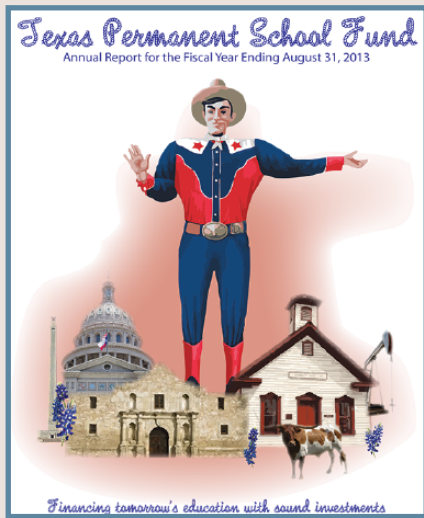


Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



PSF becomes nation's largest educational endowment

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams and Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson announced Sept. 30 that the Permanent School Fund (PSF) has reached a record high value in 2014, making it the largest educational endowment in the country.

Created by the state in 1854 with an initial \$2 million investment, the endowment has now grown to

approximately \$37.7 billion in market value as of June 30, 2014. Of that total, approximately \$30.6 billion is managed by the State Board of Education and \$7.1 billion by the School Land Board. Day-to-day oversight of the Fund is handled by staff at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the General Land Office.

♦ See **Endowment**, page 2

ACT participation hits new high

A record number of Texas public school students took the ACT according to a new report. [complete story on page 3]

15 Texans honored

The State Board of Education honored 15 Texans with the Heroes for Children award at the September meeting.

The Heroes for Children honorees were selected by the State Board members and recognized for volunteering their time, talents and skills to help improve the public schools in their communities. [complete story on page 5]

STAAR performance standards maintained

The Texas Education Agency will maintain initial academic performance standards (Phase-In 1) for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program for the 2014–2015 school year. [complete story on page 7]

3-year graduation plan model

Officials from one Texas school district presented its plans for an innovative pilot program to the State Board of Education (SBOE) at its September meeting. [complete story on page 12]

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Texas Education Today

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Endowment *continued*

"Through effective management by the State Board of Education, General Land Office and TEA, the Permanent School Fund continues to grow," said Commissioner Williams. "The true beneficiaries of these sound investments are the schoolchildren across our state."

Advancements in hydraulic fracturing technology, Patterson said, are also earning the schoolchildren of Texas hundreds of million dollars a year.

"The Texas oil and gas boom isn't just fueling the nation toward energy independence, it is earning hundreds of millions of dollars a year for public education," Patterson said. "For the first time ever, Permanent School Fund lands and investments managed by the School Land Board resulted in deposits of more than \$1.2 billion into the PSF during 2014."

A distribution from the Permanent School Fund is made every year to help purchase instructional materials and pay a portion of education costs in each school district. Since 1960, the PSF has distributed more than \$23 billion to the schools. During the 2014-15 biennium, the PSF is distributing about \$1.7 billion to the schools and anticipates distributing more than \$2 billion during the next biennium.

"The State Board of Education exercises its constitutional authority as fiduciaries of the Permanent School Fund with careful deliberation and planning," said SBOE Chair Barbara Cargill.

"It is extremely gratifying to see such excellent results of our hard work as we strive to ensure that current and future generations of Texas schoolchildren will benefit from the fund." The SBOE oversees investments in asset classes such as stocks and bonds.

"Compliments to the outstanding work of both the Permanent School Fund staff and the GLO for maintaining sound and prudent strategies designed to protect and grow the fund throughout market cycles, and resulting in such a healthy increase of the endowment that benefits all Texans," said Patricia "Pat" Hardy, chair of the State Board of Education's School Finance/ Permanent School Fund Committee.

Along with providing direct support to Texas schools, the PSF provides a guarantee for bonds issued by local school

districts and charter schools. The Permanent School Fund guarantee gives districts the equivalent of a AAA credit rating, the highest available. As a result, qualified districts are able to pay lower interest rates when issuing bonds, saving taxpayers billions of dollars. At the end of 2013, the PSF's assets guaranteed \$55.2 billion in school district bonds, providing a cost savings to 810 public school districts.

The Permanent School Fund's \$37.7 billion value as of June 30, 2014, surpasses that of the Harvard University endowment which stood at \$36.4 billion at the same time.



To learn more about the Permanent School Fund, visit the TEA website at www.tea.state.tx.us/psf.



To learn more about the Texas General Land Office's management of its portion of the Permanent School Fund, visit the GLO website at www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/state-lands/permanent-school-fund/index.html.



TEA

Number of Texas students taking ACT hits new high

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams has announced that the number of Texas students in the 2014 graduating class taking the ACT college admission test hit a new high.

According to a report released on Aug. 20 by ACT, 116,547 Texas students took the ACT (up by more than 6,700 students from 2013). In addition, 45,717 Hispanic students took the ACT in 2014. The 2014 Texas Hispanic student participation rate (39 percent) is more than double the nationally ACT-tested population (15 percent).

"ACT participation numbers reveal a commitment by school districts across Texas to position students for success beyond high school," said Commissioner Williams. "The growing number of Texas students with aspirations of earning a postsecondary degree bodes extremely well for the future of our state."

ACT tests are administered for a number of subject areas including English, math, reading, science and writing (optional). Texas scores increased in two of those areas (excluding the optional writing test) in 2014:

English 19.8 (compared to 19.8 in 2013)

Math 21.4 (compared to 21.5 in 2013)

Reading 21.1 (compared to 21.0 in 2013)

Science 21.0 (compared to 20.9 in 2013)

Composite 20.9 (compared to 20.9 in 2013)

The 2014 ACT composite scores for Texas students continued to surpass the national average in mathematics and science.

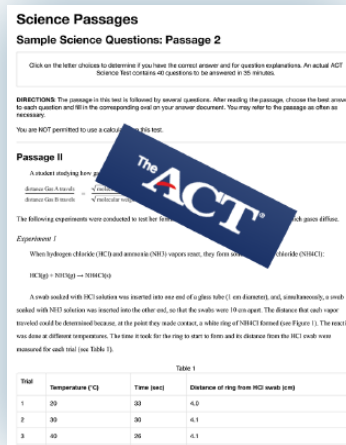
2014 ACT Texas Composite Scores		
Subject	Texas	National
Mathematics	21.4	20.9
Science	21.0	20.8
Reading	21.1	21.3
English	19.8	20.3
Composite	20.9	21.0

Additional highlights of the Texas ACT results for the Class of 2014 include:

- The 2014 composite score for white students in Texas is at an all-time high of 23.4, which is 1.1 points higher than their national counterparts (22.3).
- The 2014 composite score for African-American students in Texas is at an all-time high of 17.7, which is .7 points higher than their national counterparts (17.0).
- The 2014 composite score for Hispanic/Latino students in Texas of 18.8 is equal to their national counterparts.
- Eighty percent of the Texas graduating Class of 2014 elected to take the writing test compared to 53 percent nationally. The average essay score for Texas students was 6.6 (compared to the national average of 7.1).
- Twenty percent of students (23,279) plan on careers in health sciences and technologies, while business and engineering careers are tied for second at 11 percent. Fourteen percent were undecided.
- From 2010 to 2014, the number of ACT test-taking graduates in Texas has increased by 25.8 percent.

The top 10 Texas universities (in descending order) receiving scores from Texas ACT test-takers were: Texas A&M University; University of Texas at Austin; Texas Tech University; Texas State University; Baylor University; University of Texas at San Antonio; University of North Texas; University of Texas – Pan American; University of Houston; and Sam Houston State University.

The entire ACT report – complete with national and state-by-state results – can be viewed at www.act.org/readiness/2014.



TEA

2013-2014 financial accountability ratings released

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) released financial accountability ratings on Sept. 5 for more than 1,200 school districts and charters across the state. The 2013-2014 ratings are based on annual financial reports provided to TEA by districts and charters from the 2012-2013 school year.

Created by the 77th Texas Legislature in 2001, the financial accountability rating system – known as the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) – is designed to encourage public schools to better manage their financial resources in order to provide the maximum allocation possible for direct instructional purposes.

The financial accountability system requires TEA to review the audited financial reports from all districts and charters. Based on the submitted information, one of four financial management ratings is assigned: Superior, Above Standard,

Standard or Substandard. A designation of Suspended Data Quality or Undetermined can also be assigned when a district or charter fails to submit its annual financial report by the submission deadline and/or no financial data is available for review.

The FIRST ratings are based on 20 established financial indicators, such as operating expenditures for instruction, tax collection rates, student-teacher ratios, and long-term debt. For 2013-2014, approximately 95 percent of Texas school districts passed with a FIRST rating of Standard or above.

All school districts and charters are required to report information and financial accountability ratings to parents and taxpayers. In addition, school districts and charters must hold a public discussion or hearing regarding its financial report.

School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST)				
2013-2014 RATING	DISTRICTS	PERCENT	CHARTERS	PERCENT
Superior	912	88.98%	76	37.13%
Above Standard	83	8.10%	53	26.24%
Standard	16	1.56%	31	15.35%
Substandard	12	1.17%	40	20.30%
Suspended Data Quality	2	0.20%	2	0.99%
TOTAL	1025	100.0%	202	100.0%



To review FIRST ratings for all districts and charters (plus FIRST ratings from previous years), visit tuna.tea.state.tx.us/first/forms/main.aspx.

TEA

2012-13 Pocket Edition online

Published annually since 1991, the Pocket Edition is a compilation of a variety of state-level school statistics. The topics include data on Texas student makeup, test performance, graduation rates, attendance, graduation completion and dropout rates, accountability ratings, and others.

Download a copy at:

www.tea.state.tx.us/communications/pocket-edition/.

POCKET EDITION
2012-13 Texas Public School Statistics



Texas Education Agency
Michael Williams
Commissioner of Education

The Texas public school system consists of:

- 1,228 school districts and charters
- 8,555 campuses
- 327,420 teachers
- 5.06 million students

The Texas student makeup is:

- 51.3% Hispanic
- 30.0% White
- 12.7% African American
- 3.6% Asian
- 1.8% Two/More Races
- 0.4% American Indian
- 0.1% Pacific Islander
- 60.4% Economically Disadvantaged
- 17.1% Limited English Proficient



SBOE

State Board of Education honors 2014 Heroes for Children



The 2014 Heroes for Children are: front row, left to right: Lois White, Austin ISD; Relda Beall, Anna ISD; Lorena A. Cuellar, Weslaco ISD; Guessippini Bonner, Lufkin ISD; Nicole Frieder, Coppell ISD, and Eugene Jones, Houston ISD. Back row, left to right, Herbert Gordon, Humble ISD; Carol Scott, Fort Bend ISD; Gustavo Perez, Leander ISD; Karri Parlevliet, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD; Shauna Ramos, Burleson ISD; Dave Gannon, Northside ISD (San Antonio); Michael W. Johnston, Fort Worth ISD; Dyron Howell, Amarillo ISD; and Javier Hernandez, Ector County ISD.



The State Board of Education (SBOE) honored 15 Texans with the Heroes for Children award at the September SBOE meeting.

The Heroes for Children honorees were selected by the State Board members and recognized for volunteering their time, talents and skills to help improve the public schools in their communities. Each hero received a certificate of honor, a copy of the board approved resolution, and photographs commemorating the ceremony. Each hero also has his or her name engraved on a plaque that is permanently displayed at the Texas Education Agency.

The 2014 Heroes for Children are:

SBOE District 1

Javier Hernandez

Hernandez volunteered more than 400 hours during the 2013-14 school year as a bilingual math tutor for students at Hays Elementary, San Jacinto Elementary and new Tech Odessa schools.

SBOE District 2

Lorena A. Cuellar

A volunteer for 17 years, Cuellar works with the families of students with learning disabilities, the WISE Business Partnership Committee, the WISD Dyslexia Program and the WISD Student Health Advisory Council.

♦ See **HEROES**, page 6



HEROES *continued*

SBOE District 3

Dave Gannon

Gannon, a volunteer with the Northside ISD Education Foundation, has been a mentor and tireless advocate for thousands of students and teachers in Bexar County.

SBOE District 4

Eugene Jones

A volunteer at Jones High School, Jones assists with lunchroom monitoring, mentoring, counseling, and even works with the custodial staff to ensure the school lunchroom is spotless for the students.

SBOE District 5

Lois White

White works with students at the LBJ Early College High School teaching them the importance of manners, deportment, respect and every day courtesies to use in school and business settings, hoping to prepare them for post-high school life.



SBOE District 6

Karri Parlevliet

Parlevliet tutors and mentors several students in various grades at Keith Elementary School. She has organized science-based demonstrations for the students, serves on the board of the Parent-Teacher Organization and coordinates a Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast.

SBOE District 7

Carol Scott

Scott has served in many different capacities in the 10-plus years she has volunteered in the Fort Bend district. She has been a homeroom mom, PTO board member, reading tutor, and currently serves as the co-coordinator for the Youth Expanding Services (YES) program that encourages high school students to volunteer.

SBOE District 8

Herbert Gordon

Gordon has been a volunteer in the Humble district for 30 years. His contributions include something as simple as working the sign-in table at an event to service on the district-level committees that help shape the future of the Humble ISD and the students.

SBOE District 9

Guessippini Bonner

Bonner has worked tirelessly to help the families of students of North Lufkin who are most at-risk. She is often called upon when the district has a child in need of some clothing, food, encouragement and direction. She is also the creator of Sarah's Hope, an organization that reaches out to young people as a way to enhance achievement through the fine arts.

SBOE District 10

Gustavo Perez

Perez is an active member of the Whitestone Elementary School Dual Language Parent Advisory Committee that helps the district plan and problem solve with the goal of increasing attendance at Dual Language family nights and with parent participation at the campus level. He also works extensively with the Tejas Lee Program every week.

SBOE District 11

Nicole Frieder

Frieder has been a significant part of the Coppell district's School Health Advisory Council along with working tirelessly on the Cottonwood Creek Elementary School Library Committee, the school's hospitality committee and coaching the campus Destination Imagination team.

SBOE District 12

Relda Beall

Anna district's Early Childhood Center has been the recipient of Beall's expertise and commitment to volunteering. Each week Beall brings a moving van full of books to the school and using her literary specialist's skills helps students learn to read, to comprehend and to write.

SBOE District 13

Michael W. Johnston

Johnston, a volunteer at Terrell Elementary and Paschal High schools, is described as a passionate supporter of quality public school education who is active on the parent-teacher organizations, the site-based management teams and is responsible for implementing a reading/mentor program.

♦ See **HEROES, District 14** page 7



TEA

STAAR performance standards maintained for 2014-15

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams notified districts and charters on Aug. 21 that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will maintain initial academic performance standards (Phase-In 1) for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program for the 2014–2015 school year.

The Commissioner cited a variety of changes impacting the STAAR program over the course of the upcoming school year. Those changes include:

- Implementation of the new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) mathematics curriculum;
- Elimination of STAAR Modified;
- First administration of STAAR Accommodated; and
- First administration of the redesigned STAAR Alternate.

In addition to maintaining current performance standards for 2014-2015, TEA will be proposing changes to the existing plan to phase in performance standards for the STAAR grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessment programs. The existing plan will be adjusted from two steps to three steps to allow for smaller, incremental movements toward final performance standards.

“While I firmly believe that our students are capable of reaching the high expectations reflected in the TEKS and the STAAR performance standards, moving to a three-step phase-in plan gives educators additional time to make the significant adjustments in instruction necessary to raise the

level of performance of all Texas students,” said Commissioner Williams.

Academic performance standards represent the level of performance students must meet or exceed to pass a STAAR assessment. New performance standards will be established for the second phase-in and the newly established third phase-in prior to moving to the final recommended performance standards. The proposed three-step phase-in plan would include:

- The current phase-in 1 performance standards will be maintained for the 2014–2015 school year.
- The new phase-in 2 performance standards will be implemented beginning in the 2015–2016 school year.
- The new phase-in 3 performance standards will be implemented beginning in the 2018–2019 school year.
- The final recommended performance standards will be implemented in the 2021–2022 school year.

Current policy regarding STAAR EOC performance standards for each student will remain unchanged. The standard in place when a student first takes an EOC assessment is the standard that will be maintained throughout the student’s school career.

To learn more about STAAR academic performance standards, visit the Texas Education Agency website at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/performance-standards/.



HEROES, District 14 *continued*

SBOE District 14

Shauna Ramos

Ramos volunteered more than 350 hours last year at The Academy at Nola Dunn in the Burleson district. She has worked with a variety of projects including tutoring and mentoring at-risk students, working in the school library, providing artwork for class projects and working on the school’s yearbook.

SBOE District 15

Dyron Howell

Howell is responsible for implementing the Snack Pak 4Kids programs in the Amarillo ISD. Each Thursday, a group of volunteers overseen by Howell, packs up and provides a backpack full of nutritious, healthy snacks for students to take home over the weekend so they won’t go hungry.



TEA

Student Success Initiative for grades 5 and 8 STAAR mathematics requirement suspended for 2014–2015

School districts and charters have been advised by Commissioner of Education Michael Williams that due to the transition to revised statewide curriculum standards in mathematics, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) assessments for grades 5 and 8 mathematics will be administered only once in the 2014–2015 school year.

As a result, the Student Success Initiative (SSI) requirement that students in grades 5 and 8 must pass the STAAR mathematics assessment in order to move onto the next grade level will be suspended for the coming school year.

"There are substantial challenges associated with implementation of the revised mathematics statewide curriculum standards in the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments," said Commissioner Williams in his May 1 letter to superintendents. "For the 2014–2015 school year, districts will use other relevant academic information to make promotion or retention decisions for mathematics."

Commissioner Williams noted this suspension of the 5th and 8th grade mathematics requirement

applies only for the 2014–2015 school year. State law requiring students in grades 5 and 8 to pass the STAAR reading exam in order to proceed to the next grade level will still be in effect.

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the statewide curriculum standards, are reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the State Board of Education. As TEKS revisions are made, changes are subsequently made to the assessment program to maintain a strong, direct, and effective link between the TEKS and statewide assessments.

Revised TEKS in mathematics were adopted by the State Board in April 2012. The revised TEKS for kindergarten through grade 8 will be implemented in classrooms and in the grades 3–8 assessment program in the 2014–2015 school year.

Because performance standards for STAAR grades 3–8 mathematics will not be set until after the spring 2015 administration, retest opportunities for STAAR grades 5 and 8 mathematics will not be offered in May and June of 2015. This is similar to the approach used in spring 2012 for the first administration of STAAR.



To learn more about STAAR mathematics, please visit the Texas Education Agency's STAAR Mathematics Resources webpage at: www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/math/.

SBOE

SBOE determines PSF distribution rate for biennium

During its September meeting, the State Board of Education set the percentage distribution rate to the Available School Fund from the Permanent School Fund at 3.5 percent for the 2016–2017 biennium.

This action was the second step of the process. The board previously approved a distribution range of 2.75 to 3.5 percent at its July meeting.

The board is expected to vote a final time on the issue at its November meeting.

The Texas Constitution requires the distribution rate be determined by a two-thirds vote of the State Board of Education before the regular session of the legislature convenes. If the board does not adopt a rate, then the legislature will adopt a rate by general law or appropriation.

The distribution is projected to be \$1.05 billion per year during fiscal years 2016–2017. This funding is used to pay for instructional materials and general education expenses for Texas' public school students.



TEA

Five Generation 19 charter applicants complete process

The State Board of Education in September agreed with the Commissioner of Education's recommendations to approve five Generation 19 charter schools.

The new charters will begin operation in Texas for the 2015-2016 school year.

Originally granted approval in August by Commissioner of Education Michael Williams, the five include:

- Beta Academy (Houston)
- High Point Academy (Fort Worth)
- Ki Charter Academy (San Marcos)
- The Excel Center (Austin)
- Trinity Environmental Academy (Dallas)

High Point Academy will open with three campuses and the other charters plan to open with one campus each.

All of the charters except for The Excel Center will begin the first year serving only selected grades, eventually growing to serve grades K-12 in total. The Excel Center will serve only grades 9-12.

Under Senate Bill 2 passed in 2013 by 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. The board concurred with the Commissioner's decision this year.

In other charter related actions, the board approved revisions aligning requirements of SB 2 to the Texas Administrative Code rules on charter schools.



To learn more about open-enrollment charter schools in Texas and the application process, visit the TEA website at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769814742.

TEA

Stay in Touch

Get the latest news from the Texas Education Agency by subscribing to a listserv or following the agency on social media.

Important letters from the agency are delivered via the "To the Administrator Addressed" correspondence listserv. This subscription list is open to all, but every superintendent should be subscribed.

To join this listserv, go to the TEA webpage at www.tea.state.tx.us and click on the button called "Sign Up for Email Updates," found on the right side of the homepage.

After typing your preferred email address, click on the submit button. You will then have about 50 different topical listservs from which to choose. You may subscribe to multiple lists at one time.

More than 33,000 people stay in touch with the agency with its official Twitter account at twitter.com/teainfo. Facebook and RSS feeds are available at bit.ly/1msVYYD.

The screenshot shows the TEA website's 'Email Updates' section. On the left, there is a form titled 'Email Updates' with fields for 'Subscription Type' (with a dropdown menu), 'Email Address', and 'Submit' and 'Cancel' buttons. Below the form, a small note states: 'Your contact information is used to deliver requested updates or to access your online resources. Privacy Policy - 10/03'. On the right, there is a list of subscription topics under the heading 'Subscription Topics'. The topics include: 'About TEA', 'Laws & Rules', 'SBOE Rules', 'News & Multimedia', 'Press Releases', 'To the Administrator Addressed', 'Texas Education Today Newsletter List', 'TSDS Newsletter', 'Curriculum & Instruction', 'Career and Technical Education', 'English Language Arts-Reading', 'Social Studies', 'Science List', 'Fine Arts', 'Texas Library Initiative', 'Mathematics', 'Technology Applications', 'Health and Physical Education', 'Languages Other Than English', and 'AVID'. Each topic has a checkbox next to it.



TEA

Metropolitan school district consolidation study released

The Texas Education Agency on Sept. 3 released a study regarding the impact of potential school district consolidation in the state's five largest counties: Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Tarrant and Travis. The analysis reveals creation of such mega-districts would increase costs and would not improve student performance as a result of consolidation.

The study, "Anticipating the Consequences of School District Consolidation in Major Metropolitan Areas," was mandated by the 83rd Texas Legislature as part of Senate Bill 2. The legislation required the Texas Education Agency to provide "an analysis of whether the performance of matched traditional campuses would likely improve if there were consolidation of school districts within the county in which campuses are located." This analysis would only apply to a county that has at least seven school districts and at least ten open-enrollment charter schools.

Researchers determined that consolidation of all the school districts in these five counties would create new districts of enormous size by both state and national standards.

- With an enrollment of just over 803,000 students, the consolidated Harris County Independent School District (ISD) would become the second largest district in the country (behind only New York City Schools).
- The consolidated Dallas ISD (with an enrollment 437,642) would be the fourth largest school district in the country – ahead of the Chicago Public School system, but smaller than Los Angeles Unified School district.
- The consolidated Tarrant County ISD (with an enrollment of 341,855) would become the seventh largest school district in the country.
- The consolidated Bexar County ISD (with an enrollment of 321,072) would become the eighth largest school district in the country.

- The consolidated Travis County ISD (with an enrollment of 145,846) would be among the 20 largest districts nationwide.

The study notes that consolidation is usually expected to reduce the cost of education because research has demonstrated the per-pupil cost of operating a very small school district is much higher than the per-pupil cost of operating a larger district. However, following a cost function analysis, three key findings were revealed:

- Cost savings can be expected for consolidations involving small districts, but as the size of the consolidated district increases past 3,200 students, costs are expected to rise, not fall.
- Competitive pressure leads to greater school district efficiency in Texas, so any consolidation is expected to lead to a loss of school district efficiency.
- There is no expected cost savings from any of the targeted consolidations under analysis. Consolidation in the designated counties increases the predicted expenditure per pupil by 6.5 percent in Bexar County; 6.1 percent in Tarrant County; 4.9 percent in Dallas County; 4.1 percent in Harris County; and 2.8 percent in Travis County.

Researchers noted that given the lack of cost savings under the simulation, it is highly unlikely that student performance would improve if there were consolidation in these designated counties.

"Anticipating the Consequences of School District Consolidation in Major Metropolitan Areas" was prepared for the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center by researchers from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, the Texas A&M University Department of Economics and the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University.



To read the entire report, please visit the Texas Education Agency's webpage at: www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769815533.



SBOE

SBOE rejects changes to ed prep admissions standards

The State Board of Education voted in September to reject proposed policy changes for educator preparatory programs which included maintaining a minimum grade point average (GPA) requirement for entrance to preparation programs as recommend by the State Board for Educator Certification.

The SBOE, which is required to review SBEC rules, voted 12-3 to reject the rule, which attempted to update standards for educator preparation programs (EPP) due to changes made by House Bill 2012 in 2013. The issue that drew the most attention dealt with maintaining the current requirement that candidates must have a 2.5 minimum GPA to be admitted to a program.

The rule now returns to the SBEC for possible future consideration and maintains the GPA entrance requirement to stay at current 2.5 unless the SBEC takes future action.

The SBOE, under Texas law, may only veto proposed SBEC rules or take no action, which effectively endorses the SBEC proposal.

The certification board voted at an Aug. 1 meeting to keep the minimum requirement of a 2.5 GPA for EPP candidates, after first increasing it to a 2.75 at the previous meeting. At the Aug. 1 meeting the SBEC heard from numerous stakeholders requesting the GPA 2.5 minimum, stating that it was the EPP program quality and not a person's GPA that determined teacher quality. The SBEC requested that TEA staff provide more information on GPA-related data and research at an upcoming SBEC meeting to determine the effects raising the GPA would have on teacher candidates certified in shortage areas, minority teacher candidates, and teacher candidates certified in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

However some members of the SBOE said House Bill (HB) 2012, passed in the 2013 Legislative session indicated the minimum should be set at 2.75.

SBOE member Donna Bahorich, District 6, noted that the bill's sponsors in both the house and

the senate sent messages to the SBOE members stating the "legislative intent" of the bill was to raise the minimum GPA requirement to 2.75.

"The SBEC did not have this information when they took the vote," she told other members.

Von Byer, TEA general counsel, advised the SBOE that the final version of HB 2012, which came out of conference committee, could actually be interpreted either way. Byer said that in his interpretation, the bill could indicate that the 2.75 GPA was either the ceiling or the floor for EPP entrance.

Board member Marty Rowley, SBOE District 15, said it was difficult to decide based on the ambiguity of the legislation. But with rejection, Rowley said, the certification board would have to revisit the rule and possibly request an opinion by the Attorney General or the legislature could take further action in the coming session.

SBOE Chair Barbara Cargill, District 8, summed it by saying, "We clearly have legislative intent. We have major issues in education in Texas and we know we are working diligently to fix them.

"But, we are imposing all of this, like accountability, on our teachers on the back end. Where we need to focus is on the front end. We need to catch them early, just like we do our kids," Cargill stated.

The board also directed TEA staff to provide the SBEC board with the messages from the legislators along with any current data on the effects of raising the GPA on EPP candidates.

In the end, the SBOE rejection means for now the minimum GPA requirement for entrance to a an EPP will remain at 2.5 as stated in current rule. The impetus now lies with the SBEC whether to revisit the rule and reconsider raising the minimum.

In other items related to teacher certification rules, the SBOE took no action on several other SBEC related items including:

♦ See **Certification rules** page 12



SBOE

Dallas ISD models new, innovative three-year graduation program, Pre-K funding plan for SBOE

Officials from one Texas school district presented its plans for an innovative pilot program to the State Board of Education (SBOE) at its September meeting.

House Bill 1122, passed during the 83rd Texas Legislature in 2013, permits the Dallas Independent School District to implement a pilot program that allows students to earn a high school diploma in three years. Then, in every school year after students complete the three-year plan, the commissioner of education must provide the district funding for a full-day prekindergarten program for a number of students equal to twice the number of graduates under the pilot program in the preceding year.

TEA Commissioner Michael Williams approved the scope of the plan and its curriculum requirements over the summer, contingent on SBOE support. The legislation required SBOE comment, but not approval. There were no objections to the proposal.

Dallas ISD students who graduate under the new three-year plan still select one of five endorsements required under the new foundation high school graduation program implemented by House Bill 5 (STEM, business and industry, public services,

arts and humanities, and multidisciplinary studies) and must graduate with the distinguished level of achievement.

In order to complete the 26 credits needed to graduate, students on the three-year plan must be able to take high school courses in middle school and advanced courses during the summers after their freshman and sophomore years. Dallas ISD is encouraging students to enroll in pre-AP Math and Spanish I in seventh grade and Algebra I and Spanish II in the eighth grade to be on track for the accelerated plan.

The law requires all students who graduate under the plan to be capable of performing successfully in public junior college-level courses.

Dallas ISD has not predicted how many students would take advantage of such a plan, but officials told the SBOE that counselors will begin explaining the program to eighth graders next spring. All students will be offered the option to graduate in three years, but fewer than 30 DISD students graduated early last year.

TEA staff told the SBOE the legislature might consider rolling this program out in additional districts if it proves successful in Dallas.

Certification rules *continued*

- Amendments to the requirements for educator preparation programs under Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 228 to sections on the approval process for EPPs, the educator preparation curriculum, EPP coursework and training. The amendments further update the rules to reflect current law.
- Amendments to TAC Chapter 229 concerning the Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs. The amendments update definitions, modify the standards used for enforcing the reporting of data, clarify the standards used for accountability, adjust the small group exception requirements, and establish a new process for challenging sanctions imposed on programs that fail the accountability system.
- An amendment to Chapter 249 of the TAC regarding Enforcement Actions and Guidelines. The amendment clarifies that under the SBEC decision-making guidelines, actions that constitute “engaged in” and “solicitation” are distinct grounds for permanent revocation or denial of certification. The amendment also clarifies that fact findings from final orders from other state jurisdictions may also provide the basis for initiating disciplinary proceedings in Texas.

The board also took no action on updates to the rules concerning a request for the adoption of a certification rule or rule change. The petition that is required to be submitted when requesting the change was updated to reflect the name of the office where the form should be mailed.



TEA

Legislative appropriations request submitted to lawmakers

The TEA has submitted its Legislative Appropriations Request, which includes the agency's administrative and program budget, to the Legislature for fiscal years 2016-2017.

TEA Chief Deputy Commissioner Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds and staff presented the request in a joint budget hearing with staff of the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor's office of Budget, Planning and Policy on Sept. 9.

For the 2016-2017 biennium, the agency submitted a base operating budget of nearly \$52.5 billion.

The agency cannot request increases to general revenue items. Instead, any requested increases made by state agencies are called "exceptional items."

The agency has submitted eight exceptional items to the Legislature for the 2016-2017 biennium totaling \$255 million.

Among the items is a \$64 million request to reinstate a literacy initiative to develop and implement reading and literacy academies for students in prekindergarten through grade 8. The academies would provide support for teaching reading and language development; training on the use of diagnostic instruments, integration of writing support, and a focus on building academic vocabulary; and reading and language acquisition support for English language learners.

The legislature once funded a similar program in the 1990s.

TEA is also requesting \$4 million to assist districts and charters as they rollout the Texas Teacher and Principal Evaluation System (T-TESS), which will replace the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) as the statewide instrument used to appraise teachers and administrators.

PDAS has been in place since 1997 and is currently used by 86 percent of Texas districts and charters. T-TESS will be piloted during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, and is expected to be fully operational during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Also, state Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, has instructed the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) to include TEA in a strategic fiscal review pilot program for the upcoming session. The review will focus on administrative functions, grants and programs, but will not include the Foundation School Program.

"Reviewing this agency's operations from the ground up will ensure we are making the best use of every dollar and prepare us for the school finance discussions ahead," said Nelson, a former State Board of Education member who was recently named chair of the Senate Finance Committee.

TEA is one of 12 state agencies that will be included in the strategic fiscal review pilot program.

Exceptional item requests submitted by TEA for consideration include:

- Literacy Initiative;
- Teacher and Principal Evaluation Support;
- Technology Modernization;
- Assessment Pilot and Accountability Workgroup;
- Office of Complaints, Investigations and Enforcements;
- Funding for New Instructional Facilities Allotment and Instructional Facilities Allotment;
- Full-Time Equivalent Capacity, and
- Staff Recruitment and Retention.



The entire legislative appropriations request, including one-page explanations about the eight exceptional items, may be reviewed at www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147488035.

SBOE

State Board scrutinizes AP U.S. History framework

Concerned that Texas students who take the College Board's Advanced Placement U.S. History course based on a revised framework might not receive instruction in all of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the State Board of Education in September gave preliminary approval to a rule change that explicitly requires that the TEKS be covered, as applicable, in all AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) social studies classes.

This proposed rule will soon be posted on the Texas Register and Texas Education Agency websites and a formal 30-day public comment period will begin. A final vote by the board will occur during its Nov. 19-21 meeting.

Board member Ken Mercer said the AP framework has grown from five pages to 98 pages with recent revisions. But he said there were 181 items included in the TEKS that were not included in the AP framework.

TEA staff said they believe most AP and IB social studies teachers teach the TEKS as part of the course but the proposed rule will formalize that requirement.

The board also approved on an 8-4 vote, with three members absent or abstaining, a resolution strongly encouraging the College Board to revise the Advanced Placement U.S. History framework, and urging it to revise key concepts in the framework so that it "accurately reflects U.S. history without an ideological bias and

that restores and encourages flexibility to state, school districts and teachers in how to teach the course."

Richard Middleton, regional vice president of the College Board, said his group will clarify the instructions in the U.S. History framework "to make it clear that content such as the Founding Documents, World

War II battles, the Holocaust and leaders of the Civil Rights movement are covered in the course."

He said the College Board has also "put in place a process for collecting feedback to ensure the new course meets college credit requirements and provides a balanced view of America's history." The College Board will also release additional sample questions and answers, and this summer will release the actual test.



The full resolution is posted at www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769817726&libID=25769817829.

SBOE

Student Performance



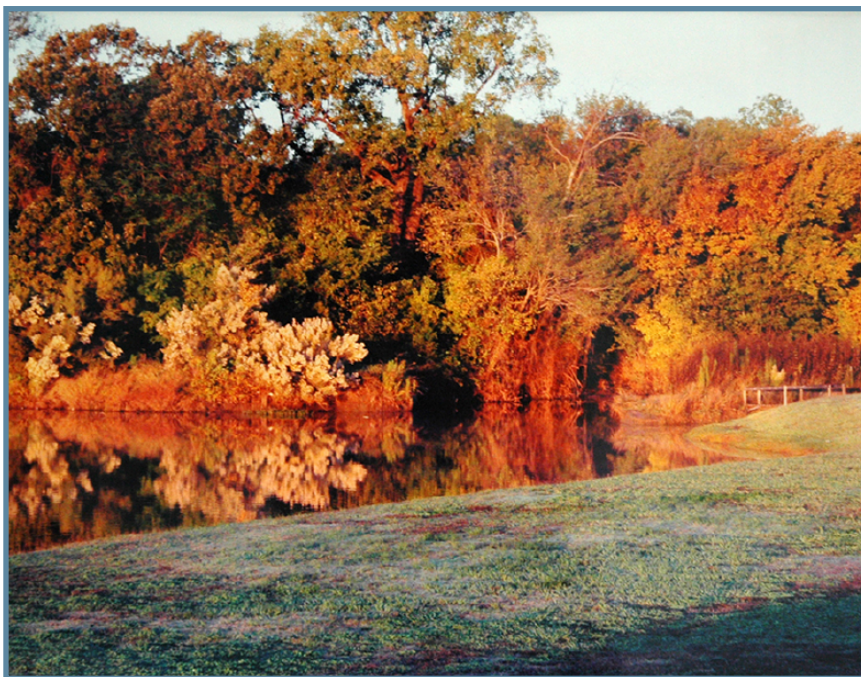
Fine arts students representing every school in the Victoria Independent School District performed for the State Board of Education and the audience at the September board meeting. Standing with the students at the conclusion of the performance are SBOE Chair Barbara Cargill and Ruben Cortez, Jr., SBOE District 2 representative, center, right.



SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met Sept. 16 – 19, 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/.

Fall back

Daylight savings time begins on Sunday Nov. 2, 2014. Remember to set clocks back one hour.

Life of Colors by Aurusa Kabani, Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD, from the 2007 Texas PTA Reflections TEA art exhibit.



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

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