirements because of changes made by HB 5, a sweeping law approved by the Texas Legislature this spring. That law creates a 22-credit Foundation High School Program with endorsements and performance acknowledgments.

Sen. Dan Patrick and Rep. Jimmie Don Aycok, the chairmen of the legislative education committees, made an appearance before the board members to ask them to preserve as much flexibility as possible when crafting the rules.

In the initial draft of the rules, all five endorsement areas required students to take Algebra II.

That course is required under the two current graduation programs that include the 4x4 requirements.

After listening to testimony from 67 witnesses and receiving letters and emails from many others both for and against requiring Algebra II, the board voted to eliminate Algebra II as a specific requirement for the public services, arts and humanities, business and industry, and multidisciplinary studies endorsements. Students pursuing those endorsements will be permitted to select the fourth math credit course from two lists of mathematics courses.

The board continued to specifically require Algebra II under the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) endorsement.

However, students who hope to be ranked in the top 10 percent of their graduating class and

◆ See **Requirements**, page 4



Requirements *continued*

qualify for automatic admission into a Texas public university, must earn a distinguished level of achievement, according to the new law. The distinguished level of achievement requires students to take a total of four credits of math, including Algebra II, a total of four credits of science, and complete the requirements for at least one endorsement.

The board approved a number of additional amendments to the graduation program in

November. The draft rule that reflects all the changes will be posted in the Texas Register on Dec. 20. Once posted there, the formal public comment period will begin. The rule is now posted on TEA's HB 5 webpage at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769806149.

Final approval of the new graduation requirements is expected to occur at the SBOE's Jan. 28-31 meeting.

SBOE

SBOE gives preliminary approval to rules governing new bond guarantee program

The State Board of Education has given preliminary approval to rules governing a new bond guarantee program designed specifically for charter schools. The program will have an initial bonding capacity of more than \$750 million.

Facilities financing has been one of the most difficult issues faced by charter schools since the first schools opened in 1996. Because charter holders have no taxing authority and have their contracts with the state renewed every five to 10 years, many charters have been forced to turn to short-term leases.

In recent years as charters schools established financial and academic track records, some have been able to finance bond issuances and build their own schools. However, charter school representatives told State Board members that no Texas charter school currently has a bond rating higher than BBB.

When backed by the Permanent School Fund, which is one of the largest educational endowments in the country, the charter school bonds could carry the equivalent of a AAA rating, the highest rating available.

This improved rating will help charter schools in several ways. The guarantee is provided at a cost lower than that available through private bond insurance. It will also allow charter schools to receive lower interest rates than they could otherwise obtain. It is not possible to estimate how much money will be saved but it could easily be millions of dollars.

Since the bond guarantee program began for independent school districts three decades ago, the program has guaranteed more than 5,280 school district bond issues totaling \$111.9 billion.

While using the Permanent School Fund to help charter schools, the state is also taking steps to protect its investment. Just as with the rules for school districts, the new rule sets up a process to be followed

if a charter holder defaults on the bond repayment. It protects both the state and the bond holder.

Legislation creating the bond guarantee program for charter schools was initially passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011 and then refined in 2013 to allow for the guarantee of refinanced bonds. However, the state had to wait for a ruling from



◆ See **New Bond**, page 5



New Bond *continued*

the Internal Revenue Service dealing with arbitrage issues before SBOE rules governing the program could be crafted.

The board is expected to grant final approval to the rules at its Jan. 28-31 meeting. The first guarantee of a charter school's bonds would likely occur in the spring of 2014.

TEA

Joshua ISD teacher receives 2013 Milken Educator Award

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams on Dec. 5 joined Milken Family Foundation Co-Founder and Chairman Lowell Milken in presenting the



Bookhamer reacts to Milken Educator award announcement. Photo courtesy of the Milken Family Foundation

2013 Milken Educator Award to Christal Bookhamer, an eighth-grade science teacher in the Joshua Independent

School District (JISD).

Bookhamer is the state's sole 2013 recipient of one of education's most prestigious recognitions, which comes with a cash prize of \$25,000. The award was formally announced in a surprise presentation during a school assembly at Bookhamer's home campus, Loflin Middle School.

"This award affirms my belief that great teaching can be found in every school district across our state no matter the size of the community," said Commissioner Williams. "I congratulate Christal Bookhamer on this well-deserved recognition, and applaud her dedication to providing her students with exemplary instruction every school day."

Bookhamer's approach to teaching science brings with it an exciting and interactive experience for her students. She dresses up in military fatigues to promote her Science Bootcamp and sings in cadence as she marches around the lunchroom. However, it's not just about fun and games. Bookhamer is serious about learning and improving her students' academic performance.

The two-week Science Bootcamp she conducts prior to state assessments reinforces scientific concepts. The preparation augments classroom learning to produce high-achieving students. In 2012, her students achieved a 99 percent passing rate on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Science test.

Her effective teaching style has been showcased as exemplary during district administrator and staff development sessions. She co-presents a workshop called "What's Your Target?" that reviews college readiness standards and helps instructors make these standards applicable in their classrooms. She has also presented best practices to JISD's elementary and middle school in-service days.

Candidates for the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Individuals whose contributions to education are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight;
- Early- to mid-career educators who offer strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and

◆ See **Milken Educator**, page 6



Milken Educator *continued*

- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

As a new award recipient, Bookhamer will be invited to join the Milken Educator Network, a group of distinguished educators coast to coast whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.

Since first presented to a dozen California teachers, the program has grown to become the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program having honored nearly 2,600 K-12 teachers, principals and specialists. More than \$136 million in funding, including over \$64 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall program, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers. For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit www.milkeneducatorawards.org.

School Districts

14 Texas school districts earn place on AP® Honor Roll

Fourteen Texas school districts are among 477 in the U.S. and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on its 4th Annual AP® District Honor Roll. The Honor Roll recognizes districts for increasing access to AP course work while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams.

The 13 districts and one charter school in Texas that have earned this national distinction are:

Carroll Independent School District (Southlake)	Lake Travis Independent School District
Coppell Independent School District	Mesquite Independent School District
Eagle Pass Independent School District	Pasadena Independent School District
Frisco Independent School District	Plano Independent School District
IDEA Public Schools	Point Isabel Independent School District
Irving Independent School District	Sharyland Independent School District (Mission)
Katy Independent School District	Southwest Independent School District (San Antonio)

"Students in school districts across Texas are tackling rigorous Advanced Placement courses and succeeding," said Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. "This opportunity to prepare for postsecondary success in high school pays great dividends in our education system today and for our state's economic future."

In 2013, more than 3,300 colleges and universities around the world received AP scores for college credit, advanced placement and/or consideration in the admission process, with many colleges and universities in the United States offering credit in one or more subjects for qualifying AP scores.

Data from 2013 show that among African-American, Hispanic and Native American students with a high degree of readiness for AP, only about half of students are participating because their schools do not always offer the AP course for which they have potential. Trevor Packer, the College Board's senior vice president of AP and Instruction, notes that these 14 Texas districts are committed to expanding the availability of AP courses among prepared and motivated students of all backgrounds.

"We applaud the extraordinary efforts of the devoted teachers and administrators in these districts who are offering more students the opportunity to engage in rigorous college-level course work," said Packer. "These outcomes are a powerful testament to educators' belief that a more diverse population of students is ready for the sort of rigor that will prepare them for success in college."

◆ See Honor Roll, page 7



Honor Roll *continued*

Inclusion on the 4th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on the examination of three years of AP data, from 2011 to 2013, for the following criteria. Districts must:

Increase participation/access to AP by at least 4 percent in large districts, at least 6 percent in medium districts, and at least 11 percent in small districts;

Increase or maintain the percentage of exams taken by African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native students, and;



Improve performance levels when comparing the percentage of students in 2013 scoring a 3 or higher to those in 2011, unless the district has already attained a performance level at which more than 70 percent of its AP students are scoring a 3 or higher.

Overall, Texas ranked 13th in nation in the percentage of 2012 graduates participating in AP. Over the last decade, AP participation and success in Texas have increased steadily.

To view the complete listing of school districts named to the College Board's 4th Annual AP® District Honor Roll, visit www.collegeboard.org.

SBOE

Science, math and technology materials approved

More than 400 new instructional materials for science classes, along with math materials for grades k-8 and technology applications were approved by the State Board of Education at its Nov. 22 meeting in Austin.

The board approved Proclamation 2014 materials, which are slated to be in Texas public school classrooms beginning with the 2014-15 school year. The adopted items include both printed and digital materials.

Prior to the adoption vote, the board heard testimony from 10 individuals who testified about the materials under consideration.

One biology textbook in which alleged errors are in dispute will go through a mediation process to determine whether there are in fact mistakes. If mistakes are identified and the publisher updates the material, the book will be approved. If mistakes are identified and the publisher is unwilling to change them in this textbook, then the book will be taken off the approval list.

In other business related to instructional materials, the board approved amendments to Proclamation 2015, which advertises for bids on new instructional materials to be used by school

districts and open-enrollment charter schools beginning in school year 2015-2016.

The subjects and grade levels included in Proclamation 2015 are social studies, grades K-12; mathematics, grades 9-12; fine arts; three Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for which students may receive mathematics credit; one Technology Applications course for which students may receive mathematics credit; and one CTE course for which students may receive fine arts credit. The board also approved amendments that clarify the accessibility standards that must be followed when producing electronic instructional materials.

The board also approved for first reading proposed amendments to its rules for the adoption process. The amendments would update and clarify specific processes for the review and adoption of instructional materials. A final vote on the proposed rules will be taken at the January meeting.



SBOE

Generation 18 charter school applicants complete process

Three Generation 18 charter school applicants have successfully completed the final step of the state's application process allowing them to begin operation in Texas in the 2014-2015 school year.

Originally granted approval in September by Commissioner of Education Michael Williams, the three include:

- Carpe Diem Schools - San Antonio
- El Paso Leadership Academy
- Magnolia and Redbud Montessori for All

Once the schools have cleared all contingencies, they will be awarded the contract to open their school.

Under Senate Bill 2, passed during the 83rd Texas Legislature, the Commissioner of Education is given the authority to grant new open-enrollment charters in Texas and must notify the State Board of Education of those that are approved. A majority of the State Board members present and voting may veto any new charter approved

by the Commissioner within 90 days of the Commissioner's decision.

At its Nov. 22nd meeting in Austin, the board took no action on the three schools and thereby ratified the Commissioner's selections. The board did however, on a nine to six vote, veto the Commissioner's decision to award a charter to Great Hearts Academies Dallas.

Texas began authorizing charter schools in 1995 and with the recently approved applicants, currently has 209 charters awarded out of a current cap of 215. About 3 percent of Texas students are enrolled in charter schools.

SB 2 also grants the Commissioner the authority to award up to 305 open-enrollment charters on a graduated basis by the year 2019 to eligible entities.

To learn more about open-enrollment charter schools in Texas and the application process, visit the TEA website at www.tea.state.tx.us/charters.aspx.

TEA

Shared responsibility in identifying, reporting inappropriate educator-student relationships

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), recently reminded Texans that everyone in education – including students, parents, teachers, administrators, coaches and staff – play a critical role in identifying and reporting improper educator-student relationships.

Anyone reporting such an incident to local school administrators – especially students and parents – must be confident that their report will be investigated fully and impartially. Local school district superintendents are statutorily required to report such incidences to TEA and local law enforcement agencies (in those cases where potential criminal charges are involved).

"Everyone who works with students in schools across our state holds a position of trust that

should never be called into question," said Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. "Any report of an inappropriate relationship should be taken seriously, handled appropriately at the local level, and reported to TEA to assure proper sanctions and safeguards can be taken for the protection of students in all Texas districts."

TEA investigates reports of inappropriate educator-student relationships, working with school district officials as well as local law enforcement. Over the past three school years, the number of investigations opened by TEA staff specifically on allegations of inappropriate relationships has increased, from 141 in 2009-10 to 163 in 2012-13. Under the state penal code, a school district

♦ See **Training Videos**, page 10



TEA Promotion

Martinez named TEA Associate Commissioner for Standards and Programs



Commissioner of Education Michael Williams announced that he has named Monica Martinez as associate commissioner for Standards and Programs for the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

As associate commissioner, Martinez will oversee the TEA department that includes

the division areas related to Curriculum; Instructional Materials and Educational Technology, and Federal and State Education Policy.

"Monica Martinez has the experience, knowledge and skill set necessary to lead this important department of our agency," said Commissioner Williams. "In addition, she possesses a commitment shared by everyone at TEA in working to make the best decisions for all our school children and for the future of Texas."

Martinez – who's been with TEA since 2004 – has been overseeing the department on an interim basis since September of this year. While with TEA, she has held various positions including curriculum director, policy director, and managing director within the Standards and Programs Department.

During her tenure with TEA, Martinez has worked with internal staff and external stakeholders on various initiatives regarding the standards and curriculum in Texas classrooms including implementation of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), and, most recent, the transition to new high school graduation plans under House Bill 5.

Martinez holds an undergraduate degree from Brown University and earned a Masters degree in Business Administration from the University of Texas at Austin.

TEA Appointment

Office of Complaints, Investigations and School Accountability leader named



Commissioner of Education Michael Williams announced on Dec. 3 that he selected Margie Johnson - an attorney with more than 15 years of prosecutorial experience - to lead the new Texas Education Agency Office of Complaints, Investigations and School Accountability.

Margie Johnson

Established earlier this year by Commissioner Williams, the Office of Complaints, Investigations and School Accountability will be responsible for accepting, screening, and investigating complaints and allegations regarding school accountability, educator misconduct, and misuse of state and federal funds submitted to TEA.

"Margie Johnson possesses the strong prosecutorial background I believe necessary to effectively carry out the responsibilities of this critical position," said Commissioner Williams. "I have full confidence she will carefully examine allegations reported to this agency and determine those specific cases our investigative resources should target."

Johnson most recently served as first chair in the criminal prosecution of Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) at the Texas Attorney General's Office. In her role with the ICAC Task Force, she reviewed law enforcement investigations and recommended charges, in addition to advising law enforcement and other agency prosecutors on the investigations and prosecution of ICAC cases.

Johnson's prior legal and prosecutorial experience includes work as an assistant district attorney with the Travis County District Attorney's Office; assistant state attorney with the Cook County State Attorney's Office in Illinois; and assistant judge advocate general with the Office of Judge Advocate General (JAG) in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

♦ See **Johnson**, page 10



Johnson *continued*

Johnson will be responsible for coordinating existing TEA resources to assure all complaints are reviewed and formal investigations initiated, when warranted.

“Commissioner Williams has clearly outlined to me his high expectations for this new office,” said Johnson. “I look forward to working with the many

dedicated TEA investigators, attorneys and staff to assure the best for school children across Texas.”

Johnson earned her law degree from the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, and holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Arizona.

Training Videos *continued*

employee commits a second-degree felony if he or she engages in sexual contact with a student who is not their spouse, even if that student is 18 years of age.

A person who serves as the superintendent of a school district or the director of an open-enrollment charter school, private school, or regional education service center is required by law to promptly notify TEA or the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) in writing of any educator misconduct that results in termination or resignation.



If a termination or resignation is based on an act of misconduct, a superintendent must report the situation to TEA within seven days. A settlement with a departing employee does not alter the superintendent’s responsibility to report the information. A superintendent who fails to report the required information within the statutorily-required seven days faces possible sanctions including reprimand, suspension or revocation of the superintendent’s certificate.

The Texas Educators’ Code of Ethics provides rules for standard practices and ethical conduct toward

students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community. The Code specifically calls on teachers to refrain from inappropriately communicating with students through the use of social media. Over recent years, electronic communication, such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication, has provided a private method to contact students during and after school hours.

Parents play an essential role in helping to monitor any communication via social media directly to their child. While group communication (such as to an entire class regarding homework, changes in practice times to all athletic team members) can serve a valid purpose, direct emails, texts or instant messaging to students should be discouraged at both the school and parental level. Many local school districts have adopted social media policies to clearly define appropriate uses of modern communication technology.

TEA has produced a series of training videos regarding the ethical behavior of all personnel on school campuses. The training videos are available for district use. The TEA website also has an area dedicated to TEA’s and SBEC’s role and responsibilities in overseeing the conduct of Texas educators. In addition, anyone seeking to review a superintendent’s responsibilities in reporting inappropriate relationships can view them at txssc.txstate.edu/.



TEA

2013 NAEP math scores strong for Texas 4th & 8th graders

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams noted that 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results released Nov. 7 showed the average mathematics scores for 8th graders and 4th graders in Texas public schools were higher than the national average.

According to results from NAEP's 2013 The Nation's Report Card, almost all 4th and 8th grade student groups in Texas – including White, Hispanic, African-American, Asian/Pacific Island, and English Language Learners (ELL) students – outperformed their national counterparts in mathematics.

"Mathematics is a critical core subject for every student in our public education system," said Commissioner Williams. "Strong performance in mathematics of our students at the elementary and middle school level establishes a foundation for future success in high school and beyond."

For Texas 8th grade students, the NAEP mathematics score (288) was higher than the national public score (284). The Texas score was higher than those in 28 states or jurisdictions, including California, Florida, New York and Illinois.

For Texas 4th grade students, the NAEP mathematics score (242) was higher than the national public score (241). The Texas score was higher than those in 12 states or jurisdictions, including California, and Michigan.



Mathematics highlights for Texas 8th graders include:

- The score of 273 for African-American in Texas students was higher than the national score of 263 in that peer group and ranked 4th nationally.
- The score of 281 for Hispanic students in Texas was higher than the national score of 271 in that peer group and ranked 4th nationally.

- The score of 300 for white students in Texas was higher than the national score of 293 in that peer group and ranked 5th nationally.
- The score of 319 for Asian/Pacific Island students in Texas was higher than the national score of 306 in that peer group.
- The score of 260 for Texas English Language Learners (ELL) was higher than the national score of 245 in that peer group.
- The score of 288 for all Texas students ranked 16th nationally in 2013, but represents a decrease from the state's 2011 score of 290.

Mathematics highlights for Texas 4th graders include:

- The score of 231 for African-American students in Texas was higher than the national score of 224 in that peer group and ranked 5th nationally.
- The score of 255 for white students in Texas was higher than the national score of 250 in that peer group and ranked 6th nationally.
- The score of 235 for Hispanic students in Texas was higher than the national score of 230 in that peer group and ranked 14th nationally.
- The score of 272 for Asian/Pacific Island students in Texas was higher than the national score of 258 in that peer group.
- The score of 229 for English Language Learners (ELL) in Texas was higher than the national score of 219 in that peer group.
- The score of 242 for all Texas students ranked 27th nationally in 2013 and represents an increase from the state's 2011 score of 241.

According to NAEP's 2013 The Nation's Report Card, the score of 264 in reading for Texas 8th graders marked an increase from 2009 (260) and 2011 (261), but was below the national average

♦ See **Highlights**, page 12



Highlights *continued*

of 266. The Texas 8th grade score ranked 38th nationally. For Texas 4th graders, the average score in reading of 217 was below the national score of 221 and ranked 41st nationally.

“As a state, improving student performance in reading and writing across all grades must be a primary focus,” said Commissioner Williams. “Providing these essential skills prepares every young Texan for ultimate success in the classroom and in life. We must do a better job.”

Various Texas student groups again outperformed their national counterparts in reading. Highlights for Texas include:

For 4th grade reading, the score of 209 for African-American students in Texas was higher than the national score of 205 in that peer group and ranked 14th nationally.

For 4th grade reading, the score of 233 for white students in Texas was higher than the national score of 231 in that peer group and ranked 12th nationally.

For 4th grade reading, the score of 252 for Asian/Pacific Island students in Texas was higher than the national score of 235.

For 4th grade reading, the score of 194 for English Language Learners (ELL) in Texas was higher than the national score of 187.

For 8th grade reading, the score of 279 for white students in Texas was higher than the national score of 275 in that peer group and ranked 9th nationally.

For 8th grade reading, the score of 253 for African-American students in Texas was higher than the national score of 250 in that peer group and ranked 14th nationally.

For 8th grade reading, the score of 255 for Hispanic students in Texas equaled the national score in that peer group and ranked 29th nationally.

For 8th grade reading, the score of 285 for Asian/Pacific Island students in Texas was higher than the national score of 279 in that peer group.

NAEP is a congressionally mandated project administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, located within the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. It is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subjects. Since 1969, NAEP has provided a common measure of student achievement across the country.

Complete 2013 results of The Nation’s Report Card, including snapshot reports for each state in mathematics and reading, are available at nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.

Texas Peer Group Performance Highlights

	Peer Group	Texas Score	National Score	National Rank
4th Grade Reading	African-American	209	205	14th
	Asian/Pacific Island	252	235	
	White	233	231	12th
	English Language Learners (ELL)	194	187	
8th Grade Reading	African-American	253	250	14th
	Asian/Pacific Island	285	279	
	Hispanic	255	255	29th
	White	279	275	



TEA

NCLB amendment sought on 8th grade Algebra I testing

The State of Texas is seeking to amend its conditional waiver of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provisions. If granted, the requested amendment would specifically address the issue of multiple assessments for Texas students taking Algebra I at the middle school level.

Current federal accountability requirements call for students to have a mathematics score every year in grades 3–8, as well as a mathematics score in high school. The federal government requires states that offer only one mathematics assessment at the high school level, which can also be taken by middle school students, to ensure there is a separate mathematics result that can be attributed to a high school.

Based on this federal requirement coupled with the passage of House Bill 5, which establishes the Algebra I end-of-course (EOC) as the sole high school level mathematics assessment, school districts with students taking Algebra I in middle school now face the choice of administering multiple assessments to those students or facing potential federal accountability consequences.

“The prospect of double-testing middle school students enrolled in Algebra I is fundamentally unfair to students and schools,” said Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. “I know we can reach a workable solution to this issue, one that continues to encourage the motivated academic achievement of our students in Texas middle schools.”

In a Nov. 6 letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Commissioner Williams asked that Texas be allowed to use the Algebra I EOC test as the single subject area assessment in middle

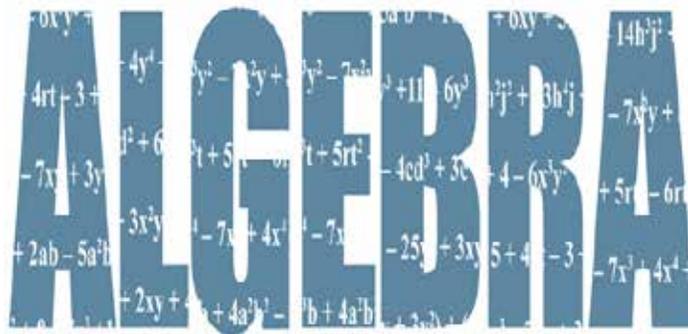
school. A waiver amendment is necessary to accommodate the lack of high school mathematics assessment results for middle school students who have appropriately completed their high school graduation requirements in mathematics prior to entering high school.

Without federal approval, Texas middle school students (primarily those in the 8th grade) taking Algebra I will have to take a grade-level assessment to meet federal requirements as well as the state’s Algebra I EOC to meet high school graduation requirements. Such double testing would begin this school year.

In his letter, Commissioner Williams expressed potential unintended consequences related to double testing. Those concerns included impeding academic progress of students who might be discouraged from taking Algebra I in middle school and attributing test scores to schools that had no control over student instruction.

The request is for an amendment to the State’s conditional waiver from the federal government for specific provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. That conditional waiver was granted by the U.S. Department of Education in September.

There is no anticipated time frame for a response from the federal government on the state’s request. The NCLB waiver previously granted to Texas and Commissioner Williams’ letter to Secretary Duncan requesting an amendment are available for viewing on the Texas Education Agency website.



In Other Action

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met Nov. 19 – 22, 2013. 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/

Student Performance

Members of the Village Tech Schools Character Chorus from Cedar Hill, Texas performed at the SBOE meeting in November 2013.

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

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