

# TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY



Self Portrait by Molly Covington  
VASE exhibition now on display at TEA through Oct. 31

News from the Texas Education Agency

SEPTEMBER 2008

## FACT CHECKER

### New method for reporting textbook errors to TEA

An eighth-grade textbook mistakenly declares that the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court was John Marshall. Thanks to the keen eyes of members of a textbook review committee, the error is caught and the name of John Jay, the actual first Chief Justice, is provided to students.

Errors often make their way into printed textbooks, despite a rigorous editing and screening process by publishers and textbook review committees. That's why the State Board of Education directed the Texas Education Agency to create a way for the public to report errors discovered in textbooks and other instructional materials.

In response to this directive, TEA notified school districts and the general public Sept. 29 that errors could be reported to a new email address: [textbookerrors@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:textbookerrors@tea.state.tx.us). Errors of fact, mis-

spellings or other inaccuracies may be reported.

"We're interested in errors of fact that will impede student learning," says Christopher Lucas, manager, review and adoption and finance in Instructional Materials and Educational Technology.

Inaccuracies will be turned over to the curriculum division for review. If an error is verified, publishers will be asked to submit an errata, or error notification, to districts which use the textbook in question.

"People have always been able to report errors to the TEA," Lucas says, "but this simply provides them a formal process to do so."

To learn more about this program or to sign up for the Textbook Errors mailing list, visit [www.tea.state.tx.us/textbooks/textbookerrors.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/textbooks/textbookerrors.html).

## HURRICANE IKE

### Texas Education Agency assists schools affected by hurricane

Hurricane Ike, which came ashore Sept. 15, impacted the school year for about one of every six Texas school districts and charter schools, displacing thousands of students and leaving behind millions of dollars in damages to Texas schoolhouses.

Dozens of school districts were closed for as much as two weeks and a few heavily damaged schools remained closed longer.

School leaders, who are becoming all too familiar with responding to hurricanes, showed courage and ingenuity in taking care of their young charges and their communities at large. Many schools became safe havens for evacuees.

Learning from past hurricane experiences, some school districts rented refrigerated trucks and moved their cafeteria foods into them to preserve the food during the days without electricity.

"I am proud of the way educators responded to help their communities during this latest disaster. The Texas Education Agency is committed to helping you restore a sense of normalcy on your campuses as soon as is safely possible," Commissioner of Education Robert Scott told educators.

The agency took numerous steps to adjust deadlines and other requirements so that school leaders could focus their energies on comforting children and restoring buildings.

Below are some of the actions taken by TEA:

- Districts that were closed because of the hurricane in the 29 disaster declared counties in Texas were told they are eligible to apply for a missed instructional days waiver. Districts that obtain this waiver may shorten their school year by up to 10 days. As in the past, districts that were closed due to a hurricane are not required to use their two bad weather make-up days. By obtain-

ing this waiver, districts will not lose funding due to the days they were closed. However, Scott encouraged districts to make up the lost instructional time if possible.

- Because of the lack of housing in some hard hit areas which kept evacuees from returning home, some schools experienced a lower-than-normal attendance rate when they reopened. The agency is making a low attendance waiver available. A district or a campus may request that any instructional days with attendance at least 10 percentage points below last school year's average attendance level be excluded from Average Daily Attendance (ADA) calculations for the current school year.

- Districts that experienced an enrollment increase of 50 or more students because of the arrival of evacuees may ask the agency to adjust its Foundation School Program payments.

- The deadline for reenrolling school dropouts was extended by about one month to Oct. 24.

- The registration period for schools that wish to be included in the Alternative Education Accountability System was extended to Oct. 31. The 2008-2009 Consolidated Reading Initiative Report is now due that same day.

- The deadline for applying for three grants was also extended to Halloween. Those are the 2008-2009 Intensive Reading Initiative/Intensive Math Initiative Grant; the 2008-2009 Accelerated Reading Instruction/Accelerated Math Instruction Grant; and the 2008-2009 Optional Extended Year Program Grant.

- The agency also activated a new element in its data collection system called a PEIMS Crisis Code. This code will be used to identify displaced students.

## OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS

# Six educators named Teacher of the Year finalists

Six top educators, with a combined 125 years of teaching experience, have been chosen as finalists in the Texas Teacher of the Year program, Commissioner of Education Robert Scott announced.

The teachers were selected from among 40 regional Teachers of the Year. The finalists will now vie for the honor of being named Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year and the Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year.

The secondary education finalists are:

**CHRISTINE GLEASON**, an English teacher at Fabens High School in the Fabens Independent School District, which is near El Paso;

**IRIS HINES**, an English teacher at the Roosevelt Alternative School in the Mission Consolidated ISD;

**DEBBIE PERRY**, who at the time she was named a regional Teacher of the Year, was a mathematics teacher at Travis Junior High in Paris ISD. This fall, Perry began teaching geometry at Midway High School in Waco's Midway ISD.

The elementary school finalists are:

**BETH DENNIS**, a fifth-grade teacher at Thomas Justiss Elementary in Paris ISD;

**JANET NAPOLI**, a literacy teacher for kindergarten through fifth-grade students at Skaggs Elementary School in Plano ISD;

**DORA ALICIA NEWELL**, a third-grade teacher at Thigpen-Zavala Elementary School in McAllen ISD.

"I congratulate these six outstanding teachers who have made a difference in the lives of thousands of students. They are representative of the many dedicated teachers who staff Texas classrooms," said Scott. "This program, through the support of our generous sponsors, provides a way to publicly recognize and thank these dedicated, creative individuals."

In their Teacher of the Year applications, each educator offered insight into their teaching philosophy and style.

*Gleason*, the Fabens High teacher, writes: "I am a teacher and can relate any piece of literature to teenage life in under 50 minutes. I do it with laughter, poise, and integrity. Most importantly, though, I talk *to* my students. They know I genuinely care about them and their issues."

*Hines* of the Roosevelt Alternative School calls herself "a dyslexia survivor. I know that the countless profound struggles that I overcame taught me to know exactly how it feels to exist in a world where acquiring information is constantly impeded by

something that is initially beyond one's control."

*Perry*, the Travis Junior High mathematics teacher, writes: "In my classroom we celebrate heroic actions such as kindness, gentleness, helpfulness, and courage so that students can see that one does not have to be smart, beautiful, affluent, or even talented to be a hero."

*Dennis*, the Paris fifth-grade teacher, said in her application: "I want to cultivate a love of learning in the lives of my students. I want them to question, create, explore and become problem solvers, not simply in my classroom, but throughout their lives."

*Napoli* of Plano describes her motivation this way: "Creating a community of learners who are empowered to seek out the best for themselves is what drives the things I do in the classroom. Students are sponges. It is my job to help them absorb the most powerful 'tools' that help them reach their learning potential."

*Newell* from McAllen involves herself in all aspects of her students' lives. "I am determined that each day each one of my students will get my absolute best. They will remember me ...with a smiling face, a kind heart and a genuine desire to form them into the best citizens they can be. If I need to nurture, I do. If I need to find appropriate clothing for them, I do. If I need to seek out ways to provide glasses or even pay an electricity bill, I do."



These six finalists were selected by a panel of judges who represent the state's four teacher organizations. The judges were Brian Baker of the Texas AFT; Jerry Bonham of the Association of Texas Professional Educators; Jan Pate of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association; and Stephen Smallwood of the Texas State Teachers Association.

The finalists then came to Austin for interviews before a larger judging panel, which determined the top elementary and secondary teacher.

The Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year and the Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year will be announced at a luncheon Nov. 22 at the Connally Banquet Hall in the University of Texas' Etter-Harbin Alumni Center.

One of the top winners will also be selected to go forward to be considered for National Teacher of the Year honors. The national program is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Texas Education Agency has sponsored the Texas Teacher of the Year program since 1969.

During the luncheon, each of the regional winners will receive a \$500 check and a trophy. The top two teachers will receive a \$5,000 cash prize, a technology package valued at more than \$15,000, and a trophy.

The Teacher of the Year program is supported by its generous donors which include AT&T, H-E-B, the SMARTer Kids Foundation, Apple, and the state's major education associations.

## MODEL TEXAS SCHOOLS

# Twenty-six public schools named NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools

Twenty-six Texas public schools were named No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

This national program recognizes outstanding public and private schools that are either academically superior in their states or that demonstrate dramatic and consistent gains in student achievement. Under the program guidelines, Texas may nominate a maximum of 26 public schools for the award each year. This year all 26 nominees were selected to receive the award.

Schools nominated for the recognition must meet one of two criteria:

1. At least 40 percent of a school's student body must come from disadvantaged backgrounds and students must show dramatic improvement in performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) over the past three years in reading or English language arts and mathematics; or
2. The schools' students must be ranked in the top 10 percent

on tests in reading or English language arts and mathematics.

In addition, Blue Ribbon Schools must also meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading or English language arts and mathematics, must not be identified as a "Persistently Dangerous" school within the last two years, and be in compliance with other USDE requirements.

Texas Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said, "The Blue Ribbon School award brings well-deserved recognition to these 26 outstanding schools and demonstrates that you can find excellent performance in schools of all sizes. I'm proud that the U.S. Department of Education's award recognizes the strong academic work that is occurring in our schools."

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and the Department of Education will honor the Blue Ribbon School recipients and highlight their achievements at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 20-21. The award recipients will be recognized as national models of excellence.

### 2008-09 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

Ben Milam Elementary School  
Lakewood Elementary School  
School of Business & Management  
**Dallas ISD**

Liberty-Eylau Middle School  
**Liberty-Eylau ISD**

Centerville Elementary School  
**Garland ISD**

Schulenburg Elementary School  
**Schulenburg ISD**

Roan Forest Elementary School  
**North East ISD**

Taylor Ray Elementary School  
**Lamar CISD**

Shepard Elementary School  
**Plano ISD**

Anderson Elementary School  
**Frisco ISD**

Big Springs Elementary School  
**Richardson ISD**

Bivins Elementary School  
**Amarillo ISD**

Samuel Beck Elementary School  
**Northwest ISD**

Landergin Elementary School  
**Amarillo ISD**

Liberty Elementary School  
**Eagle Pass ISD**

Cinco Ranch High School  
**Katy ISD**

Boerne Middle School South  
**Boerne ISD**

Wylie High School  
**Wylie ISD**

Slaton High School  
**Slaton ISD**

Club Estates Elementary School  
Shaw SES Elementary School  
**Corpus Christi ISD**

Carnegie Vanguard High School  
Hartsfield Elementary School  
Harvard Elementary School  
Peck Elementary School  
Pin Oak Middle School  
**Houston ISD**

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

# Special meeting held to make up for one cancelled by Ike

The State Board of Education met Sept. 29 and took the following actions.

At second reading and final adoption, the board:

- Approved an amendment directing the Texas Education Agency to release state assessments every three years, as required by Senate Bill (SB) 1031, which was passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007.

Currently, the tests are released every two years. Additionally, the board agreed that, in non-release years, field test items that are at least four years old and that are no longer eligible for inclusion on a subsequent test form will be released. The new release schedule will be implemented in 2009 and will affect assessments given in the 2008-2009 school year.

- Gave final approval to revisions to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Spanish Language Arts and English as a Second Language for elementary, middle and high school grades. The implementation date for the revised Spanish language arts TEKS is the 2009-2010 school year.

In other actions, the board:

- Agreed to award 14 Texas businesses the 2008 Employers for Education Excellence Award at the board's November meeting. The award honors employers who implement a policy to encourage and support employees who actively participate in activities of schools and can be recognized at the 1) bronze, 2) silver, or 3) gold level of recognition.
- Approved a question and answer document for Proclamation 2010 answering more than 200 questions submitted by publishers who are interested in submitting instructional materials.
- Approved amendments adding the TEKS for Spanish Language Arts and Reading, Grades K-1; Spanish Reading, Grades 2-5; Spanish Literature, Grade 6; English for Speakers of Other Languages I and II; and college readiness standards to Proclamation 2010, scheduled for adoption in November 2009.
- Approved amendments adding Spanish Language Arts, Grades 2-6, and the inclusion of college readiness standards to Proclamation 2011, scheduled for adoption in November 2010.

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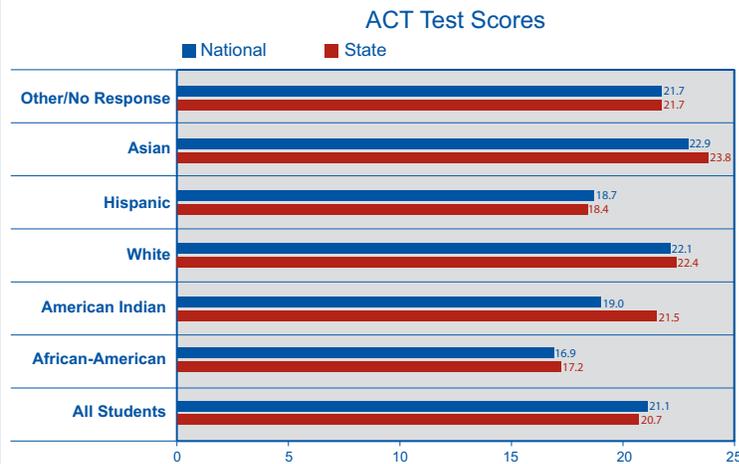
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**TEST RESULTS**

**More students in Class of 2008 taking ACT, SAT**

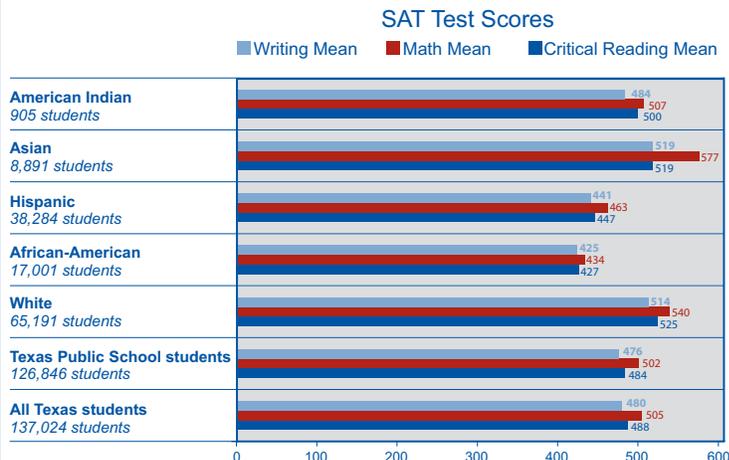


**ACT**

Texas set a new state record for the number of ACT test takers with 79,050 students in the graduating Class of 2008 taking the exam.

For the third straight year in a row, Texas public and private school graduates increased their ACT composite score, setting a new state record with an all-time high average of 20.7, even while the national average score dropped.

Texas scores rose this year on each of the four subject-area tests for reading, English, math, and science. The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36, with 36 being the highest possible score.



**SAT**

Overall, 137,024 students or 50 percent of the 2008 graduates of Texas public and private schools took the SAT. That is a 3.8 percent increase over last year.

While the state's testing population increased, SAT scores declined. Texas students in public and private schools earned an average score of 488 on the critical reading exam, a four-point decrease. The average math score was 505 and the average writing score was 480.