



April 7, 2009

Campuses and districts recognized for exceptional use of High School Allotment funds

AUSTIN – Commissioner of Education Robert Scott today recognized six school districts and seven high school campuses that offer exceptional high school completion and college readiness programs implemented with High School Allotment funds.

The High School Allotment (allotment), a \$320 million annual fund created by the Texas Legislature in 2006, provides every Texas school district with \$275 per student in grades 9-12 to improve high school graduation and college readiness rates.

For the second year, the Texas Education Agency is recognizing districts or schools that used these funds to implement exceptional programs or strategies in the following areas:

- Preparing students for college readiness;
- Increasing graduation rates;
- Improving curriculum alignment or preparing students for successful transition from middle school to high school or from high school to college; and
- Implementing innovative high school completion and success programs or strategies.

School districts and charter schools were invited to nominate their programs for recognition for exceptional use of the allotment funds. Of the 20 districts and campuses submitting applications for consideration, the following nominees - representing large, medium, and small campuses and districts - were selected as examples of exceptional use of the allotment.

The Mission Consolidated Independent School District (ISD), San Antonio's North East ISD, Humble ISD, McCamey High School in McCamey ISD, and Plainview High School in Plainview ISD are recognized for strategies used in preparing students for college success.

District-wide programs in Round Rock ISD, and a separate program offered at McNeil High School in Round Rock ISD are recognized for their efforts to increase graduation rates.

Allen High School in Allen ISD, Malakoff High School in Malakoff ISD, and Brewer High School in White Settlement ISD are recognized for improving curriculum alignment and preparing students for successful transitions from high school to college.

Friendswood High School in Friendswood ISD, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD and Lewisville ISD are receiving recognition for the implementation of innovative high school completion and success programs and strategies.

"These school districts and campuses have taken the opportunity provided by the High School Allotment to work creatively to improve the education of their students. They can serve as role models for other districts in our state and around the country," the commissioner said.

Preparing Students for College Readiness

Humble ISD has used its allotment to prepare a diverse group of students for the rigors of college including students who would be first generation college students, students historically underserved in four-year colleges, and economically disadvantaged students. During the 2007-2008 school year, the district implemented the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in seven middle schools and two high schools serving approximately 400 students in grades 7-10. Throughout the district, teachers, administrators, and counselors received intense training to assist students in succeeding in advanced academic courses. College students from local institutions of higher education and dual credit high school students were employed as tutors. In addition, workshops were held for parents to give them the tools to assist students at home. In 2008, a significant majority of AVID students passed TAKS in Science (100 percent) Reading/ELA (98 percent), Social Studies (98 percent), and Math (87 percent).

Mission Consolidated ISD is receiving recognition for strategies implemented to promote and build a college-going culture in its secondary schools. Efforts included reducing the student/teacher ratio in all core freshmen classes, paying for tuition and textbooks for dual enrollment courses and employing academic interventions for students who need assistance in achieving academic success. The district provided targeted interventions through credit recovery and mentoring programs to improve performance in core courses. Progress and grade reports were monitored every three weeks to determine the need for early intervention. In addition, the district mandated two semesters of college readiness classes to help students prepare for college entrance exams, essays, and resume writing. In partnership with local institutions of higher education, the district was able to ensure that 100 percent of graduating seniors apply to at least one of the partner colleges. With the use of allotment funds, Mission CISD has experienced a significant increase in students proceeding to college.

North East ISD in San Antonio initiated College and Career Readiness: Cohort 2011, a program designed to impact the college and career readiness for all students. With the use of allotment funds, the district has been able to add additional ninth grade math and science teachers at each high school campus to reduce teacher-student ratios. They have added innovative technology and equipment in science and math classrooms. In addition, they have provided intensive teacher training and supplemental resources for Pre-Advanced Placement/AP courses. The district has also implemented the AVID program district-wide and hired additional personnel to encourage students to take a more rigorous college-preparatory curricula and begin their college studies while still in high school. In addition, the district provides a portion of the staffing and resources for its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Academy. GO Centers have also been established on each campus to provide resources for students as they make postsecondary plans.

Initiatives at **North East ISD** have been effective in enabling more students to enroll in challenging courses and take advanced academic exams. The district's overall performance on AP exams has increased significantly. In addition, the number of students receiving an advanced diploma has increased from 74 percent in 2006 to 81 percent in 2008.

McCamey High School, in McCamey ISD, is being recognized for its efforts to increase the number of students taking dual credit courses. Allotment funds have been used to pay tuition and books for students to take dual credit courses through Odessa College. Computer equipment was purchased to assist students in their coursework. Allotment funds have provided students with an opportunity to take college classes and graduate from high school with at least 30 college hours at no cost to students. The dual credit program has contributed to a 99 percent passing rate on the exit-level TAKS tests for those taking dual credit courses and a 93 percent dual credit passing rate.

Plainview High School, located in a district that is 70 percent economically disadvantaged, used its allotment to encourage students to enroll in AP courses with the expectation that they will take the AP exams. The school offers College Prep classes, taught by the junior and senior counselors that focus on the various aspects of college enrollment, expectations, financial aid, and college forms and timelines relating to college admissions. Transportation for college visits and student participation in Upward Bound at Texas Tech University have also been made possible through the use of allotment funds. Evaluation and comments from students, staff, and college staff indicate that college preparation, attendance, and success have become much more widespread at Plainview High School as a result of the allotment program.

Increasing Graduation Rates

Round Rock ISD is recognized for implementation of the Summer School Now – Just In Time Credit Recovery Program. The program provided innovative interventions to assist ninth grade students with additional instructional time to recover Algebra I credit and strengthen their knowledge in preparation for TAKS and Algebra II. The program addressed academic deficiencies as soon as they were identified instead of allowing achievement gaps to grow. The 15-hour program was offered on Saturdays and gave students targeted TEKS-based instruction provided by math instructional coaches and additional teachers. The curriculum provided hands-on instruction that accessed multiple intelligences and learning styles. The program resulted in 95 percent of the student participants recovering first semester credit for Algebra I. Improvements were also made in ninth grade TAKS scores.

McNeil High School in Round Rock ISD receives recognition for exceptional use of its allotment by implementing a promising transition program for eighth grade students. Recognizing that ninth grade is a critical year for dropout prevention, college readiness and academic success, the school created a transition committee comprised of high school staff members, parents and community members. Failure rates from the previous year and surveys from current freshmen were used to determine the needs for academic success and social acclimation. Committee findings resulted in the implementation of a campus workshop to familiarize students with critical information on completing high school college-ready. In addition, the school offered an interactive evening of break-out sessions during the summer designed to allow incoming ninth graders to discuss expectations with the principal, counselors, teachers, and fellow students. The school has also created a “school within a school” academic team. This initiative allows incoming freshmen who have failed one or more of the eighth grade TAKS tests and had classroom grade averages below 70 to team up with a group of four core teachers, a counselor, and team administrator every other day to discuss academic intervention

strategies and student wrap-around services. Components of the transition program have shown positive results in credits earned and overall student success in acclimating to the rigors of high school.

Improving Curriculum Alignment or Preparing Students for Successful Transition from Middle School to High School or from High School to College

Allen High School in Allen ISD has used its allotment funds to help foster successful transitions from high school to college. Students with limited financial resources have received scholarships to offset multiple testing fees for both Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programs. The school has helped student athletes with scholastic achievement by providing additional educators and tutors to work with students on improving grades in the core content areas. Allotment funds have also been used to pay for the staffing of Pathway Advisors in the College and Career Center, which supports underachieving students in college preparatory courses. Advisors monitor the progress of at-risk, economically disadvantaged, minority students and those who will be first generation college students. They also assist students with individualized graduation and postsecondary plans and provide information on accessing college and financial aid. Two distinct tutoring services are also offered at the school to help increase student achievement. Allen Academic Mentoring Services provides one-on-one peer tutoring and is open to all students, while the Eagle Depot is a full-service mentoring and tutoring program for students in advanced academics.

Malakoff High School in Malakoff ISD used allotment funds to install a state-of-the-art distance learning lab to increase the number of students enrolling in college. The school entered into a partnership with a community college to provide an on-campus dual credit English course for students without transportation to travel to the community college campus. Funds were also used to provide PSAT testing to all juniors and any interested sophomores. Funds were used to pay for the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) testing and transportation to the testing site for all seniors that had not completed the required college entrance tests. Additionally, funds were used to provide transportation for seniors to visit the community college admissions, financial aid and counseling offices for a day. Efforts made possible through the use of allotment funds have resulted in 82 percent of seniors receiving a certificate of admission to the local community college along with their diplomas.

Brewer High School in White Settlement ISD employed its allotment funds to cover the salaries of teachers of dual credit and AP courses. The dual credit program was initiated to encourage more students, most of whom were first generation college-goers with limited financial resources and transportation, to attend college. The program took students and their parents step-by-step through the college application process, assisting with financial aid, tuition and books. During the program year, data indicated that a subgroup of students were receiving failing grades in their college courses, so steps were identified and taken to improve student performance. The success of the program has been confirmed by the growth of the program, as well as by improved academic performance, especially among at-risk student populations.

Implementing Innovative High School Completion and Success Programs or Strategies

Friendswood High School in Friendswood ISD supported operation of its Student Success Program to assist students in the four core content areas as well as provide support in study skills, organization and communications. The innovative, systemic approach to ensuring students' successful completion of high school was established in 2006 and restructured in 2007 to focus on individual subject area support, resulting in specialized English, Math, and Science courses.

Specialists in the four core areas regularly monitored student progress through daily grades and benchmark assessments. They met in Professional Learning Communities in each core area to discuss data and determine appropriate interventions. As a result of program success, Reading/ELA scores remained at 99 percent passing rate; Math scores rose from 93 to 94 percent; and Science scores rose from 93 to 96 percent. Based on TAKS, the gap in performance among student groups defined by ethnicity and gender significantly decreased and Friendswood High met the Exemplary rating criteria.

Grapevine-Colleyville ISD used its allotment to implement its Academy Program to target students at risk of not graduating from high school. The program shares four teachers, between Grapevine High School and Colleyville Heritage High School, who utilize a blend of computer-based instruction and non-traditional teacher instruction. Computerized software provides a basis for the Academy program's curricula. Teachers supplement the curricula, offer motivation and provide positive role models for students who have struggled with traditional methods of schooling. Success is evident in a variety of ways. Each Academy has seen significant success with the total number of credits earned in comparison to previous years. Students increased their average credits earned from 68 percent to 88 percent. Student attendance also increased 10 percent from the previous school year.

Lewisville ISD used allotment funds to implement innovative programs designed to increase high school completion and success, increase college readiness, and foster a college-going culture. These three high-priority goals were based on needs assessment data. For these reasons, the district designed strategies and interventions targeting high school students who had missed academic credits by implementing accelerated credit recovery in each of the district's five high school campuses, the ninth-grade center and the Lewisville Learning Center. Credit recovery, TAKS tutoring, a web-based math and science simulation, and the AVID program were made available to assist students in achieving success.

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