Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency

Commissioner visits three West Texas schools



Commissioner of Education Michael Williams visits Roscoe ISD -Home of the Plowboys!



Commissioner Williams sits in on an Commissioner Williams visits a 3D 8th grade Algebra I class at Terra Vista Middle School (Frenship ISD).



drafting class at the Byron Martin Advanced Technology Center (Lubbock ISD).

2013 graduation rates exceed national average

The Texas graduation rate hit 88 percent for the second consecutive year, tying Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota and Wisconsin for the nation's second highest. [complete story on page 2]

STAAR EOC passing rate hits 90 percent Following the December administration of State of Texas

Assessments of Academic Readiness end-of-course exams, 90.3 percent of students in the Class of 2015 successfully completed exams required for graduation. [complete story on page 4]

Clifton ISD teacher wins Milken Educator Award

A fifth-grade English Language Arts and Reading teacher at Clifton Elementary School is the only Texas educator receiving the Milken award in 2015. The honor comes with a \$25,000 cash prize. [complete story on page 5]

Amarillo ISD teacher named national TOY finalist

Amarillo teacher Shanna Peeples has been named one of four finalists for the 2015 National Teacher of the Year. Peeples is an English teacher at Palo Duro High School in the Amarillo Independent School District. [complete story on page 7]

Inside this Issue

Graduation rate2
Blue Ribbon honors3
EOC passing rate4
Milken Educator Award5
Pocket Edition6
Teacher of the Year7
Legislative information8
SBEC recommendations8
SBOE board9
Accreditation10
PAEMST recipients11
SBOE summaries12
Student performance12

Information

For more information about this newsletter, **Division of Communications and SBOE Support**

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TEA listservs

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TEA

Class of '13 graduation rate exceeds national average

According to the latest figures released by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, the Texas Class of 2013 high school graduation rate was 88 percent, outpacing the national rate of 81 percent.

The Texas graduation rate hit 88 percent for the second consecutive year, tying Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota and Wisconsin for the nation's second highest. Only Iowa at 90 percent posted a higher graduation rate for the Class of 2013.

"The work being carried out in school districts and charters across our state continues to bear fruit in the high percentage of high school students successfully earning a diploma," said Commissioner Williams. "Whether it be college, career or military, Texas educators are working daily to better prepare students for life after high school, and it is our state that benefits."

Commissioner Williams noted that 2013 marked the third consecutive year that Texas' high school graduation rate surpassed the national average.

Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate				
Class	Texas	National		
2013	88%	81%		
2012	88%	80%		
2011	86%	79%		

Since 2010, states, districts and schools have used a common metric – the adjusted cohort graduation rate – in reporting graduation rates to the federal government. Use of the adjusted cohort graduation rate allows for an accurate and uniform comparison between the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The National Center for Education Statistics is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. Graduation rates for minority students, students with disabilities and English language learners will be released in coming weeks.



To view a state-by-state breakdown of graduation rates for the Class of 2013, visit nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR 2010-11 to 2012-13.asp.



Students representing the Texas Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, the Texas Future Business Leaders of America and the Future Farmers of America, were honored by the SBOE with a resolution recognizing February as National Career and Technical Education Month.











TEA

26 Texas schools nominated for Blue Ribbon honors

The Texas Education Agency on Jan. 14 announced the nomination of 26 Texas public schools for national 2015 Blue Ribbon Schools recognition. Founded in 1982, Blue Ribbon Schools is a U.S. Department of Education program that recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools where students perform at very high levels.

The nominated schools in Texas include the following:

Aldine ISD

Victory Early College High School

Amarillo ISD

South Lawn Elementary School

Austin ISD

Blackshear Elementary School

Canyon ISD

Canyon Intermediate School

Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD

Country Place Elementary School

Kent Elementary School

Crawford ISD

Crawford Elementary School

Dallas ISD

Harry Stone Montessori Academy

Trinidad Garza Early College High School

El Paso ISD

Lamar Elementary School

Falls City ISD

Falls City Elementary School

Garland ISD

Kimberlin Academy for Excellence

Grandview ISD

Grandview Elementary School

Harper ISD

Harper Middle School

Highland ISD

Highland School

Houston ISD

North Houston Early College High School

3

Jim Ned ISD

Lawn Elementary School

Klondike ISD

Klondike ISD

Los Fresnos ISD

Olmito Elementary School

Malakoff ISD

Malakoff Elementary School

McAllen ISD

Achieve Early College High School

Mt. Vernon ISD

Mt. Vernon Intermediate School

Roma ISD

F.J. Scott Elementary School

San Antonio ISD

Young Women's Leadership Academy

South Texas ISD

South Texas Preparatory Academy

Vega ISD

Vega Elementary School

All schools that have been nominated for the 2015 honor were selected as exemplary high performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Each school has an economically disadvantaged population of 25 percent or greater.

The nominated schools must now complete a rigorous application process through the U.S. Department of Education. Announcements of the national award winners will be made in September 2015. Schools that receive the award are recognized at the Blue Ribbon School conference in Washington, D.C.



TEA

STAAR® EOC exam passing rate hits 90 percent

Following the December administration of State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) end-of-course exams, 90.3 percent of students in the Class of 2015 have successfully completed all exams required for high school graduation, according to the latest figures released Jan. 15 by the Texas Education Agency.

Under House Bill 5 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2013, students are required to pass five end-of-course exams – Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology and U.S. History – along with their courses to receive a high school diploma. The Class of 2015 is the first graduating class under STAAR testing requirements.

Heading into the 2014–2015 school year, 83.5 percent of students in the Class of 2015 had already passed all five assessments and, as a result, faced no state-mandated tests during their senior year. Commissioner of Education Michael Williams noted that between summer 2014 and fall 2014, almost 20,000 additional students managed to meet all their testing requirements for graduation.

"Over the first part of this school year, the hard work of Texas educators to help students who still need to show proficiency in these fundamental core subjects is truly paying off," said Commissioner Williams.

The chart below shows the breakdown of end-of-course exam passing rates for students in the current Class of 2015.

	STUDENTS	%
Passed All End-Of-Course Exams (5)	262,885	90.3%
One End-Of-Course Exam Still Needed	13,490	4.6%
Two End-Of-Course Exams Still Needed	7,154	2.5%
Three or More End-Of-Course Exams Still Needed	7,533	2.6%
TOTAL	291,062	100.0%

Among those students who haven't passed all required tests, English II is the most common test that students are still trying to pass. The remaining subjects (in descending order of the tests student still need to pass) include U.S. History; English I; Algebra I; and Biology.

Students in the Class of 2015 needing to pass one or more STAAR end-of-course exams will have another opportunity to do so prior to their scheduled graduation in spring 2015. Overall passing rates are projected to climb again following the May 2015 administration of the exams. The number of times an individual student has taken an end-of-course exam varies, depending on when the student first took the course associated with the test.

As a point of comparison, 90.2 percent of students in the Class of 2005 – the first required to take four Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams for high school graduation – passed all tests at the time of graduation. In contrast, 90.3 percent of the Class of 2015 has passed all STAAR exams required for graduation, with one more opportunity to take the STAAR EOC assessments before graduation this spring.



To review state-level reports, visit the Texas Education Agency website at tea.texas.gov/staar/rpt/sum/.







TEA

Clifton ISD teacher earns \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams joined Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken at a surprise ceremony on Feb. 3 in the Clifton Independent School District to present Samatha Morgan with the Milken Educator Award. The Milken Award recognizes exemplary elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists who are furthering excellence in education.

A fifth-grade English Language Arts and Reading teacher at Clifton Elementary School, Morgan is the

only Texas educator receiving the national award in 2015, which is often referred to as the "Oscars of Teaching." The honor comes with a \$25,000 cash prize that Morgan can spend however she chooses.

Morgan is a leader in adopting new techniques for teaching reading skills. Her understanding of the required standards and deep store of instructional tools enable her to meet the needs of students across the spectrum of learning abilities, from struggling to highly gifted readers.

"Samatha Morgan reflects the very best in Texas public education and represents the excellence we strive to provide for every student in every classroom," said Commissioner Williams. "Morgan's commitment to engaging her students every day helps strengthen the future of her community and our state."

Morgan's student-centered classroom is a mix of a reading workshop and flipped classroom. She uses a wide variety of proven, cutting-edge strategies to maximize instructional time and make learning fun and engaging, including iPad centers, student-led portfolios and conferences as well as extensive graphs to chart progress. Morgan teaches her students to be responsible for their learning while guiding them with expertise and caring.

More than 90 percent of her students are reported to achieve passing scores in reading standards, and her students' reading fluency often grows by as much as two grade levels while in her class.

"We've been presenting these awards for almost 30 years because we believe—and the research proves it—that effective educators represent the most important school-based factor in improving student performance," said Milken. "This evidence comes to life in Samatha Morgan's classroom, where students are engaged and achievement soars. Our

hope is that surprising Samatha and others like her in this public way will inspire young people to consider teaching as a worthy career option."

Known on campus as "The Book Lady," Morgan's classroom library is constantly growing. Instilling a love and passion for reading in her students is a priority. She reads everything that her students read, and is always ready to recommend new books that fit each student's interests and ability. Her warm relationship with her students is

evidence of her passion for her work, and students often maintain contact with her long after they have left her class.

Beyond the classroom, Morgan initiated and sponsored Student Council for fifth-graders and volunteered to serve as director of the high school theater production. Colleagues also benefit from her knowledge and leadership, routinely asking for advice on helping students with reading difficulties or instituting new instructional practices. Currently pursuing a master's in literacy curriculum and instruction, Morgan is dedicated to the continuation of her own outstanding teaching practice and advancing literacy education for all students at Clifton Elementary.



Photo credit: Milken Family Foundation





Morgan continued

Along with the fanfare and recognition, Morgan now belongs to the Milken Educator Network of more than 2,600 K–12 teachers, principals and specialists from around the country. In Texas, more than 46 recipients have been presented with the Milken Educator Award since the program began here in 2000.

The Milken Family Foundation first presented the Milken Educator Awards in 1987. Since that time, it has become the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program and was dubbed the "Oscars of Teaching" by Teacher magazine. More than \$137 million in funding, including over \$65 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall program, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers.



In a surprise ceremony before hundreds of students, Clifton teacher Samatha Morgan (center) was awarded the Milken National Educator Award, which carries with it a \$25,000 prize. On hand to congratulate her are (left to right) Milken Family Foundation Chairman Lowell Milken, Commissioner of Education Michael Williams, state Sen. Brian Birdwell, and Dr. Jerry Maze, executive director of Education Service Center Region 12.

her Milken Educator Award, visit www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/samatha-morgan. For information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit www.milkeneducatorawards.org/newsroom/media-kit.

TFA

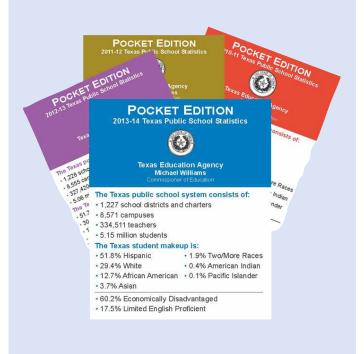
Pocket Edition available in print and online

Produced since 1991, the Pocket Edition reports a variety of state-level statistics on topics including:

- Students
- Accountability Ratings
- Personnel
- Finances
- Test Performance and Participation
- Graduates & College Admissions
- Attendance, Completion, and Dropouts.

The 2013-14 edition of the Pocket Edition may be found online at www.tea.texas.gov/communications/pocket-edition/.

The Pocket Edition print edition is also available from the TEA Publications Office at a cost of \$6.50 per 50 brochures. For an order form go to: www.tea.texas.gov/publications/.







February 2015 7

TEA and TASA

Amarillo ISD teacher named national TOY finalist

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams and Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Executive Director Johnny Veselka congratulated Amarillo teacher Shanna Peeples who has been named one of four finalists for the 2015 National Teacher of the Year. Peeples is an English teacher at Palo Duro High School in the Amarillo Independent School District.

The National Teacher of the Year program, run by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), identifies exceptional teachers in the country, recognizes their effective work in the classroom, amplifies their voices, and empowers them to participate in policy discussions at the state and national levels.

"Shanna Peeples exemplifies the outstanding teaching taking place in the Amarillo ISD and across our state," said Commissioner Williams. "I'm sure being named a national Teacher of the Year finalist is no surprise to her students and fellow teachers in Amarillo ISD. I thank her for her valuable work in the classroom and wish her the best of luck in Washington later this year."

"We are honored to recognize Shanna Peeples as an outstanding educator who truly connects with her students, showing them that the possibilities for their future are limitless," said Veselka in offering his congratulations to Peeples. "She cultivates a collaborative, engaging learning environment, serving as a model for her colleagues throughout the teaching profession."

Peeples worked as a disc jockey, medical assistant, pet sitter and journalist before becoming a teacher, a profession that she says eventually chose her. She taught 7th grade English Language Arts for about six years before moving to high school. Peeples teaches AP English and serves as the English department chair as well as an instructional coach for other teachers.

"My students, survivors of deep and debilitating trauma, have shaped the kind of teacher I am," said Peeples. "They have taught me to never make a promise I can't keep because so many already have learned to see the world through suspicious

eyes. To be the best teacher to them, I have to remember this and honor their background. I remember so I can gain their trust because I want them to read and write their way out of where they are."



National Teacher of the Year finalist Shanna Peeples and her superintendent Rod Schroder. Photo courtesy of TASA.

The Texas Teacher of the Year program is sponsored by TASA. Peeples was named the 2015 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year. Each year, two teachers from each of the 20 regional Education Service Centers become eligible for two titles, Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year and Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year. To achieve recognition, a teacher must first be chosen as a campus and a district Teacher of the Year, and ultimately a regional honoree. From this group of 40 regional teachers, six finalists are chosen and are interviewed by an independent panel of judges. The state's top elementary and secondary teachers are selected from these six outstanding finalists. As Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year, Peeples represents Texas in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

◆ See **2015 TOY**, page 8





2015 TOY continued

The National Teacher of the Year Program, presented by Voya, is a project of CCSSO in partnership with People to People Ambassador Programs. Every year, exemplary teachers from each state, the U.S. extra-state territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity are selected as State Teachers of the Year. From that group, the National

Teacher of the Year is then selected by a panel representing 15 renowned education organizations, which collectively represent more than 7 million educators.

The President of the United States will recognize the National Teacher of the Year in a White House ceremony this spring.



To read a PDF copy of the TASA news release on Texas Teacher of the Year recipients, visit www.tasanet.org/cms/lib07/TX01923126/Centricity/domain/106/pressreleases/2014/toy15.pdf.

For more information on the National Teacher of the Year program, including previous recipients, visit www.ccsso.org/ntoy.html.

84th Legislature

Legislative update links

The 84th session of the Texas Legislature convened Jan. 13, and now that committee assignments have been made in both the Senate and House, there's a lot of education news and activity to track. The links below will keep you up-to-date as the session progresses.

The 84th session concludes June 1.

General links to the legislature: www.capitol.state.tx.us/

Legislative calendar and agendas by date: www.capitol.state.tx.us/MnuCalendars.aspx

House of Representatives:

www.house.state.tx.us/

Texas Senate: www.senate.state.tx.us/

House committee and chamber meetings: www.capitol.state.tx.us/Committees/

MeetingsHouse.aspx

Senate committee and chamber meetings:

www.capitol.state.tx.us/Committees/ MeetingsSenate.aspx

Receive **email alerts** when a committee meeting is posted: www.capitol.state.tx.us/MyTLO/Alerts/Posting.aspx?Type=Notices

SBEC

Legislative recommendations

Before the 84th session of the Texas Legislature convened on Jan. 13, the State Board for Educator Certification adopted legislative recommendations to be considered by lawmakers this spring.

The three legislative recommendations, in priority order, are:

- 1. Clarify the minimum grade point average requirements for eligibility for admission to an educator preparation program in Section 21.0441 of the Texas Education Code.
- 2. Grant the Commissioner of Education the administrative subpoena power to fully investigate certified educator misconduct cases.
- 3. Maintain the State Board for Educator
 Certification (SBEC) as the policy-making
 body to recognize public school educators as
 professionals and preserving the authority of
 educators to govern the standards of their
 profession.





SBOE

New board term begins; committees announced

Erika Beltran, a former teacher who now works for a national nonprofit that develops leadership skills for Teach for America Corps members, began her service on the State Board of Education at the February board meeting. Beltran, the new District 13 representative from Dallas, joined six incumbent members who were re-elected in November to new four-year terms of office.

As is required by law, the board elected officers and organized committees during the first meeting of the year.

Thomas Ratliff, District 9 (Mount Pleasant), was elected vice chair of the board and Ruben Cortez, Jr., District 2 (Brownsville), was elected board secretary. The remaining board officer, the chair, is appointed by the governor. Although her term expired this month, the current chair, Barbara Cargill, District 8 (The Woodlands), is holding over in that office until the governor appoints a new chair.

The three board officer made committee assignments and later committee officers were selected.

Following are the committees and their officers:

Committee on Instruction

Sue Melton-Malone, chair

Geraldine Miller, vice chair

Barbara Cargill

Tom Maynard

Marisa B. Perez

Committee on School Finance/ Permanent School Fund

Patricia Hardy, chair

Lawrence A. Allen, Jr., vice chair

David Bradley

Ken Mercer

Thomas Ratliff

Committee on School Initiatives

Marty Rowley, chair

Martha M. Dominguez, vice chair

Donna Bahorich

Erika Beltran

Ruben Cortez, Jr.

Short <u>biographies</u> of the board members are available on the Texas Education Agency website.



State Rep. Jimmie Don Aycock, chair of the House Public Education Committee, swears in SBOE board members at the February 2015 meeting. Pictured left to right: State Rep. Jimmie Don Aycock; Ruben Cortez, Jr, District 2; Marisa B. Perez, District 3; Lawrence A. Allen, District 4; David Bradley, District 7; Pat Hardy, District 11; Geraldine "Tincy" Miller, District 12; and Erika Beltran, District 13.



TEA

TEA announces 2014-2015 accreditation statuses

The Texas Education Agency on Feb. 27 released accreditation statuses for school districts and charters across the state. Accreditation statuses are based on state academic accountability ratings, the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (known commonly as School FIRST), data reporting, special program effectiveness, and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Of 1,222 Texas school districts and charters, 1,161 (95 percent) received a status designation of Accredited for the 2014-2015 school year. An Accredited status recognizes districts and charters as a public school that meets specific academic and financial standards.

Under the Texas Education Code, the commissioner of education annually assigns one of four accreditation statuses to each school district.

2014-2015 Accreditation Status Status Number 0/0 95.0 Accredited 1161 20 districts Accredited-Warned 34 3.0 14 charters 7 districts Accredited-Probation 9 0.7 2 charters Not Accredited-Revoked 3 districts 0.3 3 15 1.0 Pending

An Accredited-Warned status means a district or charter exhibits deficiencies in academic and/or financial performance that, if not addressed, could lead to probation or revocation of its accreditation status.

An Accredited-Probation status means a district or charter exhibits deficiencies in academic and/ or financial performance over a three-year period that must be addressed to avoid revocation of its accreditation status.

A Not Accredited-Revoked status means the Texas Education Agency does not recognize the district or charter as a Texas public school following multiple years of deficiencies in academic and/or financial performance.

Note that the school districts assigned an initial Not Accredited-Revoked status will have the opportunity for a record review at the Texas Education Agency, and ultimately the opportunity for a review at the State Office of Administrative Hearings.

The accreditation statuses of 15 charter schools have been left pending due to revocation hearings currently under way, ongoing Texas Education Agency investigations, and/or pending litigation.



The 2014-2015 accreditation status for each school district and charter school can be found on the Texas Education Agency website at www.tea.state.tx.us/accredstatus/.



Estudiantina Tenampa, a mariachi group from Porter High School in the Brownsville Independent School District, entertained during the SBOE swearing-in ceremony at the February 2015 meeting.



SBOE

PAEMST recipients honored by SBOE

The State Board of Education recognized four outstanding math and four outstanding science teachers as finalists for the 2014 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The board approved a resolution at their February meeting honoring these exceptional teachers.

The four mathematics finalists honored are:

Anne Born

Lake Highlands Elementary School Richardson Independent School District;

Jennifer Cundieff

Raye McCoy Elementary School Georgetown ISD;

Erika Hassay

Live Oak Elementary School Round Rock ISD; and

Suzanne Nguyen

Roosevelt Alexander Elementary School Katy ISD.

The four science finalists recognized are:

Celena Miller

Cesar Chavez Elementary School Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD;

Lisa Baum

Colony Meadows Elementary School Fort Bend ISD;

Nancy Gardner

Edris Elliot Elementary School Frisco ISD; and,

Nicole Grygar

Woodway Elementary School Midway ISD.

The 2014 awards recognize outstanding individuals who teach mathematics and science at the kindergarten through sixth grade level. After the initial selection process at the state or territorial level, a panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians, and educators may select one mathematics and one science teacher from each state and U.S. jurisdiction for the national award. The PAEMST program is administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).

Each awardee receives a certificate signed by the President of the United States and a \$10,000 award from NSF. Awardees and their guests are honored during events that take place in Washington, D.C. These events include an award ceremony, celebratory receptions, professional development opportunities, and discussions with policy-makers on how to improve mathematics and science education.



The SBOE honored the 2014 Texas finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science at the February board meeting. Pictured, front row, left to right, Irene Pickhardt, Statewide Science Coordinator (TEA); Lisa Baum, Fort Bend ISD; Suzanne Nguyen, Katy ISD; Jennifer Cundieff, Georgetown ISD; Celena Miller, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD; and Nancy Gardner, Frisco ISD. Back row, left to right, James Slack, Statewide Mathematics Coordinator (TEA), Nicole Grygar, Midway ISD; Anne Born, Richardson ISD and Jo Ann Bilderback, Math/Science Manager (TEA). Not pictured is Erika Hassay, Round Rock ISD.



SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met February 11 - 13, 2015. Summaries of actions taken by the SBOE can be found on the Texas Education Agency's website at tea.texas.gov/sboe/actions/.

SBOE

Student Performance



The Oak Ridge High School Chamber Orchestra, Conroe ISD, performed a selection of classical music for the State Board of Education meeting Feb. 13, 2015.



Texas Education Today may be found online at <u>tea.texas.gov/communications/tet.aspx</u>.

State Board of Education

Michael Williams	Commissioner of Education

Chair, District 8

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District 3

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District 4

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District 6

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District 7

David Bradley, Beaumont

District 10

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District 11

Patricia Hardy, Fort Worth

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Ruben Cortez, Jr., Brownsville

District 12

Geraldine Miller, Dallas

District 13

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District 14

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