

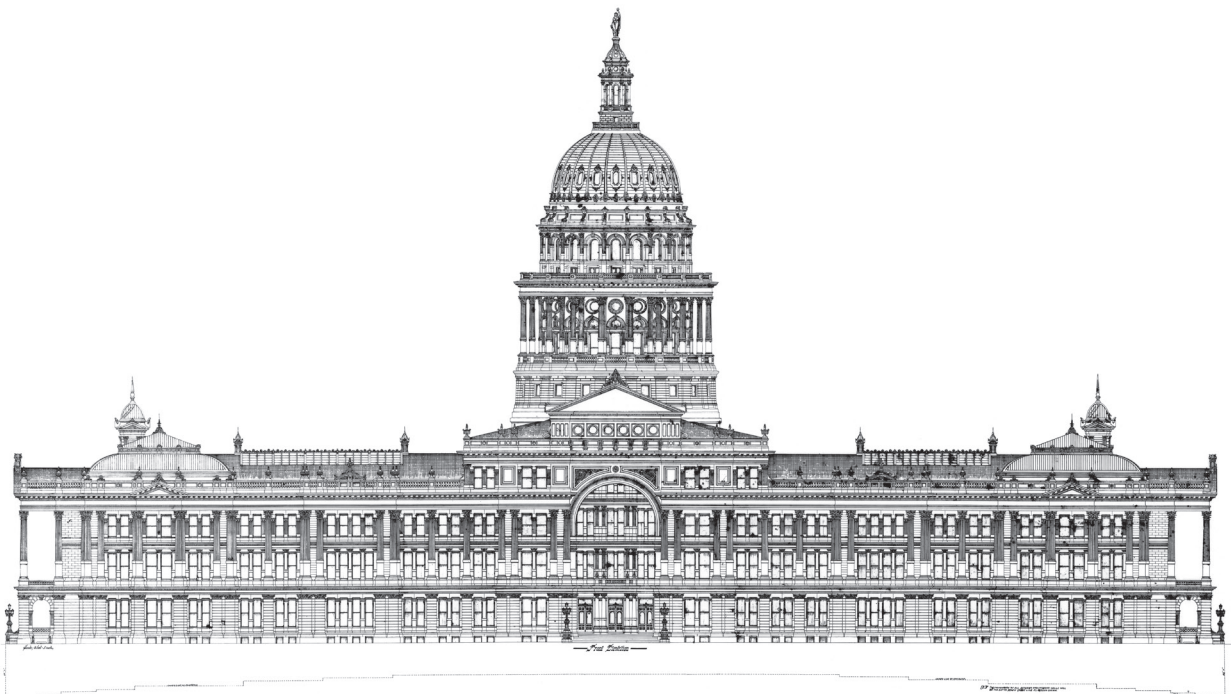


INTERIM REPORT

TO THE

82ND TEXAS LEGISLATURE

House Committee on
PUBLIC EDUCATION
December 2010



**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
INTERIM REPORT 2010**

**A REPORT TO THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
82ND TEXAS LEGISLATURE**

**ROB EISSLER
CHAIRMAN**

**SCOTT HOCHBERG
VICE CHAIRMAN**

**COMMITTEE CLERK
JENNA WATTS**



Committee On
Public Education

December 3, 2010

Rob Eissler
Chairman
PO Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

The Honorable Joe Straus
Speaker, Texas House of Representatives
Members of the Texas House of Representatives
Texas State Capitol, Rm. 2W.13
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Speaker and Fellow Members:

The Committee on Public Education of the Eighty-first Legislature hereby submits its interim report including recommendations for consideration by the Eighty-second Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Rob Eissler in black ink.

Rob Eissler, Chair

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Scott Hochberg, Vice Chair

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The House Committee on Public Education would like to thank everyone who helped in preparing this report and the committee's interim hearings.

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We would like to also thank all of our invited witnesses.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION
INTERIM STUDY CHARGES**

1. Monitor the implementation of the public school accountability, college readiness, and other reforms enacted by HB 3 (81R) and recommend adjustments as needed.
2. Study the role of public schools in promoting student health, providing health related information, and responding to infectious diseases, including the H1N1 virus.
3. Study the best leadership and management practices of campus administrators for improving student achievement, with particular focus on effective leadership models for improving low-performing campuses. Make recommendations on how to implement successful strategies at scale. Review the current administrator certification process and make suggestions for improvements.
4. Review policies to ensure the availability of quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum to all students in primary and secondary education. Examine strategies to increase the supply and improve retention rates of teachers in STEM fields.
5. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

INTERIM CHARGE 1

Monitor the implementation of the public school accountability, college readiness, and other reforms enacted by HB 3 (81R) and recommend adjustments as needed.

BACKGROUND

House Bill 3 (81st Legislature, Regular Session) reformed the outdated public school accountability system. Building on rigorous standards and higher expectations, the 81st Legislature revamped school accountability to focus on postsecondary readiness.

House Bill (HB) 3 required the commissioner to use college readiness as an indicator in the accountability system by requiring districts and campuses to increase the number of students performing at the college readiness level. College readiness will primarily be measured by student performance on English III and Algebra II end-of-course exams. The bill also requires that by 2020, Texas will be one of the top ten states in terms of students performing at the college ready level.

HB 3 also allowed schools to receive recognition for accomplishments beyond the current system. In the new system, schools will be able to earn distinctions for outstanding academic achievement beyond performance on a single test by including multiple indicators of success.

The bill focused on the core skills needed to master English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies as requirements for high school graduation, but it also provided students with increased flexibility in the form of more electives.

The bill addressed financial accountability not only academic accountability by focusing on the financial efficiency of school districts.

Assessment Update

The new assessment system for grades 3-8 and end-of-course has been named the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The Texas Education Agency is currently developing the STAAR program for implementation in spring 2012 to measure student achievement for the 2011-2012 school year.

STAAR will be more rigorous than the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills with a clear focus on alignment to college and career readiness. STAAR should also be designed to measure student growth. At the high school level, the comprehensive TAKS test is being replaced by a series of end-of-course exams. (See below)

English	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
English I	Algebra I	Biology	World Geography
English II	Geometry	Chemistry	World History
English III	Algebra II	Physics	US History

The end-of-course assessments have a "fewer, clear, deeper" focus and will emphasize knowledge and skills that are determined to be "non-negotiable" for future success.¹

The end-of-course assessments have been developed in conjunction with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board including input from public school educators and higher education faculty. A performance standard will be set on the English III and Algebra II end-of-course assessments to indicate that a student is likely to succeed in postsecondary education. The standard will equal the level of preparation a student must attain in English language arts and mathematics to succeed in an entry-level general education course for credit at a general academic teaching institution or community college.

Accountability Update

The 2011-12 school year will be a transition year for the new accountability system with no ratings being issued. The new accountability system will be used to evaluate school performance beginning with the 2012-2013 school year. For the 2012-2013 school year, districts will be evaluated using the established passing standard on the assessment instrument, not the college readiness standard. The first ratings in the new accountability system will be issued August 8, 2013. Both performance standards (passing and college readiness) will be used for accountability purposes in the 2013-2014 school year.

During December 2010, the distinction committee members will be finalized. During 2011 and 2012, each committee will meet four times at separate meetings. The committees will make recommendations to the commissioner regarding the indicators used to award distinctions.²

The Texas Education Agency is required to deliver a transition plan to the Legislature by December 1, 2010 to set forth plans to transition from the current accountability system to the new accountability system.

Financial Accountability Update

House Bill 3 charged the comptroller with identifying districts and campuses that use resource allocation practices that contribute to high academic achievement and cost-effective operations. The comptroller is scheduled to release the study to the public on December 8, 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature should consider the following recommendations:

1. Maintain the focus on college readiness in the assessment and accountability systems and allow the new systems to become fully operational.
2. Continue to monitor the implementation of HB 3, and consider technical changes and refinements identified during the implementation process.

INTERIM CHARGE 2

Study the role of public schools in promoting student health, providing health related information, and responding to infectious diseases, including the H1N1 virus.

BACKGROUND

Schoolchildren arrive at school each day with a variety of health issues, including the exposure to pandemic illnesses such as the H1N1 virus. Texas schools are not generally required to provide health services to the general student population, but many schools provide basic school health services. Districts are not mandated to employ school nurses, however during the 2009-2010 school year, there were approximately 5900 full-time nurse equivalents serving students on 6735 campuses.

Each district must establish a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to ensure that the community is involved in the district's health education program. Schools are also required to perform various screenings for their students, including: vision, hearing, spinal, dyslexia, and acanthosis nigricans. Further, certain immunizations are mandatory for school attendance to protect the health of students and faculty. The statute also establishes certain requirements for Automated External Defibrillators, medication dispensation and health management plans for diabetic students.

Physical Fitness Assessment

All students in grades 3-12 are assessed annually using the FITNESSGRAM® assessment instrument. The assessment measures body composition, aerobic capacity, muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. Parents may obtain a copy of their child's physical fitness assessment.

In 2009-2010, the Texas Education Agency collected physical fitness assessment data of over 2.9 million Texas students in grades 3-12, representing 1139 school districts and/or charter schools.³

Physical Activity

Students in grades PK-5 are required to participate in moderate or vigorous daily physical activity for at least 30 minutes throughout the school year as part of the district's physical education curriculum or through structured activity during recess. Students in grades 6-8 are required to participate in daily physical activity for at least 30 minutes for at least four semesters during middle school. Districts may modify the requirement to address local scheduling issues.⁴

Coordinated School Health Program

Texas school districts are required to implement a coordinated school health program in each elementary, middle and junior high school in the district. The Texas Education Agency has made available coordinated school health programs designed to prevent obesity, cardiovascular disease, and Type 2 diabetes.

Innovative Wellness Instruction

Northeast ISD implemented a healthy lifestyles curriculum for all of the district's high school students. Students earn a half credit of health and half credit of physical education for successfully completing the course. The course curriculum consists of:

- Family Tree of Diseases
- Obesity/Nutrition Education
- Diseases
- Environmental Quality
- Mental Health and Self-Esteem
- Family Life

The Healthy Lifestyles course is mandatory for all freshmen to meet the district's graduation requirements. There are no exemptions for this course, including athletics. The focus of the course will be making daily healthy lifestyles decisions. If the day's lesson does not include activity, students are encouraged to participate in an activity they enjoy outside the regular school day.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Require schools to adopt policies for the management of student and staff health emergencies.
2. Re-examine how wellness is modeled and taught in our schools in order to improve student health.
3. Monitor the implementation of innovative wellness courses for possible expanded implementation.

INTERIM CHARGE 3

Study the best leadership and management practices of campus administrators for improving student achievement, with particular focus on effective leadership models for improving low-performing campuses. Make recommendations on how to implement successful strategies at scale. Review the current administrator certification process and make suggestions for improvements.

BACKGROUND

Reform discussions often neglect the role of educational leaders in overseeing teacher instruction and ensuring student achievement. Research has shown the profound influence of principals on student academic achievement. Principals set the tone for the learning environment. A report by the Southern Regional Education Board summarizes the impact of principals on student performance as follows:

Principals have profoundly influenced student achievement by working with teachers to shape a school environment that is conducive to learning; aligning instruction with a standards-based curriculum; organizing resources to improve classroom instruction and student learning; and making decisions about hiring, professional learning and other school issues that influence the quality of teaching. Schools are needing skillful and knowledgeable leaders that work well with faculty members to create an authentic and intellectually challenging curriculum aligned with college-and-career readiness standards that support teachers and their proven instructional methods. Without such leaders, there is a little chance that schools will be able to make changes that will help more students meet at least grade-level standards, stay in school, and graduate prepared for college.⁶

Principal Certification

To receive a standard principal certificate, candidates must pass the required exam, hold a master's degree, hold a valid classroom teaching certificate, have two years of teaching experience and complete a principal preparation program. Principals certified after September 1, 1999 must complete 200 clock-hours of professional development every five years.

Effective Principals

There is growing agreement that teachers are the single most powerful school factor influencing student achievement. Further, expanding research has found that principals strongly influence teacher quality and, therefore, student achievement.⁷

Successful principals create a school culture that promotes academic optimism and achievement, and engage teachers in decision-making and professional growth. Shared instructional leadership has proven to strengthen the commitment of teachers which has led to improved teacher quality.⁸

Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy

The Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy (TTLA) is designed to strengthen district and campus level capacity through the implementation of policies and practices that establish the necessary environment and support needed to effectively turnaround schools that have been underperforming in multiple areas for many years.⁹

TTLA targets districts with multiple academically unacceptable campuses. The design of the program includes a strong central office component and an unique approach to principal selection based on competencies. "Unique principal competencies" is the premise that there is a unique talent set that indicates which candidates are likely to be more successful in turning around low-performing schools.¹⁰

TTLA a state-funded initiative housed at Region XIII Education Service Center. The initiative is funded through General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 42(g), Student Success Initiative, 2009. Region XII ESC received \$2, 375,000 for each year of the biennium to run the academy.

District participation in the program includes engagement in research-based data analysis, strategic planning, and ongoing professional development and training delivered and supported by the faculty with the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business and Curry School of Education's Partners for Leaders in Education, Texas Education Service Center Turnaround support teams, XIII's Texas Initiatives staff, and contracted partners.¹¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a certification endorsement for principals with a specialty in school turnaround.
2. Focus principal preparation and professional development on building a culture of achievement on campuses and on leading effective teachers.

INTERIM CHARGE 4

Review policies to ensure the availability of quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum to all students in primary and secondary education. Examine strategies to increase the supply and improve retention rates of teachers in STEM fields.

BACKGROUND

Jobs in science and engineering have maintained growth for over 50 years, and that growth is projected to continue. Eighty percent of jobs in the next decade will require math and science skills.¹² Texas will only stay competitive in an increasingly competitive global economy if we increase the number of postsecondary graduates with expertise in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.¹³

In Texas, several initiatives and programs have been implemented to try and reverse the national trend of declining performance in science, technology, engineering and math.

Recommended High School Diploma

The default graduation plan in Texas requires students to earn four credits in each of the foundation subjects of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, also known as the 4x4. The Class of 2010 was the first class of students who had to earn four credits in each of the foundation subject areas to graduate.

T-STEM Initiative

The Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Initiative consists of academies, professional development and a network all designed to improve student achievement in science and mathematics. T-STEM Academies are schools that work to develop innovative instruction and integrate technology and engineering into science and mathematics instruction. T-STEM Centers are charged with creating instructional materials and professional development to improve student achievement. The initiative also supports an online network that provides professional development for teachers.¹⁴

UTeach Program

The UTeach Program began at the University of Texas at Austin. UTeach focuses on recruiting, preparing and retaining quality STEM teachers. The program actively recruits mathematics and science majors to take the two initial one-hour UTeach courses for free. Students have field experiences throughout the program. UTeach allows students to graduate in four years while completing a degree and teacher certification. Students acquire deep content knowledge in STEM fields and the teaching and learning of mathematics and science.¹⁵

At UT Austin, 88% of UTeach graduates² decide to enter the teaching profession. Of those who enter the profession, more than 80% of UTeach graduates are still teaching five years after graduating.¹⁶ The success of UTeach has been key to the replications efforts of this program at other universities.

Algebra Readiness Grants

Algebra Readiness Grants are intended to increase student preparedness of the middle school students for Algebra I. The programs supported by the grant are designed to increase mathematics content knowledge of teachers, train school leaders to support efforts to increase mathematics achievement, and provide middle school with targeted intervention services.¹⁷

Technology-Based Supplemental Mathematics Instructional Pilot Program for Grades 2-5 and Grades 5-8

These pilot programs aim to improve student achievement in mathematics and prepare student to succeed in Algebra I. The programs target students who are at-risk of failing mathematics using technology to provide an individualized intervention. The programs provide immediate feedback and detailed, step-by-step solutions to missed problems. Further, the programs provide teacher and school leader professional development to increase student achievement.¹⁸

Mathematics Instructional Coaches Pilot Project (MIC)

The Mathematics Instructional Coaches Pilot Project is intended to increase the content knowledge and instructional expertise of secondary mathematics teachers. Funding for FY 2011 was eliminated as a result of the five percent reduction exercise.¹⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature should consider the following recommendations:

1. Monitor the postsecondary performance of students graduating with the 4x4 curriculum required by the Recommended and Advanced high school graduation programs.
2. Eliminate any barriers to the replication or expansion of UTeach.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹⁸ Texas Education Agency. (September 27, 2010). Technology-Based Supplemental Mathematics Instructional Pilot Program for Grades 2-5 and Grades 5-8 Fact Sheet.
- ¹⁹ Texas Education Agency. (September 1, 2010). Mathematics Instructional Coaches Pilot Project (MIC) Fact Sheet.