

Texas Education Today

News from the Texas Education Agency



Morgan’s Angels

State Board of Education members recently got a glimpse of the future – thanks to a four-foot tall robot on wheels and the fifth-grade student at the controls from his home.

Morgan’s Angels is a program that provides robots to

homebound students so they can attend class – and more importantly, interact with their classmates – from home. See information about the program and how it’s benefitting Texas students [on page 7](#).

SBOE chair Barbara Cargill with C.J. Herron, Kip Robins and Matthew Pettinato.

Graduation rates shine

Texas, with a graduation rate of 88 percent, tied for second place with Nebraska, Vermont and Wisconsin. [\[complete story on page 2\]](#)

Public school enrollment surges

Enrollment in Texas public schools continues to surge, growing by 820,019 students or more than 19 percent over the past decade, a new report released April 1 by the Texas Education Agency found. [\[complete story on page 3\]](#)

Ethnic studies

Responding to calls to provide more study of ethnic groups, the State Board of Education expanded its call for new instructional materials to include a call for materials aligned with a course called Special Topics in Social Studies to include, Mexican-American, African-American, Native American and Asian-American Studies. [\[complete story on page 6\]](#)

STAAR passed on first attempt in April

Almost 80 percent of 5th and 8th graders passed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) mathematics test on their first attempt in April. [\[complete story on page 4\]](#)

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TEA

Texas' graduation rates shine in national comparison

In a study released this week by the U.S. Department of Education, only Iowa posted a higher graduation rate than Texas for the Class of 2012. Texas, with a graduation rate of 88 percent, tied for second place with Nebraska, Vermont and Wisconsin.

In addition, the Texas Class of 2012 had the highest graduation rate in the country among African-American students and tied for the highest graduation rates for white and economically disadvantaged students.

According to the *First Look* report from the National Center for Education Statistics, the national high school graduation rate hit 79 percent for the class of 2011 and 80 percent for the class of 2012. Commissioner of Education Michael Williams noted that Texas' overall graduation rate for both classes easily exceeded the national averages.

"Texas educators continue to be among the leaders in assuring students reach the finish line and are prepared for life after high school," said Commissioner Williams. "While these numbers reflect the hard work accomplished on campuses all across our state, I have no doubt teachers and counselors would agree there is more we can do to help every student earn their high school diploma."

For the class of 2012, Texas posted a graduation rate of 88 percent, well above the national average (80 percent) and tied with three other states for second highest. Iowa posted a graduation rate of 89 percent.

For the class of 2012, Texas' graduation rates in almost every key demographic ranked either first, second, or third compared to other states.

	Class of 2012		
	TEXAS	RANK	UNITED STATES
All Students	88%	2 nd (tie)	80%
White	93%	1 st (tie)	86%
Hispanic	84%	2 nd	73%
African-American	84%	1 st	69%
Economically Disadvantaged	85%	1 st (tie)	72%
Students with Disabilities	77%	3 rd (tie)	61%

For the class of 2011, Texas posted a graduation rate of 86 percent, well above the national average (79 percent) and tied with five other states for third highest. Vermont and Wisconsin posted a graduation rate of 87 percent, and Iowa posted a graduation rate of 88 percent.

For the class of 2011, Texas' graduation rates in every key demographic ranked first, second, or third compared to other states.

	Class of 2011		
	TEXAS	RANK	UNITED STATES
All Students	86%	3 rd (tie)	79%
White	92%	1 st	84%
Hispanic	82%	3 rd	71%
African-American	81%	2 nd (tie)	67%
Economically Disadvantaged	84%	1 st	70%
Students with Disabilities	77%	1 st	59%

◆ See **Graduation rates**, page 3



Graduation rates *continued*

The public high school event dropout rate for the United States remained constant at 3.3 percent for both the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. Conversely, Texas' high school event dropout rate was 2.4 percent in 2010-2011 and 2.5 percent in 2011-2012.

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.



To review the complete *First Look* report, visit nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf.

TEA

Texas public school enrollment tops 5 million

Enrollment in Texas public schools continues to surge, growing by 820,019 students or more than 19 percent over the past decade, a new report released April 1 by the Texas Education Agency found. The 2012-2013 school year marked the first time that statewide enrollment officially topped 5 million.

The growth is even more pronounced over a 25-year period. Between the 1987-1988 school year and the 2012-2013 school year, enrollment grew 57.4 percent or about 1.85 million students.

A new report called *Enrollment in Texas Public Schools 2012-2013* documents the ethnically and culturally diverse populations that are increasingly attending the state's public schools.

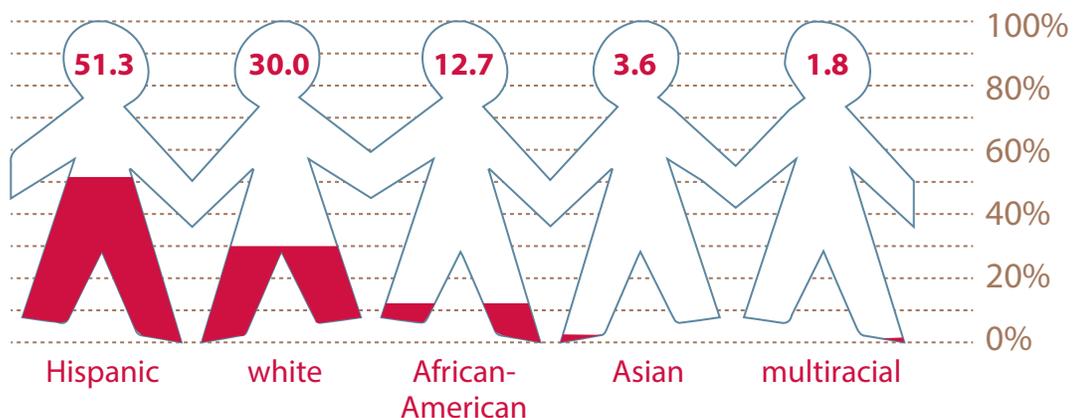
Enrollment increased for all student groups between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 except for whites, who experienced a numeric and percentage decrease statewide.

Nineteen of the 20 education service center regions saw a percentage decline in white enrollment. The remaining area – the Region 1 Education Service Center in Edinburg – saw white enrollment hold steady at 1.7 percent.

Other highlights from the report include:

- The number of students in grades 9-12 participating in career and technical education programs was 35.2 percent in 2012-2013, a slight decrease from 35.5 percent the previous year.
- The number of students participating in bilingual or English as a Second Language programs increased by 268,538 or 46.9 percent between 2002-2003 and 2012-2013.
- The percentage of children living in poverty remained steady at 60.3 percent.

With an enrollment of 5,075,840 in 2012-2013, the student body (in percent) was:



The complete enrollment report is available at www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/enroll_index.html.



TEA

5th and 8th graders pass on first attempt at STAAR

Almost 80 percent of 5th and 8th graders successfully passed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) mathematics test on their first attempt in April, according to numbers released on April 24 by the Texas Education Agency.

The initial 2014 mathematics passing rates for more than 650,000 5th and 8th graders reflect an improvement compared to the 2012 first administration passing rates.

MATHEMATICS		
	Grade 5	Grade 8
2013-14	79%	79%
2012-13	75%	77%
2011-12	77%	76%
% CHANGE (2011-12 to 2013-14)	+2%	+3%

More than 75 percent of 5th and 8th graders successfully passed the STAAR reading assessment on their first attempt in April. The initial 2014 reading passing rates for more than 700,000

5th and 8th graders remained relatively stable compared to the 2012 first administration passing rates.

READING		
	Grade 5	Grade 8
2013-14	76%	82%
2012-13	77%	84%
2011-12	77%	80%
% CHANGE (2011-12 to 2013-14)	-1%	+2%

Under state law, Texas students in grades 5 and 8 must pass the STAAR reading and math tests to be promoted to the next grade. A second administration of the STAAR grade 5 and 8 mathematics and reading assessments is scheduled in May.

Additional information regarding the initial administration of these STAAR assessments can be found on the Texas Education Agency website at www.tea.state.tx.us/staar/rpt/sum/.



SBOE

New rules govern cardiopulmonary resuscitation in schools

The State Board of Education approved new rules governing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training for Texas' middle and high school students during its April meeting to carry out a 2013 legislative requirement.

A school must provide instruction to each student at least once before he or she graduates from high school. The board's CPR rule allows school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide CPR instruction as part of any course offered to students in grades 7-12.

Students are not required to become certified in CPR as a result of the course, but the

CPR instruction must have been developed by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross or use nationally-based guidelines for emergency cardiovascular care.

Districts have the option of allowing emergency medical technicians, paramedics, police officers, firefighters, teachers, school employees or other qualified instructors to

provide the training. An instructor is required to be authorized to provide instruction in CPR only if the instruction is intended to lead to certification for students.

Students who entered the seventh grade during or after the 2010-11 school year are required to receive instruction in CPR.

Texas schools have been providing CPR instruction to seventh and eighth graders since the fall of 1998 as part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Health Education.

The changes go into effect on Aug. 25.



TEA

TEA announces 2013-2014 accreditation statuses

Ninety-six percent of Texas districts and charters received full accreditation status this year, the Texas Education Agency recently announced. 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, 1,176 (96 percent) received a status designation of Accredited for the 2013-2014 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.

Accreditation statuses* 2013-2014 school year	
Status	Number of districts
Accredited	1,176
Accredited-Warned	30
Accredited-Probation	3
Not Accredited-Revoked	3
Pending	10

*As of February 28, 2014

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. For the 2013-2014 school year, 13 school districts and 17 charter schools received an Accredited-Warned 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. For the 2013-2014 school year, three school districts received an Accredited-Probation accreditation status.

A Not Accredited-Revoked status, given after years of deficiencies in academic or financial performance, means TEA does not recognize the district or charter as a Texas Public school. For the 2013-2014 school year, two school districts and one charter school received a Not Accredited-Revoked accreditation status.

Since the ratings were released in February, abatements of the revocations of the two school districts have been issued. The abatements give the districts a reprieve and they must take certain actions to improve or the revocations will be enforced.

Any school districts and charters assigned an initial Not Accredited-Revoked status 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.

In February, the accreditation statuses of one school district and nine charter schools were left pending due to revocation hearings currently under way, ongoing Texas Education Agency investigations, and/or pending litigation.

As of April, the one school district has been assigned a status of Accredited-Probation; the status of one charter school has been changed to revoked, while the remaining eight are still pending due to litigation.



The 2013-2014 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/.



SBOE

Proclamation 2016 to include ethnic studies materials

Responding to calls to provide more study of ethnic groups, the State Board of Education in April expanded its call for new instructional materials to include a call for materials aligned with a course called Special Topics in Social Studies to include, but not be limited to, Mexican-American, African-American, Native American and Asian-American Studies.

Those four ethnic groups represent the heritage of 68 percent of the children enrolled in Texas public schools.

Districts have had the ability to teach ethnic studies courses using the Special Topics in Social Studies standards for years, and some have done so. However, no state-approved textbooks existed for the courses so teachers had to collect or create material for the classes themselves. State adopted-instructional materials would provide educators with the assurance that the materials meets the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

The request for instructional materials for these elective courses is included in a call-for-bids

document known as Proclamation 2016. This proclamation originally included only a call for new materials for languages other than English (LOTE).

The new instructional materials are scheduled to be approved as part of the state adoption process in November 2015 for use beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.

The board, in order to address requirements of legislation passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, also directed Texas Education Agency staff to develop the following courses:

- personal financial literacy (one-half credit);
- career and technical education personal financial literacy (one credit);
- combined world history/world geography (one credit); and
- non-Advanced Placement (AP) calculus (one credit).

TEA staff noted that they had already begun development of Algebraic Reasoning and non-AP statistics courses.

SBOE

SBOE accepting Heroes for Children nominations

The State Board of Education is now accepting nominations for the 2014 Heroes for Children Award. This annual award recognizes public school volunteers who have been strong advocates for Texas schoolchildren.

Volunteers may be nominated by individual persons or by organizations. Educational employees, elected government officials and organizations are not eligible to be nominated.

The State Board of Education will select 15 Heroes for Children—one person from each of the 15 State Board of Education districts. Heroes will be honored during the State Board of Education's September 2014 meeting.

The application in PDF format is available at www.tea.state.tx.us/awards/heroes-application.pdf. Completed applications must be received by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 30. Applications may submitted by either:

Mail

Heroes for Children

Communications Division, Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue, Room 2-180
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

FAX

512-463-9838

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SBOE

State Board of Education receives lesson in mobility

When the State Board of Education convened on April 9, board members got a glimpse of the future – in the form of a four-foot tall white robot on wheels and the Montgomery ISD fifth grader operating the machine from more than 100 miles away.

Morgan’s Angels is a program operated by the Region 6 Education Service Center in Huntsville that provides VGo robots to homebound students so they can attend class – and more importantly, interact with their classmates – from home.

“They’re able to participate in activities, just like if they were there, as much as they can possibly be there,” said Kip Robins, the director of the Morgan’s

Angels program, noting that the program is getting worldwide attention.

Robins was joined at the board meeting by Rylan Karrer, a 10-year-old fifth-grade student who was diagnosed with restrictive cardiomyopathy in 2011 and has been homebound while waiting on a heart transplant. Thanks to a two-way camera, Rylan’s face was visible inside the screen on the robot’s “face” as he operated the machine from a computer in his house, turning in a circle to wave to all the board members.

“There’s nothing fancy about this. It’s Skype on wheels,” Robins said, before noting that the robots need little more than a Wireless HotSpot to work. “The kids have control, even to the point that

◆ See **Mobility**, page 8



C.J. Herron and Matthew Pettinato listen to VGo robots presentation.

SBOE

Standards approved for languages other than English

Revised curriculum standards for languages other than English (LOTE) earned final approval from the State Board of Education in April.

This is the first time the standards known as Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the LOTE have been updated since they were first implemented in 1998. In today’s Texas schools, this area of study extends far beyond the old standbys of Spanish, French, Latin and German.

In 2013, for example, 25,560 high school students were enrolled in American Sign Language courses and 5,667

students took high school level Chinese courses. Courses in Italian, Hebrew, Hindi, Arabic, Japanese, Turkish and Russian can also be found in Texas schools.



Before giving final approval to the revised TEKS, the board removed all references to classical

languages from the TEKS for LOTE Levels I-VII. Separate TEKS will be developed for classical languages, which do not have extensive speaking and listening components as do most modern languages.

The board also made amendments to more appropriately address proficiency levels for logographic languages in the LOTE Levels I-VII TEKS. Logographic languages are those, such as Chinese and Korean that use written symbols.

The updated TEKS are scheduled to be implemented in Texas classrooms in 2016-2017.

◆ See **Languages**, page 8



Languages *continued*

Along with updating the standards, the board in January adopted a new course called Special Topics in Language and Culture. This course addresses a requirement included in HB 5, which was passed by the Texas Legislature in 2013. Students who have completed one credit in a language other than English, but who are unlikely to pass a second

credit in that language, as determined by a local district committee, may take this new course to earn their second LOTE course credit. This course was approved for implementation earlier than the revised LOTE standards so that it will be available in the 2014-2015 school year.

Mobility *continued*

they're responsible for docking this at the end of the day."

Presenting with Robins at the meeting were 9-year-old C.J. Herron and 8-year-old Matthew Pettinato, who have both used robots to attend class. C.J., who was born with an autoimmune disorder, has never attended his classes at Brenham Elementary School in person. Matthew, who was diagnosed with leukemia last year, returned in March to the second grade at Holy Family Catholic School in Austin.

The program is named for Morgan LaRue, a Lovelady Independent School District student diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer. Morgan started using her VGo robot, which she named "MoGo," shortly before she had limb salvage surgery to remove a tumor in her right leg during the fall of 2012.

Region 6 owns 21 robots for students to use. Robins said that Region 6 has helped 25 students in 17 school districts take part in classroom instruction in the 18 months the program has been in existence. The robots cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000 each to operate, with many of the operating costs coming from private donations.

"Twenty-five years ago, we isolated special needs children, and I think we could all agree today that was just wrong," Robins told the board during his presentation. "And it's very similar to what

we're doing to these homebound students. We're isolating. We're keeping them away from the one place that they need to be – because one day, Rylan will be back in school. Matthew's back in school today. C.J.'s going to be going back to school real soon. And what better piece of technology can we use to drive that curriculum?"

But more than the keeping up with their lessons, C.J. and Matthew said it's the face-to-face interaction with their peers that has made their experiences with the Morgan's Angels program so invaluable.

"The best reason to use the robot is because if you were homeschooled, you wouldn't be able to go to different classes – go to P.E., go to Spanish, go to music and all that," Matthew explained after the meeting. "But if you had the robot, you could at least do some of it instead of having to not do those classes and not having fun."

Robins told the board members that he wanted them to see firsthand what the robots could accomplish because Texas runs the largest homebound program in the United States.

"You have no idea how many homebound students there are that are in CJ's position or Matthew's position or Rylan's position," he said. "People are coming up with ideas for how to use this, so it's very exciting."



According to his [Facebook page](#), Rylan Karrer received a heart transplant April 20. You can learn more about the Morgan's Angels program and the students using it [online](#) and on [Facebook](#).



SBOE

Summaries of SBOE actions can be found online

The State Board of Education met April 8 – 11, 2014. Summaries of actions taken by the SBOE can be found on the Texas Education Agency's website at www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/actions/

SBOE

Student Performance



The Young Men Junior High School Choir, Young Junior High School in the Arlington ISD, performed at the April 11 State Board of Education meeting.



Texas Education Today may be found online at www.tea.state.tx.us/tet/

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