

Recommendations to the 81st Texas Legislature

Submitted by members of the High School Completion
and Success Initiative Council

**Submitted to the Legislature
In compliance with TEC Sec. 39.365**

December 1, 2008

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List of Council Members

The statute establishing the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council, HB 2237, specifies that the Council is to be comprised of nine members, two of whom are the Commissioner of Education, statutorily designated as the presiding officer, and the Commissioner of Higher Education. The remaining seven members are to be appointed by the Commissioner of Education from lists of nominations provided by the Governor (three members), the Lieutenant Governor (two members) and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (two members). Appointed members are to be individuals who have distinguished experience in developing and implementing high school reform strategies and promoting college and workforce readiness. Appointed members serve terms of two years and may be reappointed for additional terms.

Designated Members:

Mr. Robert Scott
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency

Dr. Raymund Paredes
Commissioner of Higher Education
Texas Higher Education Coordinating
Board

Appointed Members:

Nominated by the Governor

Mr. Christopher Barbic
Head of Schools
YES College Preparatory Schools
Beginning date of term: 12-07-07

Dr. Rod Paige
Chairman
Chartwell Education Group, LLC
Beginning date of term: 12-07-07

Dr. Rosa Maria Vida
Superintendent
Diocese of Laredo
Beginning date of term: 12-07-07

Nominated by Lieutenant Governor

Ms. Cindy Ramos-Davidson
Chief Executive Officer
El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Beginning date of term: 1-18-08

Dr. Don McAdams
President
Center for Reform of School Systems
Beginning date of term: 12-13-07

Nominated by the Speaker of the House

Ms. Chris Patterson
Research and Policy Consultant
Beginning date of term: 12-07-07

Mr. James M. Windham
Chairman
Texas Institute for Education Reform
Beginning date of term: 12-07-07

Introduction

In May, 2007, the 80th Texas Legislature passed HB 2237 establishing in statute the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council (Council) charged with providing strategic direction and legislative recommendations for high school completion and postsecondary success. The Council is composed of the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and seven members appointed by the Commissioner of Education from a list of nominations provided by the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Lieutenant Governor.

In accordance with Section 39.365 of the Texas Education Code, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is required to prepare and submit a report to the Legislature not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year submitting any recommended statutory changes considered appropriate by the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council (Council) to promote high school completion and college and workforce readiness. This report is a compilation of recommendations submitted by individual members of the Council. The member who authored each recommendation is identified by last name prior to each proposal.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

Proposals Related to: Definitions

Proposal 1 (McAdams): Recommend that the Legislature adopt the Council's definition of postsecondary success, which states that postsecondary success is the range of academic, workforce, and social proficiency that high school students should acquire to successfully transition into:

- Skilled employment
- Advanced training in the military
- An associate's degree
- A bachelor's degree, or
- Technical certification.

Proposals Related To: State Curriculum

Proposal 2 (Patterson): Revise the state curriculum standards [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] for English Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, and science to ensure the standards are grade-level specific with explicit academic content, transition with comparable difficulty from grade-to-grade, and culminate in postsecondary readiness [as defined by the College Readiness Standards adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and articulated throughout the public school curriculum by the College Readiness Standards Crosswalk produced by REL-Southwest at the request of the Commission for a College Ready Texas.]

Proposal 3 (Patterson): Revise the state curriculum standards for Career and Technology Education to establish occupationally relevant, technically sophisticated, and academically rigorous alternatives to the fully academic high school program – Establish a broad array of CTE programs with coherent sequences of courses, culminating in college credits and industry-recognized credentials.

Proposal 4 (Patterson): Introduce reading standards, related to both content and difficulty of texts, across each of the four core content areas, K-12.

Proposal 5 (Patterson): Establish a literacy enrichment curriculum program for students who cannot meet grade-level reading standards, k-12.

Proposal 6 (Patterson): Create K-12 state curriculum standards that are explicit, academic content-rich, grad-level specific, and connect with nationally recognized college readiness standards.

Proposal 7 (Patterson): Redesign Career and Technology Education to make it a viable and attractive alternative to the fully academic program – occupationally relevant, technically sophisticated, and academically rigorous.

Proposal 8 (Windham): Recommend a concerted effort by the appropriate elected and agency officials to revisit the ELAR TEKS and adopt the following reforms:

- * Set explicit grade-level benchmarks for reading proficiency,
- * Establish specific standards for grade-level content, and
- * Establish clear linkage of state ELAR standards with state and national standards for postsecondary readiness.

Proposal 9 (Windham): Consolidate, to the extent possible, and align all language arts and reading initiatives and their related public and private funding and establish clear state objectives for the progress of student achievement in reading proficiency.

Proposal 10 (Windham): Require schools in which less than 75 percent of students read proficiently to collaborate with public or private early-literacy intervention

programs that have proven effective, and seek funding to provide scholarships for students and teachers to access these programs.

Proposal 11 (Windham): Revisit Subchapter B. Bilingual Education and Special Language Programs of the Texas Education Code, particularly Sec. 29.051, and amend it to ensure that state policy assigns the highest priority to the ability of all children to read at grade level in English as early as possible, and that the most current reading science and research should drive the methodologies used to achieve this objective.

Proposal 12 (Windham): Provide funding incentives for schools to provide extended time for reading instruction to students at risk of, or diagnosed with, reading difficulties.

Proposals Related to: High School Graduation Requirements

Proposal 13 (McAdams): Recommend that the Legislature establish multiple pathways leading to high school graduation to enable students to prepare for postsecondary success. An approved pathway would maintain the standard of rigor of a fourth year of math or science while permitting students to substitute a fourth year math or science course with a high level liberal arts course or a course leading to industrial certification or a course satisfying prerequisites necessary for securing an occupational license.

Proposal 14 (Patterson): Offer all students a broad array of educational delivery options, including distance/on-line learning and a choice of instructional methods for all required high school courses – either applied [with an occupational context] or theoretical [fully academic content].

Proposals Related to: Student Assessment

Proposal 15 (McAdams): Recommend that the Legislature adopt a passing standard for the Texas public high school End of Course testing program that requires a level of proficiency determined by research to be aligned with the postsecondary readiness standard in the High School Council Strategic Plan and have a strong predictive relationship between the passing standard and a student's likelihood of passing entry-level community college core courses.

Proposal 16 (McAdams): Recommend that the Legislature replace the State's Grades 3 through 8 TAKS testing program with a testing program sufficiently aligned to the high school End of Course testing program that student scores can be used as an assessment tool to determine the extent to which the student in Grades 3 through 8 is on track to pass the End of Course tests.

Proposal 17 (Patterson): Develop and administer new state assessments that are technically sophisticated, grade-level specific and sufficiently sophisticated to measure both high and low levels of student achievement and identify grade-level progress towards postsecondary readiness, grade-level deficits [particularly in reading and mathematics], and measure annual academic growth, value-added, and progress towards graduation and postsecondary readiness.

Proposal 18 (Patterson): Create and maintain a state public education assessment program that includes both administration of combined norm-referenced and state criterion-referenced assessments, end-of-course state assessments, and national postsecondary readiness assessments. Ensure assessments are sufficiently sophisticated to measure grade-level performance, annual progress towards graduation standard, annual gains, and value added.

Proposals Related to: State Accountability System

Proposal 19 (Paredes): Recommend that the Legislature modify the State Accountability

System to include the following new indicators to be used to determine a district or campus' annual accountability rating:

- Percentage of high school graduates who enroll in higher education the fall after completing high school; and
- Percentage of high school graduates who enroll in higher education the fall after completing high school and are unprepared for college work as evidenced by their failure to meet one or more parts of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards.

Proposal 20 (Patterson): Hold schools and districts accountable for specific annual improvements in the percentage of students (a) passing state assessments, (b) on-track for educational transitions [elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary programs], (c) graduating with the Recommended or Distinguished Achievement Diploma, (d) graduating with postsecondary credits or industry-recognized certifications, and (e) closing the achievement gaps associated with family income, race, and ethnicity for each of these metrics.

Proposal 21 (Patterson): Create and maintain a state public education accountability system that identifies and holds schools accountable for early identification of academic deficits, early interventions, gains in student performance, value added, postsecondary readiness, and multiple, diverse measures of high school dropouts, completion, graduation, and postsecondary transitions.

Proposals Related to: Educator Quality

Proposal 22 (Patterson): Develop new standards for teacher preparation, certification, and professional development that focus on evidence-based policies and practices [particularly reading instruction, early identification of educational deficits, and academic interventions] to increase high school completion, postsecondary success, and closing the achievement gap between student groups.

Proposal 23 (Patterson): Create a new appraisal system for educators and school professionals that is based on the individual's impact on student achievement – Connect the appraisal system with professional development, preparation programs, and certification systems.

Proposal 24 (Patterson): Create and maintain a statewide educator assessment program that focuses on an individual teacher's impact on individual student achievement outcomes, particularly annual academic gains, and links individual teacher assessments with professional development.

Proposal 25 (Patterson): Establish state policies and programs to encourage districts to assign the most effective educators to students with the greatest educational needs.

Proposal 26 (Patterson): Ensure all courses are taught by effective or appropriately certified teachers.

Proposal 27 (Windham): Replace learner-centered instruction with direct, teacher-centered instruction in all state policy, including educator standards, teacher preparation, certification, appraisal, and professional development.

Proposal 28 (Windham): Require all educator preparation programs, traditional and alternative, to train teachers how to use reading science in teaching children how to read, identify reading difficulties, and provide reading interventions—in concept and with classroom practice.

Proposal 29 (Windham): Base accreditation of all K-8 teacher preparation programs on the value that program graduates add to students' reading performance in schools.

Proposal 30 (Windham): Require the measurement of teachers' knowledge of reading science on state certification tests and require all teachers to pass tests pertaining to reading.

Proposal 31 (Windham): Create a new, improved Texas Reading Initiative: (1) Offer state-matching funds for K-8 teachers to complete Summer Reading Academies to hone their skills in the science of reading instruction, (2) Require districts to send K-8 teachers in low-performing schools to attend Summer Reading Academies, (3) Provide follow-up to Summer Reading Academies with supervised classroom practice in the teaching of reading which focuses on

instructional practices that are based on scientific research, and (4) Strengthen early reading assessments and raise standards for proficiency.

Proposal 32 (Windham): Incorporate reading into the teacher professional development and appraisal system—require districts to appraise proficiency in reading instruction and provide districts with matching funds to provide needed training in the science of reading.

Proposal 33 (Windham): Provide funding and other incentives for the use of value-added measures to evaluate teacher effectiveness in reading instruction, educator preparation programs, and professional development.

Proposal 34 (Windham): Establish credentials for a K-8 Reading Specialist to instruct students who have not acquired grade-level reading proficiency.

Proposal 35 (Windham): Enhance teacher preparation by providing incentives to educator preparation programs to assist in transforming them into customer-driven institutions, with assessment based on their value-added to student achievement.

Proposal 36 (Windham): Expand state grant programs and encourage private grants to provide seed funding to encourage school districts to adopt incentive pay programs based on value-added assessments of educator performance.

Proposal 37 (Windham): Expand incentive grant funding for programs that recruit and develop successful administrative leadership from non-traditional backgrounds.

Proposals Related to: Operation of TEA

Proposal 38 (Patterson): Identify systems and programs that the agency should outsource, including but not limited to –

- Research and evaluation [including but not limited to applications for grants and initiatives];
- Monitoring the accuracy of school and district data;
- Creation and maintenance of a K-16 education data system; and
- Creation and maintenance of a K-12 Assessment System.

Proposal 39 (Patterson): Focus the efforts of the agency on the core mission to

- create programs and policy in accordance with legislation
- monitor, evaluate, and report on educational outcomes of students, schools, districts, programs and policies, and
- assist school district efforts to meet state education goals.

Proposal 40 (Patterson): Offer all districts, giving priority to districts serving the highest populations of economically disadvantaged students, the opportunity to select to from a menu of optional state initiatives to improve high school success and completion, including (a) diagnostic processes and systems, (b) student interventions, (c) enhancement of professional capacity, (d) comprehensive school reform, and (e) technical assistance for implementing initiatives.

Proposals Related to: Information Systems

Proposal 41 (Patterson): Create a new K-16 educational information system that is modeled on Florida's system – providing integrated, real-time, longitudinal data to schools and districts so that student progress can be monitored, teacher and student performance can be linked, and create an automated early warning system to detect educational deficits and identify students at risk of dropping out [as indicated by attendance problems, failing grades, grade retention, off-track for on-time graduation, and behavioral problems.]

Proposal 42 (Patterson): Develop multiple, longitudinal, student-level methods that are externally validated to realistically identify the percentage of students who drop out and graduate from high school.

Proposal 43 (Patterson): Create and maintain a state public educational data system that provides districts:

- early identification and warning of students who are not on-track for grade-level progression and on-time for high school graduation,
- annual academic gains, progress toward graduation, and value added for individual students, with a teacher-related information, and
- individual K-16 longitudinal data.

Proposal 44 (Patterson): Create and maintain a state public school finance system that encourages districts to prioritize state dollars for state-mandated functions, provide full disclosure of school spending, and links state funds to annual cost adjustments as necessary.

Proposals Related to: Evaluation

Proposal 45 (Patterson): Direct the Texas Education Agency to secure external, independent evaluation and validation of these efforts to ensure systems and programs are designed to meet state goals for increasing high school completion, postsecondary success, and closing the achievement gaps between student groups.

Proposal 46 (Patterson): Direct the agency to obtain independent, external validation of new programs and systems, with periodic evaluations – including but not limited to:

- K-12 Curriculum standards;
- K-12 Assessments;
- Public school accountability; and
- Teacher preparation, accreditation, and professional development programs.

Proposals Related to: High School Council and Strategic Plan(s):

Proposal 47 (Patterson): Increase the number of individuals that the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House may each nominate for Council membership from two members to four members. This amendment would allow the Council to deliberate more independently and with fewer institutional constraints.

Proposal 48 (Patterson): Require the state's Strategic Plan for High School Completion and Success to be updated annually. This amendment would allow the Council to adapt the plan and respond to rapid economic, social, demographic, and technical changes that affect Texas public schools.

Proposal 49 (Patterson): Create a council or designate a state entity to review and provide the legislature with recommendations for ways to align and focus all existing and proposed strategic plans and initiatives on high school completion and postsecondary success.