

# **State P-16 Council Meeting**

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

## **Minutes**

The twenty-sixth meeting of the State P-16 Council, authorized by statute, was held at the Travis State Office Building, Room 1-104, on February 17, 2010.

Statutory members present: Robert Scott (chair), Commissioner, Texas Education Agency (TEA). Non statutory members present: Gregory Williams, President, Odessa College; Melody Johnson, Superintendent, Fort Worth ISD and Phyllis Snodgrass, President, San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce.

Statutory members absent: Raymund Paredes (co-chair), Commissioner, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB); Terrell Murphy, Commissioner, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative (DARS); and Larry Temple, Executive Director, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

## **AGENDA ITEM ONE**

### ***Call to Order***

Robert Scott called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

## **AGENDA ITEM TWO**

### ***Welcome and Opening Remarks***

Mr. Scott welcomed members and guests and announced that Council members Paredes, Murphy and Temple had other obligations, but sent staff members on their behalf.

## **AGENDA ITEM THREE**

### ***Adoption of Minutes***

Mr. Scott laid out the minutes from the November 4, 2009 Council meeting and asked for a motion to adopt. A motion was made and seconded. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

## **AGENDA ITEM FOUR**

### ***Agency and Council Member Updates***

No additional member updates were provided.

## **AGENDA ITEM FIVE**

### ***Presentation on Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Autism Program***

Mr. Lynn Blackmore, Director of the Center for Policy and Innovation at DARS presented information on the agency's Autism Program. In August 2007, the LBB and Governor's Office instructed the Health and Human Services Commission to transfer \$5 million in general revenue to DARS to fund services, such as Applied Behavior Analysis, for children ages 3 through 8 with Autism Spectrum Disorder. DARS awarded grants for autism services to be administered through four contracts. Services began April 1, 2008. Service providers receiving funding included:

- Child Study Center (Fort Worth) in collaboration with University of North Texas (UNT)
- Easter Seals North Texas (Dallas) in collaboration with UNT
- MHMRA of Harris County (Houston) in collaboration with University of Houston – Clear Lake
- Texana Center (Rosenberg)

Services provided through these contracts included:

- Applied Behavior Analysis supervised by Board Certified Behavior Analysts;
- Clinic and home-based;
- Individual and small-group;
- Ancillary services (speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, audiology); and
- Pre- and post-treatment measures.

At the end of the first 17-month grant cycle:

- 293 children had been served;
- 653 children remained on provider interest lists;
- \$3,138 was the average monthly cost per child;
- cost to DARS was \$2,469; and
- 99.93% of grant funds were expended.

The agency received positive feedback from service recipients and the 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature increased funding for program expansion during the 2010-2011 biennium. As a result, contracts were extended with the original four providers and two new providers (Any Baby Can of San Antonio and Center for Autism and Related Disorders in Austin) were awarded grants.

Council member Johnson asked what might be contributing to the significant increase of autism diagnoses. She wondered if it was because we are getting better at identifying the disorder or because of some other causal factors. Mr. Blackmore said the jury was still out on that issue, but since last October there had been a dramatic increase in kids being diagnosed. He also said one of the real benefits of the programs was their partnership with the universities. Council member Williams asked whether the additional \$1.6 million in funding was what the agency had requested. Mr. Blackmore answered yes and noted that they were interested in expanding slowly for a number of reasons. Chairman Scott pointed out that there has been discussion regarding additional federal resources for Pre-K that places focus on cradle-to-career. He said he believed Texas' response should be to allocate resources to children with disabilities and

their parents for additional support and he looked forward to TEA working with DARS to address these issues. Mr. Blackmore mentioned that DARS had already been coordinating with Kathy Clayton's office at TEA.

## **AGENDA ITEM SIX**

### ***Update on the Interagency Literacy Council***

Mr. Clint Winters, Manager, Strategic Workforce Initiatives, TWC, provided an update on the Interagency Literacy Council. He noted that the Interagency Literacy Council (Literacy Council) was established through passage of House Bill 4328 (81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature). The bill authorized the TWC to establish the Literacy Council for the study, promotion, and enhancement of literacy in the state. The Council is composed of the following nine members, serving two-year terms: one representative of the TWC (Larry Temple), who will serve as the presiding officer; one representative of the TEA (Kerry Ballast) appointed by the Commissioner; one representative of the THECB (Tamara Clunis), appointed by the Commissioner; and six public members who are leaders of the business and nonprofit communities engaged in literacy promotion efforts, appointed by the TWC executive director. The powers and duties of the Council are as follows:

- Study current research to assess the adult literacy needs in this state, including needs relating to business and finance, workforce and technology, civics, and health and wellness;
- Consult with key stakeholders to identify barriers to improving literacy and evidence-based best practices for improving literacy;
- Review the status of the programs and services administered by agencies or entities represented on the council that promote literacy in an effort to coordinate efforts, align services, reduce redundancies, implement best practices, integrate support services, and improve accountability;
- Build existing funding streams and identify additional state and federal funding sources available for the promotion of literacy;
- Raise literacy awareness and engage community leaders in creative solution-building for improving literacy; and
- Develop a comprehensive statewide action plan for the improvement of literacy in this state, including a recommended timeline for implementation.

By November 1 of each even-numbered year, the Council is required to submit a written report to the Governor, both houses of the Legislature, and the Texas Workforce Investment Council. The report will include information on the developments and actions taken on the statewide action plan, areas that need improvement and changes to the plan, and programs and services that address literacy in Texas. The first meeting was held in December 2009. They are interested in working closely with the Texas Workforce Investment Council and the State P-16 Council to coordinate efforts. The next meeting is set for April 1, 2010. The initial report is due November 1, 2012.

Council member Johnson said she was glad to see that the Literacy Council has found a home and Council member Snodgrass noted that the San Marcos Chamber was looking at this in their

community. Chairman Scott asked whether any research on trends in literacy rates had been accumulated. Mr. Blakemore indicated that none had been accumulated yet.

## **AGENDA ITEM EIGHT**

### ***Update on College Readiness Programs for Adult Basic Education Transitions***

Jan Lindsey, Senior Director for Dropout Prevention/College and Career Readiness Initiatives, TEA, provided an update on College Readiness Programs for Adult Basic Education (ABE) Transitions. She began her remarks by emphasizing that this program is jointly owned by all members of the P-16 Council. Each has played a different role in the past, but with the landscape changing as dramatically as it is, it will be critical that a strong collaboration be forged. Staffs of the various agencies have already met and shared information and ideas and will continue to strengthen this collaboration. Ms. Lindsey briefly described the changing landscape of ABE and talked about the two driving forces in the upcoming transformation. The first is a focus on performance. The second is the transitioning to higher education and employment.

#### **Focus on Performance**

The focus on performance is both a Federal and a State expectation. Federal expectation has been expressed through a statutory requirement that states set performance targets for a series of performance objectives. The State of Texas expectation for performance has been expressed more recently through Rider 46 which mandates funds be tied to performance in addition to student contact hours. One of the first challenges for the state was to create a funding formula. Designing a schedule for implementation of the performance formula was easier than designing the formula itself.

- The schedule was outlined as follows:
  - Stakeholder meetings in October 2009
  - Proposal presented to State Board of Education (SBOE) – January 2010
  - First Reading by SBOE will be in March
  - Posting in Texas Register for 30 day public review – April
  - Final action by SBOE is expected in May
  - Effective - June
- The rider contained a number of competing objectives:
  - Funds must be allocated based on need
  - Existing providers are entitled to the “same level” of contact hours as they provided in 2008-09
  - Providers must be paid based on student contact hours and performance
- Goals for designing the formula:
  - Adhere to the mandates in Rider 46
  - Provide an incentive for performance
  - Ensure that all funds are used

- Minimize unnecessary disruption to the program

### **Description of Proposed Funding Formula**

Ms. Lindsey stated that all funds were required to be treated the same, so they pooled them. Since all providers are entitled to their 08-09 funding level, they aggregated the funds and called them the Base Allocation. The Base Allocation was distributed to each provider according to its 08-09 allocation. The remainder was put in a pool for Performance Allocation and was distributed based on need (share of state's population of adults 18 and older without a high school diploma). Under the proposed new funding formula, providers have to earn their performance allocation. If they meet 50% of their federal performance targets, they are allowed to keep 50% of their Performance Allocation. The remainder goes into the Reallocation Fund. These funds are distributed to providers who met their state performance targets. Examples of the performance targets used include:

- **Federal:** Percentage of adult students who will complete Beginning Literacy ABE level by end of grant year.
- **State:** Percentage of all adult students enrolled in Adult Secondary Education who achieved a GED or a diploma within the calendar year.

The anticipated consequences of the proposed funding formula:

- Existing providers will receive at a minimum the same amount of funding they received in 2008-09
- Providers with the largest share of need will receive the largest share of performance funding
- Performance will improve

Ms. Lindsey noted that the proposed funding formula is a work in progress and Texas is the recipient of a federal grant providing technical assistance to enhance its performance-based funding strategy. There are plans to convene a stakeholder group to work on this task.

### **Focus on Transitioning to Higher Education and Employment**

The second transformative change in ABE is the focus on transitioning ABE learners to higher education and employment. While literacy and fluency in English are still key to the program, they are no longer the end goals. Texas is setting its sights higher than passing literacy tests and earning a GED. To earn a self-sustaining wage requires much more and the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy will require strong skills and engagement in postsecondary education and training. Texas recently participated in national competitive application process and was selected as one of only eight states to receive intensive technical assistance in developing strategies to successfully transition adult learners to higher education and employment. THECB also has several exciting initiatives designed to assist ABE learners in transitioning to higher education. In addition, the TWC continues to require local workforce boards to develop working agreements with ABE programs.

Some of the steps taken to address the transitioning to higher education and employment include:

- Creating an interagency team
- Focusing on aligning systems so ABE learners transition to higher education and employment
- Analyzing and identify effective strategies and policy levers that create change

Some of the policies/strategies that the interagency team may use to contribute to this focus area include looking at:

- ABE part-time learners' access to financial aid
- ABE learners' co-enrollment in ABE and postsecondary courses
- ABE learners' access to employment advising and placement services
- Clients' co-enrollment in WIA Title I and Title II services

Ms. Lindsey told Council members that all of the P-16 partners will need to collaborate, consider innovative strategies, create high expectations, coordinate, and claim joint ownership.

Mr. Blackmore from DARS asked what the timeframe would be on creating the interagency team. Staff answered that the interagency team would convene very quickly because work must be completed by March 30<sup>th</sup>. Council member Johnson asked for clarification on whether providers would continue to get the same amount for operating and performance would be funded on top of operating. The answer was yes. Johnson also expressed concern about ESL classes because her district offers more ESL classes than GED. She asked whether basic literacy will continue to be the test for performance. Lindsey answered yes and stated that several of the Federal performance targets are related to ESL. Johnson also noted her district's need to cut back on services paid out of district funds that resulted in removing test administrators and sites. She said it would be critical that this type of funding be built in because add-ons that the districts previously paid will no longer be available. Council member Snodgrass echoed some of Council member Johnson's sentiments. Ms. Lindsey clarified that the way the formula is designed, students at the very lowest level (including English language learners) will get a weighted benefit to the program. When ELL students achieve their target, it will weigh more heavily on the performance of the providers.

In closing, Chairman Scott noted that ABE received its first increase in 25 years from the legislature last year. Council members agreed that there was a great public interest in preserving ESL/ABE and it will important to preserve this level of funding.

## **AGENDA ITEM NINE**

### ***Update on College Readiness Programs for Adult Basic Education Transitions***

Dr. Judy Loreda, Assistant Commissioner for P-16 Initiatives, THECB, provided a brief update on the ABE Transition Program. She stated that THECB had received 17 applications and the review process will begin in the following week. Dr. Loreda also mentioned a Financial Aid Telethon they are currently producing in partnership with the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation. She noted that many of the calls they are receiving are coming from Spanish-speaking adults wanting to know how they can come back into the system and get educated. Chairman Scott expressed his appreciation for the joint work occurring between agencies on the ABE program.

## **AGENDA ITEM TEN**

### ***Adjournment***

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.