

TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY



"Untitled" by Roberto Reyes, Premier High School-San Juan

News from the Texas Education Agency

NOVEMBER 2009

GRADUATION PLANS

Board revises course requirements to align graduation plans

The State Board of Education gave preliminary approval to revisions to two high school graduation plans to bring them in line with the Recommended High School Program.

This spring, the Texas Legislature eliminated some specific course requirements students must complete for the Recommended High School Program (RHSP), which is the graduation plan followed by most Texas public school students.

Legislators eliminated the requirement that students take a one-semester health class, a one-year technology applications class and reduced the amount of physical education classes high school students must take by one semester. By doing so, students are given more flexibility to take elective courses. Students who entered

ninth grade in the 2007-2008 school year and beyond are still required to earn four credits each of math, science, English and social studies.

Because students sometimes transfer between graduation plans, the board took preliminary action to align the 22-credit Minimum High School Program and the 26-credit Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) with the 26-credit Recommended Program.

These changes include:

- Eliminating the requirement that students take a health class;
- Eliminating the requirement that students take a technology applications class;
- Reducing the number of physical education credits required from 1.5 to one credit;
- Increasing the number of elective credits to 7.5 for the minimum plan and 4.5 for the DAP.

In addition, under all three graduation programs, students will be allowed to earn up to four credits for athletics. Team sports and individual sports will be

replaced with four new courses.

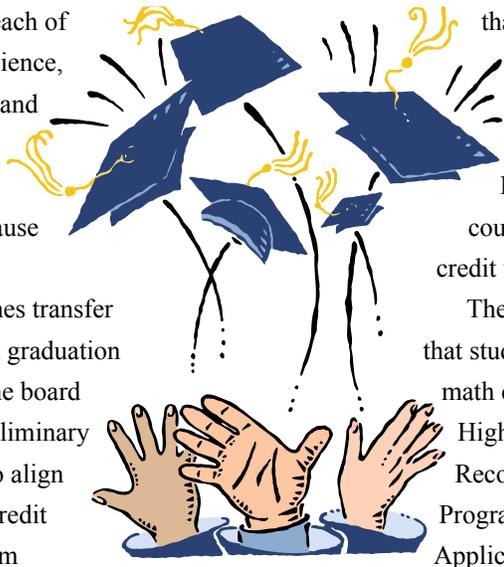
Board members also added courses that may be taken for math, science, fine arts and speech credit. A Career and Technical Education class called Professional Communications could now be taken for speech credit under this proposal.

The board approved three courses that students will be able to take for math credit under the Minimum High School Program and the Recommended High School Program. Those are: Mathematical Applications in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Engineering Mathematics; and Statistics and Risk Management. Students will be able to take Engineering Mathematics and Statistics for Risk Management under the DAP.

Additional classes will also be available for science credit. Students following the Recommended and DAP programs could receive science credit for classes such as Engineering Design and Problem Solving, Advanced Biotechnology, Advanced Animal Science, Advanced Plant and Soil Science and Food Science.

To comply with new legislative requirements, the board also added a fine arts credit to the Minimum plan.

All of these changes are subject to review and final approval at the Jan. 13-15 board meeting.



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OUTSTANDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

North East ISD principal receives Terrel H. Bell Award

Dr. Donna Newman, principal of Garner Middle School in San Antonio's North East Independent School District, received the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership at the 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Newman was one of eight principals across the country to receive the Terrel H. Bell Award this year.

Named for the former U.S. Secretary of Education, the Terrel H. Bell Award recognizes outstanding school leaders and the vital role they play in overcoming challenging circumstances.

Principals nominated for this award are school leaders committed to fostering successful teaching and learning at their schools. They are principals who do whatever it takes to help their students meet high standards and are committed to the notion that in educating America's children, failure is no option.

Secretary Bell held education as his highest priority, trusting that all students

would find it their personal key to success as he had. Principals chosen as Bell award recipients have transformed their schools. They have set high standards and expectations for all, including themselves. They have shattered the false stereotypes that students living in poverty or with limited English proficiency cannot achieve at high levels. Their vision and collaborative leadership styles have produced outstanding results for all their students regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. They have shown that with effective leadership and teaching and a conviction that all students can learn, schools are powerful, joyful places that generate energy in their communities.

Dr. Newman's selection was based on the school's application for the 2009 Blue Ribbon School Award. The selection panel stated "Dr. Donna Newman is an outstanding school leader who inspires, guides and sustains others; she is a leader willing to do whatever it takes to meet students' needs. She shows that with



Dr. Donna Newman, principal at Garner Middle School, North East ISD.

effective leadership and teaching and a conviction that all students can learn makes schools powerful, joyful places that generate energy in their communities."

Garner Middle School was named a Blue Ribbon School this fall.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY CONTEST

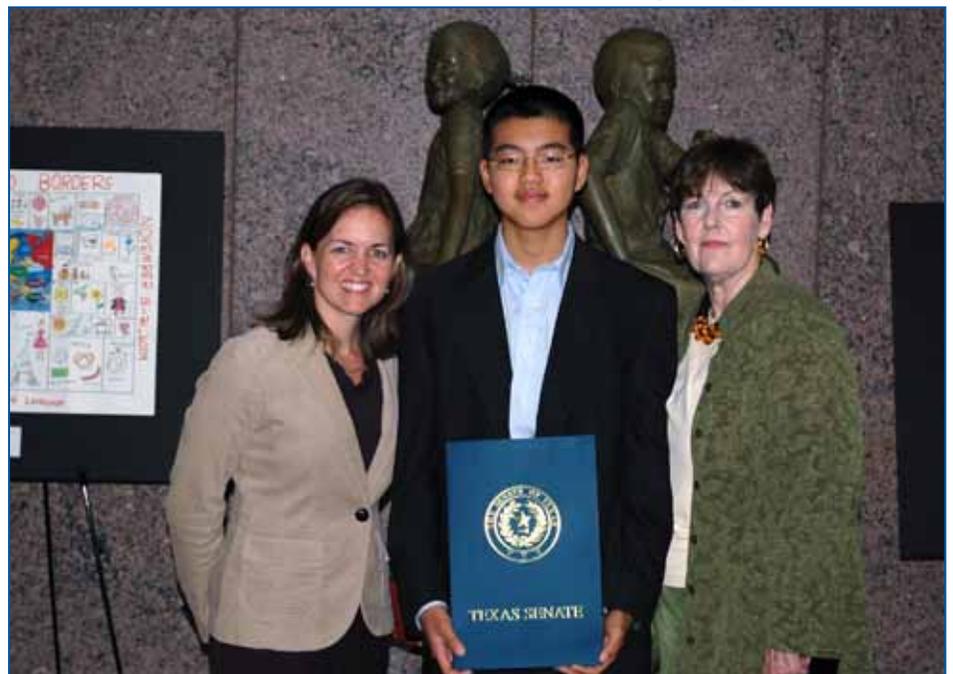
Texas seventh-grader wins 2009 National Geographic Bee

Eric Yang, a seventh-grade student at Griffin Middle School in the Lewisville Independent School District was honored at the November State Board of Education meeting for winning the 2009 National Geographic Bee.

Yang is the first Texan to win this prestigious competition in its 20-year history by correctly answering this question: Timis Country shares its name with a tributary of the Danube and is located in the western part of which European country?

The answer: Romania.

Pictured from left to right: A representative from National Geographic with Bee winner Eric Yang and State Board of Education member Patricia Hardy.



TOP TEACHERS

El Paso, Wichita Falls teachers named 2010 Teachers of the Year

Yushica Walker, a sixth-grade science teacher at Morehead Middle School in the El Paso Independent School District, was named the 2010 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year, and math and language arts teacher Donna Patrick of Southern Hills Elementary School in the Wichita Falls ISD was named the state's new Elementary Teacher of the Year.

Walker and Patrick learned of this top honor at a special ceremony and luncheon at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin on Oct. 30. Both Walker and Patrick were awarded a cash prize of \$5,000, a SMART Board technology package worth more than \$16,500, a laptop computer and a commemorative trophy.

Each educator vying for the top honors submitted an application that answers questions about their teaching philosophy and background. Secondary Teacher of the Year Walker writes that it was her aunt Willie Mae, a veteran teacher in Houston, who inspired her to become an educator. "With the exposure that my aunt gave me to the teaching profession, I knew that I wanted to be what I saw in her. She epitomizes what a teacher should be, inside as well as outside the classroom. I knew that money was not her drive; it was the love she had for her students. Teaching is unconditional love; therefore, I believe that teaching has to come from the heart and students are keenly aware of teachers that truly love to teach."

Elementary Teacher of the Year Patrick had this to say: "As I look back on 30 years teaching in various schools, I am proud of the many personal accomplishments made possible by the people I encountered in life. But like any teacher, my true success is with my students. My central goal is to prepare each of my students to be successful in life. I encourage them to take challenging risks because they know that I will always be there as their safety net."

In addition to the state's top two educators, the other 37 outstanding regional Teachers of the Year were honored. The four additional state finalists received a \$750 cash prize along with a commemorative trophy, and 33 regional teachers each received a \$500 award and a commemorative trophy.

"I want to congratulate each teacher honored at this event. These teachers dedicate themselves to their students, their schools and their communities. They do what they do because



Elementary Teacher of the Year, Donna Patrick (left), teaches at Southern Hills Elementary School in Wichita Falls ISD; Secondary Teacher of the Year, Yushica Walker, teaches at Morehead Middle School in the El Paso ISD.

they truly care, because they want to make a difference," said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

To achieve recognition through this program, a teacher must first be chosen as a campus and a district Teacher of the Year, and ultimately an elementary and secondary regional honoree may be selected. From this group of regional winners, six finalists are chosen and interviewed by an independent panel of judges. The state's top elementary and secondary teacher is selected from the six outstanding finalists.

Walker, Texas' Secondary Teacher of the Year, will advance to compete for the National Teacher of the Year award.

The Texas Teacher of the Year program, considered the top teaching award in the state, is sponsored by the Texas Education Agency with financial support or in-kind donations from the following generous benefactors:

- AT&T
- H-E-B
- SMARTer Kids Foundation
- First Financial Capital Corporation
- Intel
- Association of Texas Professional Educators
- State Board of Education
- Texas ASCD
- Texas School of Public Relations Association
- Texas Association of School Administrators
- Texas Business and Education Coalition
- Texas State Teachers Association
- Texas Association of School Boards
- Texas Computer Education Association
- Texas Association of School Business Officials
- Texas Association for School Nutrition
- Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers Association
- Texas Association of Secondary School Principals
- Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association
- Texas Federation of Teachers
- Texas Classroom Teachers Association
- Texas Association of Partners in Education
- Texas Council of Women School Executives

\$25,000 PRIZE**Two Austin-area educators win Milken Award**

On a typical day, *Maricruz Aguayo-Tabor* is busy teaching world history and European history classes, mentoring teachers, working with students in the math club and running the social studies department at Austin's Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School. But last month her normal schedule was interrupted by a school-wide assembly. Unaware of the real reason for the gathering, Aguayo-Tabor was plucked from the crowd of cheering students and faculty in the gym and told that she was a recipient of the 2009 Milken Educator Award.

Adelaida Olivares, principal of the Freshman Academy at Del Valle High School, thought Gov. Rick Perry, Commissioner of Education Robert Scott and Superintendent Bernard Blanchard were coming to her campus to salute the school for earning a Recognized rating from the state. But during a morning assembly, Olivares got the surprise of her life when she learned that she was receiving a Milken Educator Award.

Given by the Milken Family Foundation of California, the award carries with it a cash prize of \$25,000, which Aguayo-Tabor and Olivares can spend on anything they wish. They are two of only 50 educators in the entire country to receive the Milken Award this year.

Dubbed "the Oscars of teaching" by Teacher Magazine, the Milken Educator Awards were conceived by Lowell Milken, chairman of the Milken Family Foundation, to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter the teaching profession. He said, "Milken Educators represent the best of what the American teaching profession is and can be."



Maricruz Aguayo-Tabor, history teacher at Austin ISD's Liberal Arts and Science Academy, stands in disbelief as she is named winner of the Milken Educator Award.

The awards alternate each year between elementary and secondary educators. Since first presented in 1987 to 12 exemplary California teachers, the Milken Educator Awards program is now the nation's largest teacher recognition program having honored more than 2,400 educators nationwide with over \$60 million.

Texas has participated in the program since 2000 and now has 40 educators who have received this prestigious award and earned a total of \$1 million in prize money.

The educators never know in advance that they are under consideration for the award.

Both Texas recipients come from humble families in the Rio Grande Valley. They bring a passion and excitement to their work, which brought them to the attention of the state of Texas and the Milken foundation.

Aguayo-Tabor sets up her world history class at the LASA magnet school like a graduate class in which students study specific topics in-depth. They research large global issues, such as world hunger and diseases. In her Advanced Placement European history class, students turned their research into a film.

It's no surprise that she has twice been named the LASA Teacher of the Year and is a teacher whom students refer to frequently when they go out to middle schools and other high schools in the district on student recruiting trips.

One colleague said students enjoy Aguayo-Tabor's classes so much that they ask other teachers to schedule field trips around her class so they won't miss it.

Aguayo-Tabor, who holds a National Board Certification, is a recognized leader throughout her school. She has served as a



Gov. Rick Perry congratulates Milken winner Adelaida Olivares as she poses with Milken Family Foundation representative Gary Stark, Del Valle ISD superintendent Bernard Blanchard, Commissioner of Education Robert Scott, and Del Valle High School principal Jean MacInnis.

SHARP STUDENTS**National History Day winners honored at SBOE meeting**

The State Board of Education honored winners of the 2009 National History Day contest, which was held in College Park, MD in June.

Pictured, from left to right: Eisenhower High School principal Therese Samperi, Aldine ISD; Eisenhower High School teachers Debra Brown and Carol Michael; students Alejandro Suazo; Jonathan Espinoza (Back); Zuleyma Escobar; Nernwon Kargou; and Clifton Boudreaux (Back) from Eisenhower High School in the Aldine ISD.

Student Kara Roberts, Boerne High School (formerly of Boerne Middle



School North) in Boerne ISD; Stephen Cure (Back), Director of Educational Services, Texas State Historical Association; and teacher Bryan Degner of Boerne Middle School North.

◆MILKEN *continued*

mentor teacher for five years. She is the social studies department chair and serves on many campus committees. Although Aguayo-Tabor does not teach math, she sponsors LASA's math club and was named one of the top 25 math teachers in the country because of her tireless sponsorship and support of the math team

Texas' other award recipient, Adelaida Olivares, also stands out as an inspirational leader. Olivares, the daughter of migrant farm workers, was selected for the award because in her short 10-year career, she has already earned a reputation as an educator's educator, dedicated to bringing out the best in her teachers, her students, their parents and school volunteers.

She cares fervently about the students. Her passion to provide them with the best education possible provides infectious inspiration to her teachers.

"Both Adelaida Olivares and Maricruz Aguayo-Tabor are inspirations to us all. They make a difference every day they are in our schools," Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said.

Olivares joined Del Valle immediately after college as a bilingual kindergarten teacher. By age 28, the district had named her principal of Ojeda Junior High School. After two years of success in that job, Olivares was named principal of the Freshman Academy, which is a school within Del Valle High School.

Before the creation of the ninth grade center, 45 percent of the high school freshmen were retained. With the steps Olivares has taken, the retention rate has dropped to 19 percent.

One of those steps involved creating a mandatory freshman orientation for students and parents. She did so because she realized that both students and parents did not understand the system of awarding course credits in high school. The first year she held the orientation, she offered 17 different sessions so people could attend whenever it fit their schedule. Orientation is part of her Pathways to Success program, which connects the school, the students and the parents to the success of each child. This program also helps students learn organizational skills and teaches them how to keep track of their assignments and grades.

Because she is bilingual, she is also able to speak to many families in their home language, which makes them feel more comfortable when they are at school. She has a strong relationship with the families because she has moved up with the students as they have advanced. She has now worked in elementary, middle and high schools.

Olivares and Aguayo-Tabor will receive all-expenses paid trips to Los Angeles May 14-16 to attend the Milken Educator Forum where they will receive their awards.

TECHNOLOGY

TEA, The New York Times and Epsilen LLC to collaborate on innovative eLearning portal

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with Epsilen LLC, and The New York Times Company, is pleased to announce Project Share, a new initiative to expand the development and delivery of high quality professional development in an interactive and engaging eLearning environment and provide access to online resources, online course content, academic networking, and professional learning communities.

Project Share will utilize a single online environment to leverage existing and new professional development resources

for teachers across the state and build professional learning communities where educators can collaborate, share, and tailor professional development to meet individual needs.

Professional learning communities provide opportunities for educators to share ideas, effective classroom strategies and knowledge of current education research. Project Share will also provide opportunities for extensive interactions among teachers and students, showcasing accomplishments through ePortfolios, and new forms of evaluation through online student assessments.

“Project Share is a cutting edge initiative that will allow teachers to share classroom practices that work well with teachers all over Texas and the country in a new and exciting way. It will allow students to do in-depth research in a real time fashion that connects them with experts. It will also allow the state and its partners to deliver training to educators in an interactive and timely manner,” said Robert Scott, commissioner of education.

The Epsilen Environment offers opportunities to enhance the eLearning environment through its comprehensive suite of tools for teaching, interacting, col-



laborating and assessment. Project Share will also provide more than 150 years of articles, videos, and interactive features from The New York Times Knowledge Network Content Repository (NYTKN Repository), which houses NYT and other digital content and resources dating back to 1851. The Epsilen Environment and NYTKN Repository allow teachers to use existing content and specifically align it with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

Project Share will not only ensure that Texas is leading the way in addressing the 21st century needs of our classrooms, but it will also to lead a cutting edge effort in the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers, specifically those teachers with a commitment to infusing web 2.0 technology tools in the classroom.

“Education has long been a focus for The Times Company and Project Share is an exciting and innovative initiative,” said Janet L. Robinson, president and chief executive officer, The New York Times Company. “As majority owner of Epsilen,

we are very pleased to collaborate with The Texas Education Agency and Epsilen on this innovative approach to statewide education and excellence.”

The first phase of Project Share begins with building a community of practitioners dedicated to improving teaching and learning through collaborative professional development and ongoing support. A series of webinars, presentations, and training opportunities will be provided to acquaint educators and other stakeholders with the various components of Project Share. Learn more about Project Share at www.tea.state.tx.us/projectshare.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY

The New York Times Company, a leading media company with 2008 revenues of \$2.9 billion, includes The New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, The Boston Globe, 15 other daily newspapers and more than 50 Web sites, including NYTimes.com, Boston.com and About.com. The Company’s core purpose is to enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news, information and entertainment.

ABOUT EPSILEN

Epsilen Environment combines Web 2.0 social networking with the best practices of eLearning course delivery. Epsilen Environment is a hosted online solution featuring ePortfolios, global networking and learning management that enhance learning across a campus or around the world. In March 2008, The New York Times Company purchased a majority ownership interest in Epsilen, LLC, and provides Epsilen’s clients with a repository of New York Times articles, multimedia and archives dating back to 1851.

SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Employers honored for service to public schools

The State Board of Education honored 11 Texas businesses, organizations and governmental entities for encouraging employees to volunteer in the state's 8,000-plus public schools.

Each was presented with an Employers for Education Excellence (EEE) Award, which is designed to promote more community involvement in Texas public schools.

"This is well-deserved recognition for these companies and businesses that encourage their staff members to attend parent-teacher conferences, mentor students, assist with special projects, and volunteer in many other ways in our public schools," said Gail Lowe, chair of the State Board of Education. "The entire board joins me in commending these employers for their visible commitment to public education."

The award is open to any employer in the state, including private businesses or corporations, nonprofit organizations, state and government agencies, and educational entities that have at least one employee.

The EEE Awards are given in three categories – Gold, Silver and Bronze. Winners in the Gold Award category have implemented policies that encourage and support employees who attend parent-teacher conferences, who implement policies to encourage employees to volunteer in school activities, and who support employees who participate in student mentoring programs.

All 2009 Employers for Education Excellence award winners are in the Gold category. The honorees are:

ADMINISTAFF of Kingwood. The company partners with Humble Independent School District to support the Students United in Reading Fun mentoring program. Administaff is also actively involved in fundraising activities for the Humble ISD Education Foundation.

The ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS of Austin. The organization has purchased books for students, sponsored field trips and provided employee mentors and tutors for Harris Elementary in Austin Independent School District.

The CITY OF FORT WORTH. Through its 100 Mentors in 100 Days Program, the City of Fort Worth has been highly supportive of employees volunteering as mentors so at-risk youth will stay in school.

Flint Hills Resources of Corpus Christi. Company employees teach business economics to students in the Tuloso-Midway Independent School District and also spend time one-on-one with students in the district.

HUCKABEE & ASSOCIATES, INC. of Fort Worth. Company employees can take time off to attend parent-teacher conferences and school programs and to serve as tutors and role models for students in the Crowley Independent School District.

JOHNSTON LEGAL GROUP of Fort Worth. The law firm started a reading program to help students who are struggling with reading skills at I.M. Terrell Elementary School in the Fort Worth Independent School District.

The firm also provided attorneys to talk to students about their profession during a school-wide Career Day.

RED RIVER CREDIT UNION of Texarkana. Employees have served as student advisors on financial literacy and have helped implement a financial education curriculum at the Pleasant Grove Independent School District.

TEXANS CREDIT UNION of Richardson. The credit union encourages employees to interact with students as professional role models and to work with the Dallas Independent School District students on issues of financial literacy.

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS of Austin. The association has supported employees who serve as mentors in the Seedling Foundation, an organization which works to support Austin Independent School District students whose parents are incarcerated.

TEXAS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY of Fort Worth. The university endeavors to enhance academics in the Fort Worth Independent School District and offers employees time off to work with students on science, math and music studies.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, Fort Worth. The agency sponsors an employee Pen Pal Mentoring program in which workers help with reading and writing skills by corresponding with fourth-grade students at Van Zandt-Guinn Elementary in Fort Worth.

This is the second year for the EEE Award, which was created by the Legislature in the 2007 session. For more information, go to <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/edex/empedexaward.html>



LEADERSHIP**State Board member Geraldine Miller receives Simmons Luminary Award**

Former State Board of Education chair Geraldine “Tincy” Miller of Dallas received a Simmons Luminary Award from Southern Methodist University’s Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education on November 19. The award recognizes outstanding leaders in education.

“I am honored to be a part of such an esteemed group of individuals,” Miller said. “Over my 25 years serving District 12 in the State Board of Education, I have made it my mission to ensure that every Texas public school student has the resources they need to succeed. The two other honorees have each made a significant contribution to education. I am humbled to receive this great honor.”

Awards were also be presented to former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and St. Philip’s School and Community Center Headmaster and Executive Director, Terry J. Flowers.

“The Simmons Luminary Awards honor women and men

who are real education reformers - people willing to step outside the status quo and follow evidence, rather than tradition, to improve outcomes for our students,” said David Chard, Leon Simmons Dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School. “This year’s three recipients serve as beacons on the education landscape.”

Miller has served on the State Board of Education since 1984. She has distinguished herself by promoting better curricula and programs for dyslexic children and for promoting strong early reading programs.



Geraldine Miller

STUDENT PERFORMANCE**Lancaster High School choir performs at SBOE meeting**

Under the direction of Garry Williams, the Lancaster High School Choir in the Lancaster Independent School District performed at the State Board of Education meeting on Nov. 20. Pictured with the choir are (from left to right): Lancaster High School Principal, Roosevelt Nivens; State Board of Education member Mavis B. Knight; board chair, Gail Lowe; and Lancaster High School choir director, Garry Williams.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

26 Texas schools nominated for Blue Ribbon honors

Commissioner Robert Scott announced the nomination of 26 Texas public schools for the 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools recognition. The award honors schools for academic excellence and making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

For the past 27 years, this prestigious program has honored more than 5,800 of America's most successful schools, including almost 500 Texas schools. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools. The schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- schools that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests;
- schools whose students achieve in the top 10 percent of their

state on state tests.

The nominated schools were recommended by an intra-agency committee that examined student achievement statistics for the more than 8,000 public school and charter campuses in the state. The schools selected have demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap and each school has an economically disadvantaged population of 40 percent or greater. Schools nominated for the award serve as models of best practices for schools across the state.

The nominated schools will now complete a rigorous application process through the U.S. Department of Education. Blue Ribbon winners will be announced in September 2010.

2010 Blue Ribbon Nominees

Schools nominated for the High Performance category are:

ALIEF ISD* – Dr. Louis B. Stoerner, superintendent
Alief High – Greg Freeman, principal

DALLAS ISD – Dr. Michael Hinojosa, superintendent
H.S. Thompson Learning Center – Kamalia Cotton, principal
James B. Bonham Elementary – Sandra Fernandez, principal

GLASSCOCK COUNTY ISD* – Steve Long, superintendent
Garden City High – Misty Kinnibrugh, principal

HOUSTON ISD – Dr. Terry B. Grier, superintendent
J.P. Cornelius Elementary – Karen Jackson, principal
James Burrus Elementary – Jesse Woods, Jr., principal
Oak Forest Elementary – Scott Pollack, principal
Briar Meadow Middle – Peter Heinze, principal

JACKSONVILLE ISD* – Dr. Joe Wardell, superintendent
West Side Elementary – Sandi Jones, principal

LA VEGA ISD* – Dr. Sharon M. Shields, superintendent
La Vega Elementary – Chris Borland, principal

LONE OAK ISD* – Eddie White, superintendent
Lone Oak Elementary – Judy Steadham, principal

MASON ISD* – Matthews Mason Underwood, superintendent
Mason High – Pam Kruse, principal

RICHARDSON ISD – Dr. Carolyn G. Bukhair, superintendent
Dover Elementary – Brona Comeaux-Hudson, principal

SOUTH TEXAS ISD – Dr. Marla M. Guerra, superintendent
South Texas High School for Health Professions – Barbara Heater, principal

THE VARNETT SCHOOL* – M. Annette Cluff, superintendent
The Varnett School – East Campus – Twilet Alexander, principal

UNITED ISD* – Roberto J. Santos, superintendent
Trautmann Elementary – Cynthia Rodriguez, principal

The schools nominated for Dramatic Improvement are:

AUSTIN ISD – Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen, superintendent
Dorothy A. Linder Elementary – Beverly Odom, principal

BEAUMONT ISD – Dr. Carrol Thomas, superintendent
Ogden Elementary – Wayne Wells, principal

BLOOMINGTON ISD* – Bradley S. Williams, superintendent
Bloomington Elementary – Israel Salinas, principal

CORPUS CHRISTI ISD – D. Scott Elliff, superintendent
Marvin Baker Middle – Darla Reid, principal

Houston ISD – Dr. Terry B. Grier, superintendent
Albert Sidney Johnston Middle – David Wheat, principal

HURST-EULESS-BEDFORD ISD – Dr. Gene Buinger, superintendent
Central Junior High – Jonathan James, principal
Hurst Junior High – Leslie Guajardo, principal

JACKSONVILLE ISD* – Dr. Joe Wardell, superintendent
Fred Douglass Elementary – Amber Penn, principal

RICHARDSON ISD – Dr. Carolyn G. Bukhair, superintendent
Lake Highlands Junior High – Veronica Escalante, principal

SCURRY-ROSSER ISD* – Chris Couch, superintendent
Scurry-Rosser Middle – Jason Turner, principal

* This is the first Blue Ribbon School nomination for the district.

State Board Actions

The State Board of Education met Nov. 20 and took the following actions.

FIRST READING

At first reading and filing authorization, the board:

- Voted to repeal the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) adopted to be effective in 1998 for Kindergarten-Grade 8 and English I-IV, and related implementation language, that were superseded by 19 TAC §§110.10-110.20 and §§110.30-110.34 beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. Members also approved amendments to remove references to repealed rules.

- Voted to repeal the TEKS adopted to be effective in 1998 for Kindergarten-Grade 6 and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) I and II, and related implementation language, that were superseded by 19 TAC §§128.10-128.18 and §§128.30-128.32 of this chapter beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. Members also approved amendments removing references to rules that were repealed.

- Approved changes to the instructional materials review and adoption process in Chapter 66 of the Texas Administrative Code resulting from legislation from the 81st Texas Legislature, 2009.

SECOND READING

At second reading and final adoption, the board:

- Approved an amendment related to graduation requirements for all three diploma plans consistent with House Bill 3 passed by the 81st Texas Legislature. This includes adding a fine arts requirement to the Minimum High School Program and reducing physical education requirements.

- Approved revisions necessary to reflect legislation that passed during the 81st Texas Legislature, 2009, that amend an existing rule allowing teachers to modify the suggested sequence and pace of the parenting and paternity awareness (p.a.p.a.) program that districts must use in high school health classes. It allows the program to be used in middle schools but students younger than 14 years old must have parental permission to participate in the program. It amends rules governing physical education classes. The changes include emphasizing lifetime physical activity and requiring that at least 50 percent of the PE class must be used for actual student physical activity.

- Approved revisions to the assessment rules related to student testing, graduation, grade advancement, remediation, release of tests, performance standards, and private school administration of state tests. These revisions align the assessment rules with recent legislation in House Bill 3.

- Approved an amendment to the rules for public senior college or university charters by adding public junior colleges as potential charter holders, granted under Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 12, Subchapter E as amended by House Bill (HB) 1423, 81st Texas Legislature.

IN OTHER ACTION

In other actions, the board:

- Approved a schedule of per-student costs for administering TAKS tests to private school students for 2009-2010.

- Ratified the purchases and sales of the investment portfolio of the Permanent School Fund (PSF) for the months of August and September 2009 in the amount of \$713,141,042 and \$698,265,678, respectively.

- Approved the reappointment of Reynaldo Trevino to the board of trustees of the Lackland ISD for a two-year term from Nov. 19, 2009, to Nov. 18, 2011.

- Moved the review of the technology applications TEKS to the Committee on Instruction.

- Voted to transfer \$60.7 million from the PSF to the Available School Fund during fiscal year 2010.

- Approved Proclamation 2010 which calls for new instructional materials to be used in school districts and open-enrollment charter schools beginning in school year 2010-2011. Proclamation 2010 includes English language arts and reading, Grades K-1; Spanish language arts and reading, Grades K-1; reading, Grades 2-5; Spanish reading, Grades 2-5; reading elective, Grades 6-8; literature, Grades 6-12; Spanish literature, Grade 6; English for Speakers of Other Languages I and II; English Language Proficiency Standards Teacher Material, Grades 9-12; Advanced Placement (AP) English Language; AP English literature; and International Baccalaureate (IB) language studies. More than 100 programs were placed on the conforming list and will be available for use in the schools next fall. Five publications were granted permission to withdraw from the process.

- Rejected an offer to accept statewide licenses for online instructional materials for use in school districts and open-enrollment charter schools because members felt that it was not clear to all publishers that they could offer a statewide license for consideration.

- Approved a question and answer document with more than 200 questions asked by publishers about Proclamation 2011.

- Approved penalties for textbook publishers that failed to correct factual errors in instructional materials adopted under Proclamations 2000, 2004, and 2005. The following textbook publishers were assessed a penalty: Saxon in the amount of \$149,485.17; SRA/McGraw-Hill in the amount of \$157,766.48; Glencoe/McGraw-Hill in the amount of \$5,000; and Teachers' Curriculum Institute in the amount of \$5,000.
- Voted to set the indirect cost rate for the Foundation School Program at 45 percent for special education, bilingual education and special language programs, and gifted and talented education allotments; and an indirect cost rate of 40 percent for the career and technology education allotment.
- Approved an amendment to requirements for student attendance accounting for state funding purposes.
- Voted to impose \$341,776.75 in total penalties for publishers' back-ordered instructional materials. The amount is based on one percent of the average value of back-ordered materials for each day the instructional materials remained on back order after the first day of school year 2008-2009 and require each publisher to issue credit to the agency.
- Selected HOV Services of Houston for the production of large type instructional materials for the visually impaired; Region 20 Education Service Center (ESC) to produce Braille masters from Packages A and B; Visual Aid Volunteers to produce Braille masters from Packages C and D, Region 4 ESC to produce Braille masters from Package E; Region 20 ESC to produce Braille copies from Packages A and B; Region 4 ESC to produce Braille copies from Packages C and D; and Braille Jymico to produce Braille copies from Package E, and authorized the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contracts.
- Approved a list of 67 qualified candidates to provide investment management services for real estate.
- Placed Goldman Sachs on an absolute return strategy watch list for 90 days and directed that the firm's status be reviewed at the March 2010 PSF Committee meeting.
- Took no action on certification rules updating the school counselor, school librarian, educational diagnostician, reading specialist, and master teacher certificates.
- Took no action on amendments to certification rules repealing current rules for the American Sign Language (ASL) certificate, based on standards established for the Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TExES).
- Adopted the application for the 15th generation of open-enrollment charter schools. The application will be available Dec. 4 to prospective applicants and is due to the agency by 5 p.m. Feb. 25, 2010. Open-enrollment charters under the Generation 15 process are scheduled to be awarded in September 2010, with schools scheduled to open in Fall of 2011. The new application was approved with a provision that any charter contingencies not cleared after six months post-award, will require the applicant to return before the board to discuss the status of the charter.
- Approved the application for the public college or university open-enrollment charters by adding public junior colleges as entities entitled to apply for and open charter schools.

RULES & REGULATIONS

State Board updates ethics policies, operating rules

In an effort to have clear and stringent ethic rules, State Board of Education members in November updated and clarified rules that govern the conduct of members, vendors and bidders.

"The rules put forward by the Permanent School Fund committee and state board are more stringent than almost anyone else's out there," said board member Pat Hardy, R-Weatherford.

Board members approved amendments to its Investment Procedures Manual to clarify the rules surrounding the no-contact period that exists while a bid is active. They also adopted a provision that says any bidder found in violation of the no-contact period will be disqualified from the bidding process.

The board amended its operating rules as well and will now require board members to report annually all businesses in which

they hold a substantial interest. This will provide transparency in determining whether any potential conflicts of interest exist.

To align its procedures with those of the Texas Ethics Commission, the board revised rules dealing with the disclosures of campaign contributions or benefits. The rule now requires those doing business with the board to disclose if they have spent more than \$250 during the preceding four years on a board member. Previously, the board's rule had a \$50 disclosure requirement, which caused a disparity with Ethics Commission requirements.

Members also began the process of updating the ethics policies that deal specifically with the Permanent School Fund. A preliminary vote on those changes is expected at the board's Jan. 13-15 meeting.

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FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Despite turbulent markets, Permanent School Fund's value rebounds

Despite turbulence in financial markets worldwide, the Permanent School Fund, which is overseen by the State Board of Education, has rebounded to a value of almost \$22 billion, up from \$15.9 billion last spring.

Gail Lowe, chair of the State Board of Education, said, "Given the market conditions of the last year when many asset classes fell 25 to more than 40 percent, the Permanent School Fund has turned in a better than anticipated return. The allocation to the absolute return asset class has proven effective in reducing risk to the PSF during a very volatile period, and that is essential in protecting this endowment fund for future generations of Texas public schoolchildren."

A recent analysis shows that for the past 12 months, ending Sept. 30, the PSF total return was 2.55 percent. It was 4.74 percent annualized for the past five years.

"This was a solid return for a year in which the capital markets experienced the worst decline since the Great Depression with a high degree of volatility. In addition, the fund outperformed its

policy benchmark by 84 basis points," said Holland Timmins, chief investment officer of the fund.

The major areas of strength for the fund were:

- Superior fixed income performance which substantially outperformed its benchmark;
- Solid performance by the domestic and international index portfolios, outperforming their respective benchmarks;
- The benefit from the 10 percent investment in absolute return asset class which provided downside protection during the bear market;
- A disciplined rebalancing policy in which the PSF moved funds from equities to fixed income while equities were peaking in 2007. Those assets were then moved back to equities while the asset class was bottoming out.

The Permanent School Fund was established in 1854 with a \$2 million state investment. The fund helps to pay for textbooks and other educational expenses. Since 1960, the fund has provided more than \$19 billion in financial support to the Texas public schools.