

DATE:	October 31, 2019
SUBJECT:	Official Notification of the 2018–2019 Release of Final FIRST Ratings
CATEGORY:	Information Update
NEXT STEPS:	Required reporting

The state's school financial accountability rating system, known as the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST), ensures that Texas public schools are held accountable for the quality of their financial management practices and that they improve those practices. The system is designed to encourage Texas public schools to better manage their financial resources to provide the maximum allocation possible for direct instructional purposes.

Final 2018–2019 Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) ratings based on fiscal year 2018 are now publicly available on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website:

- [School districts](#)
- [Open-enrollment charter schools and charter schools operated by institutions of higher education \(IHE\)](#)

A previous “To the Administrator Addressed” letter (dated August 8, 2019) instructed your school district or charter school (local education agency or LEA) to view its *preliminary* FIRST rating. The letter also provided information about the data the TEA analyzes to produce the rating and described the appeal process available to your LEA. This appeals process is now complete, and the FIRST ratings are final.

Required Reporting

Within two months of the release of its final FIRST rating, your LEA must announce and hold a public meeting to distribute a financial management report that explains the LEA's rating and its performance under each indicator for the current and previous year's ratings. The report also must provide the financial information described in Title 19, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), [§109.1001\(q\)\(3\)](#). We encourage your LEA to include in the report additional information that will be beneficial to stakeholders, especially information explaining any special circumstances that may have affected the LEA's performance under one or more of the indicators.

The required newspaper notice to inform taxpayers of the meeting must be published no more than 30 days and no fewer than 10 days before the public meeting. Your LEA may combine the meeting with a scheduled regular meeting of the board of trustees.

For full requirements related to the report and meeting, see 19 TAC [§109.1001\(q\)](#). For a template that your LEA can use in developing its financial management report, see the TEA [FIRST](#) web page or [FIRST Rating for Charter Schools](#) web page.

Accreditation Status

Please note that the TEA considers an LEA's FIRST rating when assigning an accreditation status, as required by the accreditation status rules in 19 TAC [§97.1055](#).

Contact for Further Information

If you have questions about your LEA's FIRST rating, please contact the Division of Financial Compliance at (512) 463-9095 or by email at financialaccountability@tea.texas.gov.



Texas Education Agency

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