

preparing
for the

21st
CENTURY

**Public
Education
Reform in Texas**

Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs
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Number 107

**Preparing for the 21st Century:
Public Education Reform in Texas**

A report by the
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Texas Public Education Reform
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Foreword

The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs has established interdisciplinary research on policy problems as the core of its educational program. A major part of this program is the nine-month policy research project, in the course of which two or more faculty members from different disciplines direct the research of 10 to 20 graduate students of diverse backgrounds on a policy issue of concern to a government or nonprofit agency. This "client orientation" brings the students face to face with administrators, legislators, and other officials active in the policy process and demonstrates that research in a policy environment demands special talents. It also illuminates the occasional difficulties of relating research findings to the world of political realities.

This report on Texas public education reform efforts in the 1980s and early 1990s is the final publication of a policy research project conducted in 1992-93 under a grant from the Texas Center for Educational Research and the Texas Association of School Administrators. In February 1993, the project produced *A Decade of Change: Public Education Reform in Texas 1981-1992*, a report chronicling the passage of numerous education reform efforts.

The curriculum of the LBJ School is intended not only to develop effective public servants but also to produce research that will enlighten and inform those already engaged in the policy process. The project that resulted in this report has helped to accomplish the first task; it is our hope that the report itself will contribute to the second.

Finally, it should be noted that neither the LBJ School nor The University of Texas at Austin necessarily endorses the views or findings of this report.

Max Sherman
Dean

Acknowledgments

This study is the second of two reports resulting from a policy research project jointly conducted by the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and the Texas Center for Educational Research. The purpose of the project was to examine education reform in Texas and to recommend policy options for making improvements in public education. The study participants acknowledge with appreciation the advice, counsel, and guidance throughout this project of Texas Education Agency officials, Austin Independent School District representatives, the Texas Association of School Administrators, the Texas Association of School Boards, and instructional personnel in each of the schools visited (see Appendix C).

Individuals who contributed their time and ideas to the project include Elvis Shoaf, Ron Winkleman, Lynda Haynes, and Jim Salmon of the Texas Education Agency; John Cole of the Texas Federation of Teachers; Anne Dorsey of the Texas Council on Vocational Education; Lillie Ransom of McCallum High School in Austin, Texas; and Daniel T. Casey and Laura Bloemker of the Texas Association of School Boards. Their knowledge helped inform the efforts of this study, although the project participants remain responsible for errors of interpretation or omission.

Thanks are also due to Rosemary Foster and Kimberly Gomez for their patience and persistence in preparing the manuscript of this report for publication.

Summary of Recommendations

Student Reforms

1. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should ensure that information on priority occupations and available jobs is disseminated to all school districts and is linked effectively by districts with their academic, vocational education, and school-to-work transition programs.
2. The Texas Education Agency should inform vocational education teachers about state and regional occupational opportunities and should establish a program to retrain, as appropriate, these teachers in subject areas relevant to student and employer needs.
3. The Texas Education Agency should assist schools in designing student records that provide employers useful and timely information about the academic and personal achievements, skills, and proficiencies of high school students.
4. The State Board of Education and the Texas public education system should continue to accord a high priority to state policies that enhance academic learning for all students.
5. The Texas Education Agency should expand its efforts to encourage and assist school districts to enhance and assess student performance.
6. The Texas Education Agency should expand its assessment of at-risk student identification criteria and recommend to the 74th Legislature a revised identification framework within which schools are better able to meet, cost-effectively, the needs of their students who are most at-risk.
7. The Texas Education Agency should make available guidelines and technical assistance to school districts so they can develop educational programs that explicitly address state and district goals. TEA should also develop programs of assistance to school districts that are consistent with the new results-based monitoring process.
8. The Texas Education Agency should identify and conduct pilot projects on promising tutoring and remediation programs and should regularly encourage school districts to implement and evaluate compensatory education programs that are effective and compatible with district goals.
9. The Texas Education Agency should foster expanded staff development programs for prekindergarten teachers to enhance students' social and intellectual development.
10. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should encourage the Texas Legislature to fully fund the teen pregnancy and parenting program on an annual basis and should actively encourage school districts to seek waivers from student attendance and other requirements if they can be shown to limit the program's effectiveness.
11. The Texas Education Agency should encourage school districts to provide curricular options for bilingual students until they score at the 40th percentile on English reading and language tests and should disseminate to school districts information on best practices for achieving this objective cost-effectively.
12. The Texas Education Agency should foster greater integration of special education students into mainstream school activity, including academic classes, vocational education, school-to-work transition programs, and other initiatives that increase student opportunities to develop life and employment skills.

Teacher Reforms

13. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should take steps to improve teacher preservice preparation by increasing the student-teaching time required for teacher certification and encouraging student-teaching assignments that more effectively prepare future teachers for the classroom and community realities of their initial teaching positions.
14. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should actively promote the adoption and implementation of voluntary state criteria for school districts to use in screening alternative certification program applicants for their abilities to teach the diverse group of students in Texas public schools.
15. School districts and campuses should provide incentives and opportunities for teachers to establish greater numbers of collaborative, team-based mentor relationships.
16. Regional education service centers and school districts should offer more workshops for teachers and school administrators on how to increase the level and effectiveness of mentoring programs.
17. The Texas Education Agency should design and conduct a multiyear assessment of the effectiveness of both state- and district-developed teacher appraisal systems relative to fiscal, instructional, career advancement, and other measures and should disseminate assessment results on a timely basis to policymakers and school districts.
18. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency, working closely with Texas educational organizations, should articulate a professional career path for teachers. The career path recommendations should include professional development objectives matched to stages of advancement for teachers.
19. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should ensure that staff development is included in the plan that each district is required to prepare for itself and each of its campuses.
20. The Texas Legislature should ensure that staff development requirements and increased professional responsibilities of school staff are appropriately funded.
21. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should assess the impact of expanded use of class-size waivers to provide teachers additional time for professional development and collaboration.
22. The Texas Legislature should expand funding for research on successful teaching techniques and staff development programs and for dissemination of research results.

School Management Reforms

23. The Texas Education Agency should produce and distribute a pamphlet for parents and teachers on what the legislation says about site-based decisionmaking. School districts or education service centers should conduct training sessions for principals, teachers, and parents on site-based decisionmaking.
24. The Texas Education Agency should supply district and campus decisionmaking committees with information on best practices as an aid in establishing school improvement activities.
25. The Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education should review state laws and regulations from which many districts seek waivers to determine if those laws and regulations should be changed.

26. The Texas Legislature and the Texas Education Agency should provide additional financial support to education service centers to help them more effectively assist school districts.

27. The Texas Legislature should provide adequate financial support to the Texas Education Agency for the development of the Public Education Information Management System. The Texas Education Agency should provide adequate financial and technical support to the education service centers so that they can assist school districts in submitting data to the system.

28. The commissioner of education and the State Board of Education should continue efforts to develop appropriate academic and vocational indicators for the Academic Excellence Indicator System and the accountability system.

29. The Texas Education Agency should establish accountability performance objectives for the large number of districts and campuses rated as accredited or acceptable.

A Role for Texas Policymakers

30. The Texas Legislature should target financial support for school districts in order to strengthen schools as learning organizations.

31. The Texas Education Agency, working with education service centers and school districts, should develop programs to strengthen the professional development of teachers and develop programs to prepare them to assist students in reaching the state's standards for academic performance.

32. The Texas Legislature should limit the number of new policies and reforms for public schools and monitor the progress toward reaching state goals made as a result of reforms already enacted.

33. The Texas Legislature should link school finance to the state goals for education and to the accountability system.

Chapter 1. Introduction

The failure of American youth to achieve high levels of knowledge and skill has become a paramount concern for many Americans. During the 1980s, many states passed laws strengthening state control over the processes and content of public education. These actions are under scrutiny today. Many argue that "top down" prescriptions have inhibited rather than stimulated improved performance.¹ Although students have made significant progress in mastering basic skills, performance has not risen to an acceptable level across the board.² In response, the public has called for policymakers and educators to be more responsive and accountable for student achievement.³

Many scholars who have studied education reform have characterized the process as a series of waves,⁴ the first one beginning approximately in the early 1980s, bringing enhancements to the traditional system in the form of a longer school year, more graduation requirements, higher standards, and more mandates. The focus of policymakers and reformers was on improving inputs. The second wave of reform, beginning at the end of the 1980s, focuses on shifting decisionmaking authority to individual schools and, in some states, providing explicit incentives to schools to improve student performance. In the second wave, attention has shifted from inputs to outcomes. Most recently, some states have begun to "restructure" schools or districts, another second-wave reform approach. Restructuring occurs when individuals within an organization rethink the goals, processes, and structure of schooling and take action to implement significant change. Behind the idea of restructured schools is a belief that schools, as they are presently constituted, cannot meet society's expectations for education.⁵

As states gain experience with educational reform, the complexities become more obvious. Steps taken in the 1980s to deal with the more difficult problems were fragmented and did not achieve the desired results.⁶ In part, this was the fault of state policy. In carrying out educational reform, policymakers at that time failed to review existing educational policies to determine which standards or expectations were most important and which ones posed real barriers to change and improvement.⁷ Now, as policymakers begin to recognize inconsistencies, they are considering major shifts in responsibility and accountability designed to offer some local flexibility in response to state policies.

For more than a decade, Texas policymakers have sought to reform and improve the public education system. (Appendix A contains a summary of the most significant education legislation from 1981 to 1993.) Most of the changes have been responses to public concern about the achievement of students and the productivity of schools as organizations. Beginning with a complete overhauling of the curriculum in 1981, reform has been characterized by intensification of traditional education activities such as the requirement for a longer school year, tighter control over student activities, and efforts to hold schools and districts accountable for student learning through vastly expanded measuring and reporting processes.⁸ A more recent shift in the focus of reform has resulted in statewide efforts to decentralize decisionmaking so that it takes place at the campus level, efforts to relax the rules and regulations for high-performing or innovative programs through the waiver process, and renewed emphasis by the state education agency on student learning. Yet, in spite of persistent efforts at reform, Texas still struggles to find ways to improve student performance that remains persistently below expectations. Many policies and mandates conflict with each other, and educators struggle to align the new priorities with strong traditions from the past. Clearly, the public education system has changed as a result of reforms enacted in the 1980s, but the failure of the great majority of students to meet new and higher standards illustrates the relative ineffectiveness of the efforts of the past decade.

Goals for Education

National Education Reform Goals

At the national level, policymakers envision a public education system that will ensure a "world-class" education for American youth. President Bill Clinton and the United States Department of Education have offered a new focus to help schools and communities reach national goals—"Goals 2000: Educate America." Goals 2000 retains the six national goals developed by the National Governors' Association and endorsed by the Bush administration as "America 2000." It also calls for development of new partnerships, coordination of state and local efforts to improve teaching and learning, expanded outreach to more schools and communities with diverse populations, improved communications, and expanded technical assistance.⁹

The proposed legislation (HR 1804 and SB 1150, 1993) would establish in federal law the six national goals that were part of the America 2000 initiative: (1) all children will start school ready to learn; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (3) all students will demonstrate competency in core subjects; (4) United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement; (5) American adults will be literate, be prepared to compete in a global economy, and have the skills necessary for responsible citizenship; and (6) schools will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.¹⁰ The proposed legislation would increase funding for existing federal programs such as Chapter 1 (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) programs for low-income children. In order to receive new funds, states would develop an improvement plan, including academic performance standards, school delivery standards, and provisions to encourage parental and community involvement. Also to be included in the state improvement plans would be innovative organizational strategies such as site-based decisionmaking, performance-based accountability, and shared decisionmaking.

Some national policymakers believe that national goals and expectations are the best and quickest route to creating world-class schools.¹¹ The New Standards Project, for example, seeks to join a reform of teaching and learning with a national performance examination system keyed to high standards. The New Standards Project will develop a unified examination framework. States would select their own tests, which would then be calibrated to national outcome standards. Mastery of certain sets of knowledge, capacity to apply knowledge, thinking and problem-solving skills, and teamwork would underpin the national standards.¹² Numerous national curriculum study groups are also reframing the content of different subjects and setting out performance objectives.

Texas Education Reform Goals

The Texas Constitution establishes the standard for public education. It maintains that "it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." This system is predicated on the assumption that "a general diffusion of knowledge [is] essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people."¹³

The Texas Education Code, revised in 1993, states that the objective of the system of public education "is education for good citizenship and is grounded on the conviction that a general diffusion of knowledge is essential for the welfare of Texas and for the preservation of the liberties and rights of citizens." The code's seven goals for public education offer educators a vision for their work.¹⁴

Goal A: All students shall have access to an education of high quality that will prepare them to participate fully now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities available in Texas.

- Goal B:** The achievement gap between educationally disadvantaged students and other populations will be closed. Through enhanced dropout prevention efforts, the graduation rate will be raised to 95 percent of students who enter the seventh grade.
- Goal C:** The state shall demonstrate exemplary performance in comparison to national and international standards for student performance.
- Goal D:** A well-balanced and appropriate curriculum will be provided to all students.
- Goal E:** Qualified and effective personnel will be attracted and retained. Adequate and competitive compensation commensurate with responsibilities will be ensured. Qualified staff in critical shortage areas will be recruited, trained, and retained.
- Goal F:** The organization and management of all levels of the education system will be productive, efficient, and accountable.
- Goal G:** Instruction and administration will be improved through research that identifies creative and effective methods. Demonstration programs will be developed and local initiatives encouraged for new instructional arrangements and management techniques. Technology will be used to increase the equity, efficiency, and effectiveness of student learning, instructional management, staff development, and administration.

The goals for public education spelled out in the Texas Education Code speak directly to the changing nature of the student population when they state that "[t]he achievement gap between educationally disadvantaged students and other populations will be closed." The challenge of meeting these goals is intensified by the size and diversity of the Texas population. Enrollment is growing at a rate of about two percent per year. Between 1991-92 and the end of the decade, cumulative enrollment growth will be over 15 percent if current projections hold. Collectively, minority students make up over half of the student population. Significant disparities in performance exist among the major ethnic groups, with African American and Hispanic students performing at lower levels than Anglo students.¹⁵ In addition, the proportion of students who come from low-income families is nearly 42 percent and growing.¹⁶ These students also score at levels falling significantly below students who are more economically advantaged. The conclusions to be drawn from this evidence are sobering: more Texas students must cope with the additional burdens that low-income family background and language differences confer, and a growing number of schools and teachers must work harder and find new ways to help students stay in school and reach high standards. In addition, a growing population of older Texans will rely on well-educated younger workers to maintain a growing economy and to support entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

Demographic and societal shifts come at a time when the demands from the world of work have intensified. High-wage jobs in the next century will require a workforce with more than a high school diploma. Workers will generally need a high school education plus a year or two of college or technical school.¹⁷ But even more important, American youth must develop new competencies and foundation skills, a number of which their parents and teachers have not mastered. Technological innovation has led the way to improved communication and transportation systems while creating a more favorable environment for global competitors. The effective collection and application of information has become integral to economic success.

The new standards for economic competition have become quality, flexibility, precision, and specialization. In turn, this new orientation has fundamental implications for public education. The United States Department of Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) has identified competencies and skills for the workplace.¹⁸ Other groups are also attempting to identify what students should know and be able to do. The New Standards Project, mentioned above, is developing a national examination system based on a framework it is developing for student achievement standards.¹⁹ The National Council on

Education Standards and Testing is developing standards to describe content that students should master and performance standards that define various levels of competence in challenging subject matter. Voluntary school delivery standards also may be identified by the council. In addition to these broad efforts, curriculum groups have engaged in setting standards in math, science, social studies, civics, English, geography, history, and the arts.²⁰

These national projects are underway at a time when the states have independently developed standards for students, teachers, and schools.²¹ Texas, too, has a process called "Raising Expectations for Students to Meet Real World Needs" for determining student results. A task force of practitioners and experts will lead the effort to develop skill and knowledge expectations through a collaborative effort that is expected to involve thousands of Texans. As a signal of its importance, the Texas Education Agency is working cooperatively with Governor Ann Richards, the Texas Department of Commerce, the Texas Employment Commission, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to ensure public participation in this process. The end result of the process will be a revised curriculum, student assessments compatible with the curriculum, and other policies focused on teaching and learning.²²

A Decade of Reform—A Coherent Approach?

A pattern has characterized state-level public education reform efforts during the 1980s.²³ A specific need is identified, and the legislature then addresses that need in statute. Public education policy thus is constantly under revision, yielding neither systematic nor coherent results because each initiative is considered as an answer to one specific problem instead of being a part of a collective entity that affects the entire public education system. In many cases, the specific solution may contribute nothing to the larger objective or may even undermine it.

For example, teachers are called upon to meet the diverse needs of individual students and to respond to their learning styles. But they are also constrained to use state-adopted textbooks, to follow a curriculum that effectively segments the day into time slots for different subjects, and to conform to a teaching style reflected in a state-developed teacher assessment instrument. The mandates and structures serve as barriers to flexible responses that teachers might make to accommodate individual students' learning styles.

A more effective approach would provide a coherent program of reform in which broad state policies would mesh with educational goals and objectives while leaving issues of actual implementation to be determined at the district and campus levels. To pass the test of coherence, the policies would need to work together and lead to measurable improvement. By developing coherent policies, states could avoid initiatives that work counter to the common objective while at the same time eliminating unnecessary or irrelevant regulations.

A coherent approach to public education policy would consider the benefits of integrating the curriculum framework with teacher professional development. For example, teachers should have a deep understanding of the curriculum they will be teaching and the ways in which the curriculum can be effectively introduced to young learners.²⁴ The preparation of beginning teachers should be linked directly to the curriculum frameworks set out by the state. Teachers should be prepared to use new assessments. Practicing teachers should have opportunities to acquaint themselves with and to strengthen their understanding of new curriculum requirements. Site-based decisions provide campus professionals with another opportunity for growth. At the campus level, teachers would decide how to present the curriculum and determine the appropriate staff development activities to ensure high-quality instruction. In addition to understanding the curriculum and the assessments, teachers need to be better prepared to handle the challenges that a changing student population presents. The future teacher should learn methods of coping with students' needs and promoting learning in a more diverse population. The practicing teacher needs ongoing staff development and peer support to meet students' academic and personal needs. Coordinated policies supporting such an approach

would focus on improving the competence of schools as organizations and on developing the expertise of instructional staff. These ideas suggest a pervasive and systemic approach.

Systemic Reform—A Concept for Texas Education Reform

Marshall Smith and Jennifer O'Day, in their 1991 article entitled "Systemic School Reform," examine the limited effectiveness of current education policies across the nation.²⁵ Noting the fragmented education policies of most states, they propose a systemic reform approach which combines coordinated state policies with restructured governance. Under systemic reform, state policy would upgrade the curriculum to encompass challenging content and skills. An alignment of state policies would offer an understandable structure to support schools and teachers as they provide the upgraded curriculum to all students. They believe such policy alignment is missing in the current system, resulting, for example, in statutory regulations that emphasize the teaching of basic skills while simultaneously holding districts and campuses accountable to higher standards. Systemic reform also calls for a restructured governance system focused on local decisionmaking that would provide schools with the flexibility, resources, and responsibility to implement strategies to help students learn the upgraded content. Systemic reforms would simultaneously increase coherence in the system through centralized policy coordination (the top-down element) and increasing professional discretion at the school site (the bottom-up element). Thus, "while schools have the ultimate responsibility to educate thoughtful, competent, and responsible citizens, the state—representing the public—has the responsibility to define what 'thoughtful, competent, and responsible citizens' will mean in the coming decade and century."²⁶

Top-down approaches such as those introduced in Texas in HB 246 (1981) and HB 72 (1984) and legislation passed throughout the second half of the 1980s address such issues as improved curriculum, time on task, teacher quality, student testing, and student promotion. Recent policies to establish knowledge and skills frameworks carry forward the vision of improved instruction centered on consensus about what students should know and be able to do. Bottom-up approaches include site-based decisionmaking (implemented in all districts in 1992) and allow schools and districts to seek waivers of certain state education requirements, thereby increasing local autonomy. But the change can go further than site-based decisionmaking and waivers. The new governance structure permits both local responsibility for learning and more flexibility in designing and implementing instructional strategies.

Texas and several other states have initiated systemic reform. The challenge of the 1990s and beyond is to continue to build a coherent public education policy structure around a clear and measurable set of objectives.

Overview of This Report

High standards, new competencies, and an ability to specialize as well as generalize—Texas schools and Texas students are challenged to meet these expectations. How must public education adjust or restructure to provide the right environment and experience for this change? This study explores answers to that question by reviewing the results of recent reforms and speculating on the opportunities for improvement inherent in changes recommended by national education policy experts, state leaders, and local educators.

In this report, the subject of public education is divided roughly into three areas of concern—students, teachers, and management—all linked with the common goal of improving student performance. The dialogue of public education reform revolves around ways to help all students meet higher standards of achievement at a time when many current practices seem to be failing. This research project considered past reform efforts in the context of how student performance was affected, and this report recommends additional measures policymakers and educators can take to improve the environment for learning.

The process that produced this assessment was an intensive eight-month study of the issues of public education. The research group examined relevant documents and spoke to experts. The initial efforts of this project culminated in *A Decade of Change: Public Education Reform in Texas 1981-1992*, which is a record of changes to the Texas public education system since the early 1980s.²⁷ The research group developed a questionnaire for teachers and administrators working in Texas schools. Thirteen schools from urban, rural, and suburban areas of the state participated in the field study portion of the project's efforts. Members of the research group visited each school and interviewed teachers, principals, and counselors in order to gain a perspective on the issues confronting front-line educators. Insights from these interviews, referred to throughout this report as "site interviews," appear in the text to reinforce the research findings and to provide additional insight into the concerns of educators in Texas. (See Appendix C for a complete listing of interviewees.)

Chapter 2 considers reforms specific to students. Curricular standards and the assessment process are addressed along with the challenges that students with special needs present to educators applying these standards. Chapter 3 looks at reforms directed at teachers in Texas. The issues of standards, teacher recruitment and preparation, teacher professionalism, and staff development are examined in this chapter. Chapter 4 examines reforms targeted at the public education management structure. Important issues in this chapter include decentralization of authority, accountability, and dissemination of information. Chapter 5 identifies new directions with which Texas public education policymakers should be familiar.

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Chapter 2. Student Reforms

Reforms intended to make Texas public schools more effective have included increased specificity about what is taught as well as efforts to tighten up controls on the ways students spend their time in school. Laws and rules governing curriculum and testing, student behavior, and academic progress were enacted and amended throughout the 1980s. In addition, the state has engaged in a process of identifying academic excellence indicators and using these indicators to set high standards for students, campuses, and districts. This chapter organizes the reforms affecting students into two strands: reforms that set higher standards for performance and reforms that enable students to achieve the high standards. As this review will show, progress toward comprehensive change and improvement has been uneven.

Setting Standards

Standard-setting reforms touch several areas of student life, including curriculum, student assessment, graduation requirements, and behavioral incentives such as attendance rules and extracurricular participation. The Texas curriculum standard is embodied in the essential elements for each class or subject that all students should master while they are in school. The Texas Legislature called for this reform in 1981 in HB 246. Standards for learning are reinforced in the student assessment system, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), which is keyed to these essential elements. Graduation requirements, as well as the rules governing attendance and extracurricular activities, reinforce the importance of academic achievement. Graduation requirements, for example, specify the course requirements and the passing standard for all students in the state. Graduation also requires passing an exit-level TAAS test. The TAAS exit-test standard was set—and then raised—in the 1980s to ensure that all graduates can demonstrate the skills and competencies identified in the curriculum. The standards for students with respect to extracurricular participation communicate expectations for academic achievement as a prerequisite for nonacademic activities. While the overall impact of reforms adopted in the 1980s was intended to improve student achievement, the reforms also had the effect of standardizing practice within the state and limiting local school district discretion.

Curriculum

Prior to the 1980s, Texas public schools did not offer a uniform curriculum. Legislators and policymakers were troubled because there was no way to ensure that schools were presenting the most relevant programs and courses. The Texas Legislature recognized that this variation in curricular offerings would not provide a quality education for all students. In 1979, it passed a resolution calling for a study of a well-balanced and basic curriculum and recommendations to the 67th Legislature for implementing curriculum reform. The Governor's Advisory Committee on Education and the State Board of Education both published reports in 1980. These reports called for the repeal of all laws relating to curriculum and the establishment by the State Board of Education (SBOE) of a state basic curriculum. Following passage of the curriculum reform bill in 1981 (HB 246), policymakers and educators worked together to develop the curriculum, with participation by educators in the field.¹

Essential Elements

By March 1984, the SBOE had adopted curriculum rules for implementation the following year. These rules and the essential elements of the curriculum appear in Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code. The essential elements are the basic learning objectives that must be covered in each of the 12 subject areas, including vocational education.² Many of the elements are taught at every grade level, with a progression of topics and coverage over time. As the name implies, however, essential elements constitute the core knowledge that the SBOE has decided Texas students need to learn. They affect instruction as well as other

areas of the education system such as graduation requirements, textbooks, tests, and teacher preparation. The rest of the curriculum is determined by a school's instructional leaders—its principal and teachers for each grade or subject area.

When the essential elements were first introduced, teachers in some grades were required to spend specific amounts of time covering certain topics. In 1990, the Texas Legislature loosened these requirements, allowing school districts and teachers greater freedom to decide the best way to deliver instruction to cover the essential elements. This legislative response illustrates how state policy can be implemented through decentralized management. Under such an arrangement, the central education agency provides the general guidelines and structural framework for the curriculum, and the teachers and the schools make decisions on how best to deliver that curriculum. In 1993, the Texas Legislature further specified state and local responsibilities (SB 705), requiring that the SBOE "establish a curriculum mastery plan to allow each student in a district to advance through the required curriculum in the most efficient manner."³ One feature of the plan must be a provision for accelerated programs.

The state's vocational education curricula also are based on the essential elements. However, this traditional training path often fails to link classroom instruction with the workplace skills these students need. In addition, the courses of study do not reflect evolving workplace opportunities. For example, many Texas students continue to enroll in agricultural science, home economics, and industrial arts programs even though the number of good jobs in these areas is shrinking.⁴ While students in these classes may perform well and learn the content that is presented, they may discover they are unprepared to find and keep a good job when they graduate. The Texas economy no longer relies primarily on natural resources, mass production, and an insulated American market. Today's society is information and technology driven; it relies more heavily on human capital.⁵ All workers must possess the skills and competencies to adapt to rapidly changing workplace environments. This, in turn, requires that all students, including those in vocational education, be prepared for entry into fields of work that will lead to high-skill, high-wage jobs.

Changing the focus of vocational education in Texas schools is difficult. Schools continue to offer home economics and agricultural courses in part because their vocational teachers are trained to teach them and school traditions perpetuate them. Many vocational teachers lack the training to teach courses that provide students with the skills necessary for the state's priority occupations in the 1990s. A 1993 report by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts recommends giving these traditionally trained vocational education teachers vouchers to attend higher education or technical schools for retraining.⁶

The state's academic high school curriculum has come under scrutiny as well, in part because of poor student performance on the state's assessments, and also because new tests will be introduced that are expected to challenge students to achieve higher performance. In order to prepare students, the State Board of Education has endorsed a more rigorous, but voluntary, high school curriculum that includes 24 credits rather than the 21 credits currently required for graduation.⁷

What Students Should Learn

Several initiatives at both the state and national level have attempted to determine the skills and knowledge students will need when they leave school. One initiative helping to shape the curriculum of public schools nationwide is a 1991 report from the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), commissioned by the United States Department of Labor. Based upon interviews with employers, managers, and workers in a wide range of United States businesses, this report recommends the foundations and competencies that are needed for high-performance work:

Foundations

1. **Basic skills**—reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, speaking, and listening.

2. **Thinking skills**—creative thinking, decisionmaking, reasoning, problem solving, seeing things in the mind's eye, and knowing how to learn.
3. **Personal qualities**—responsibility, self-management, integrity/honesty, self-esteem, and sociability.

Competencies

1. **Resources**—identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates them.
2. **Interpersonal**—associates with others to achieve a common goal.
3. **Information**—acquires and applies necessary information.
4. **Technology**—effectively selects and uses appropriate technology.
5. **Systems**—understands how system components interact to achieve goals.⁸

In Texas, the Committee on Student Learning was created in 1991 by the 72nd Legislature for a similar purpose, namely, to identify what schoolchildren need to learn to be successful. According to its mandate, the committee focused on "the essential knowledge and skills identified by the committee for elementary and secondary students, including at a minimum knowledge and skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and critical thinking" and on "replacing course or class credit requirements with requirements for core competencies, including critical thinking skills, for the purpose of improving and evaluating student performance."⁹ In other words, the committee's charge was to identify a wide range of skills and knowledge related to academic achievement and future economic success of Texas students. To carry out its charge, the committee reviewed prominent national reports on student outcomes and met with national experts on the topic. The committee also asked educators and citizens in Texas what they believe is most important for students to learn. Committee activities were expected to continue into the 1994-95 biennium, but legislation in 1993 (SB 7) effectively abolished the Committee on Student Learning. The committee's activities and many of its members are now part of an Essential Skills and Knowledge Panel that has conducted a series of public forums during 1993 about education outcomes.

An important existing resource for relating the Texas public school curriculum to the jobs that will be available to students when they leave school is the list of priority occupations for the state adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE) in January 1993 (see Appendix B). For each of the occupations in this list, an average of 500 or more annual job openings in Texas are projected until the year 2000. The jobs are projected to have average wage rates of at least \$6.44 per hour and to require training times of three months to four years.¹⁰ The role of educators is to integrate a high-quality academic curriculum with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that specific jobs require. This approach does not guarantee that graduates will find employment in these jobs, but it increases the likelihood that they will.

Targeted-occupations lists have been developed in 24 state regions by Quality Workforce Planning Committees (QWPCs) created through a tri-agency partnership composed of the Texas Department of Commerce, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Education Agency.¹¹ Members of these regional committees represent education and training providers, business, and labor. The committees are intended to link employer needs for productive employees with vocational and technical education programs in the region. Through these linkages, vocational education, academic curricula, job training, and school-to-work transition programs can better serve students and the Texas economy. For example, since only six of the 24 regional lists include agricultural occupations, students and educators in the remaining 18 regions would need to consider programs and training in areas other than agricultural vocational education.¹²

School-to-Work Transition

Texas schools can play an important role in preparing students for successful adult life, but changes in secondary education programs will have to occur for this role to be successfully fulfilled. A growing body of evidence suggests that students who do not plan to obtain a college degree must be better prepared than they are now to enter the workforce.

1. According to the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, more than half of young people leave high school unprepared to find and keep jobs in high-performance workplaces where good pay and advancement opportunities are available.¹³
2. Many students see little connection between their courses and activities in high school and the jobs they may have in the future. Both students and schools are uncertain about skills employers currently require.¹⁴
3. Workers need workplace know-how—the ability to combine technical knowledge and skills (reading, thinking, and problem solving) with competencies or attributes that characterize high-performance employees.¹⁵

Schools currently do not ensure that students leave with these skills and competencies. High school teachers interviewed during site visits concurred that more attention should be given to students who do not plan to go to college.¹⁶ Upon high school graduation, non-college bound youth in the United States have limited job opportunities. Employers are reluctant to hire these youth until they reach their mid-twenties, believing they lack sufficient maturity and training.¹⁷

In contrast, Japan and Germany have successful systems of school-to-work transition for their youth. In Japan, non-college-bound students attend vocational high schools with strong academic curricula, close industry ties, and good training equipment.¹⁸ Graduates from these high schools are often recruited by some of Japan's best companies. Non-college-bound students in Germany go to school one day a week and learn on the job for the other four days under the guidance of a mentor.¹⁹ Upon completing their apprenticeships, German students must pass an exam to be certified for a job in their profession.²⁰ In both countries, non-college-bound youths receive vocational training and a strong academic foundation that prepare them for careers.

In the United States, many school-to-work transition strategies have been proposed and are being implemented. No single strategy meets the needs of every student, every business, or every occupation, however. For this reason, a variety of approaches to education and training are being implemented. Technical preparation (tech prep), career academies, cooperative education, and apprenticeship programs are among the most common.

Technical preparation (tech prep) programs include a sequence of academic and vocational courses that span both high school and college or technical schools. In this coordinated effort, repetition of concepts can be avoided, and consistency in the high school and postsecondary programs can be promoted. One type of tech prep is the 2+2 program, which integrates two years of courses in high school with two years of postsecondary coursework. Upon completion of the program, a student receives a high school diploma, plus an associate's degree or a certificate in a technical area.²¹ Many consortia of school districts and postsecondary institutions offer 4+2 programs that start in the ninth grade. In the 4+2 programs, some students choose to exit after four years of high school with sufficient training to obtain a job. Other communities offer 2+2+2 programs in which students complete a 2+2 program followed by upper-division coursework in a four-year college leading to a bachelor's degree.²²

Career academies are high school programs in which a group of students (e.g., 100) constitute a "school within a school." These students are taught by a team of teachers who use an occupational area, such as

finance or health care, as the focus in teaching their courses. For example, the team of teachers might consist of math, science, English, and vocational teachers who coordinate lessons and projects across disciplines. The occupational focus brings an added relevance to academic subjects that students can easily understand. Such a group of students and teachers in a career academy typically stays together for two or three years, enabling students and teachers to know each other well.²³

Apprenticeship programs teach students job skills primarily at the worksite, where youths work directly with experienced employees who socialize them to the job setting. These programs offer unique opportunities for mentor relationships. Training is usually offered at the expense of the employer. Under apprenticeship programs, students earn money while they learn knowledge and skills in nontraditional and practical ways.²⁴ Such workplace instruction often is appealing to youths who find learning difficult in conventional classrooms. Some programs employ high school seniors part-time as apprentices, with a transition to full-time apprenticeships after high school graduation, while other programs delay employment until after graduation. In all instances, however, the high school courses are linked to the workplace skills needed by apprentices.

Cooperative education is more school-based than other school-to-work transition programs. It generally does not involve post-high school graduation training and is commonly arranged in retailing, office professions, and other occupations not normally served by apprenticeships. For each student assignment, the cooperative education teacher and the student's job supervisor develop a workplan for the student. The student works while attending high school and receives some credit for the work experience. Nationally, about one of ten students enrolled in vocational education programs participates in cooperative education.²⁵

In Texas, tech prep is becoming the most prevalent type of school-to-work transition program; more than 600 school districts participate in tech prep programs.²⁶ To comply with the federal Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act, which requires integration of academic and vocational education in the tech prep programs it funds, Texas has set up 25 tech prep consortia encompassing every region of the state.²⁷ Consortia members include secondary and higher education institutions, business and labor groups, and other community organizations that work together to develop tech prep programs for their local areas. The consortia usually work closely with the QWPCs in their respective regions, although some QWPCs are not as actively involved in shaping vocational education courses on school campuses as others are.²⁸

School-to-work transition programs, education and business partnerships, and records of student achievements and accomplishments that are useful to employers are all elements that can enhance the school-to-work transition for Texas students. The Austin Independent School District (ISD) and the Fort Worth ISD have programs that encourage job-shadowing opportunities, in which students or teachers visit individuals at work in order to observe the duties and activities various jobs entail, and industry internships, in which students or teachers serve as interns in local businesses.²⁹ Through these programs, students and teachers become more familiar with the knowledge and skill requirements of work environments. The experience is intended to illustrate to the students the connection between what they learn in school and what they will need to be able to do on the job. Also, teachers who have interned are more likely to incorporate their experiences into instructional activities in a way that shows students the relevance of their classes.

Initiatives in several Texas cities involve business-education partnerships in which preferential job interviews or preferential hiring are offered to students who participate in the programs. For example, the High Expectations program in Austin has offered preferential interviews for jobs that pay at least one dollar above the minimum wage to participating junior and senior students in targeted high schools. Students must maintain a 95 percent attendance rate and a 2.5 cumulative grade point average, plus attend monthly pre-employment and motivational seminars to be eligible for these preferential interviews.³⁰

One significant problem for non-college-bound youth is that employers usually do not consider high school transcripts when making hiring decisions.³¹ To some extent, this reflects the fact that high school transcripts are generally developed for use by colleges, but it may also indicate that employers find it difficult to

obtain and use transcripts or do not consider the details of a high school student's training and education record to be important in the hiring process. As a result, students who make high grades often have no advantage over low achievers in seeking employment. This takes away many of the incentives for maintaining good grades and good attendance.³² Currently, school-to-work transition programs are exploring ways to make transcripts, portfolios of student work, or other types of high school records of achievement more useful to employers. For example, Fort Worth ISD students are developing portfolios of their work to be used for this purpose.³³

Student Assessment

Student assessment in Texas public schools serves several purposes. First, assessment results indicate how well the state system is performing and how well each district within the system performs. Second, assessment identifies students in need of remediation. Third, it monitors how well students master the curriculum. Fourth, it provides a measure for holding teachers, principals, and school districts accountable for performance. Finally, assessments permit the state to identify high- and low-performing campuses in order to provide rewards and assistance.

Most recently, Texas has administered two standardized tests to meet these objectives: the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas (NAPT). The TAAS is a criterion-referenced test that assesses mastery in reading, writing, and math. The criterion or key to the test is the Texas curriculum and learning objectives established by the SBOE. Although the TAAS is keyed to the essential elements of the curriculum, it also assesses students' higher-order thinking skills (e.g., creative thinking and reasoning) within the curriculum. The NAPT was incorporated into the Texas assessment system in 1992 so that the performance of Texas students could be compared to the performance of students across the country.³⁴ The NAPT is a normed test that assesses science, social studies, reading, language, and math achievement. Student scores are referenced (or normed) to scores of a sample of students who took the test at some time in the past. Unlike the TAAS, the NAPT was not designed to measure attainment of the Texas essential elements. It is a version of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Student assessment has been a topic of lively debate in the Texas Legislature and in Texas schools for several years. The debate has included discussions regarding the frequency, content, and timing of exams. As a result, there have been several changes to the overall assessment program. In early 1992, the commissioner of education responded to a concern that Texas students were spending too much time taking tests by recommending that the TAAS be administered only in grades 4, 8, and 10 rather than in all odd-numbered grades. A recommendation also was made to give the test at the end of the school year rather than at the beginning, so that it could more accurately assess what students learned during the year. In addition, the commissioner recommended that the NAPT be gradually reduced in scope over several years and that eventually it no longer be required.³⁵ The recommendations regarding NAPT and TAAS timing have, for the most part, been implemented. However, the recommendations for reduced use of the TAAS were set aside for a more ambitious and extensive state testing program.

The 73rd Texas Legislature considered the role of testing in the context of accountability and, following a path different from the commissioner's recommendations, mandated the use of criterion-referenced TAAS tests in reading and mathematics each year in grades 3 through 8. In 1994, science and social studies sections will be added to the TAAS. The SBOE and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) also remain responsible for adopting criterion-referenced end-of-course tests for high school students, the first of which will be in Algebra I and Biology I to be administered in May 1994. The legislature removed the mandate for a norm-referenced test (the NAPT), although the SBOE may adopt such a test and pay for the cost of testing. Texas students still must pass an exit-level TAAS test to graduate from high school, as required by previous legislation; however, SB 7 gives authority to the SBOE to add additional subject areas to the test.³⁶

Since standardized test results are publicized and because they are a key indicator in determining accountability and school and district accreditation, there is significant pressure on principals and teachers to

ensure that students do well on these tests. One would expect teachers to spend a significant amount of class time preparing for the tests, and the majority of teachers interviewed in the site visits indicate that this is the case. While the amount of time varies among teachers, several indicated that test preparation is a focus of class time for several weeks prior to the test administration.³⁷ It also follows that the more tests there are, the more time is spent on preparation.

In general, "teaching to the test" implies that students are being taught nothing other than how to do well on a particular test. As long as test results are viewed as a reflection of the teacher's ability, however, it may be impossible to prevent teachers from "teaching to the test." The TAAS was designed to assess effectively the essential elements of the curriculum along with higher-order thinking skills, but the extent to which this objective has been accomplished has not been adequately researched.

Although many teachers and principals interviewed believed that the TAAS is an improvement over previous versions of the competency test, many of them agree that the skills and knowledge assessed are still too basic and that too much time is spent preparing students for the TAAS. Some respondents elaborated by saying that this is especially damaging to the higher-achieving students, whose time may be wasted by reviewing remedial skills.³⁸

On the other hand, several teachers interviewed remarked that the TAAS is challenging and that because the TAAS is geared to the essential elements and assesses students' writing ability and problem solving skills, time spent preparing students for the test is worthwhile. These teachers believe that the high standards of the TAAS communicate high expectations to students. Although some respondents feel that the writing component is too structured and thus does not recognize a student's creativity, many of those interviewed believe that teachers are spending more time working with students on writing as a result of the writing portion of the TAAS.³⁹

Most of the teachers and principals interviewed think that the tests do a good job of identifying students in need of remediation. One teacher explained that the skills were so basic that if a student fails, he or she definitely needs remediation. On the other hand, many believe that evaluating student performance on a single test is unfair. After all, as one teacher pointed out, any student can have a bad—or exceptionally good—test day.⁴⁰ Educational professionals favor using several measures of accomplishment for accountability.

Nationally, many educators who recognize the shortcomings of standardized tests would like to see them replaced with performance-based assessments that focus on demonstrations, projects, and portfolios. They feel that these assessments would more accurately evaluate the students' abilities and be a more worthwhile teaching tool. Vermont, for example, has been active in developing and administering performance-based assessments on a statewide basis.⁴¹ Other educators disagree, arguing that in addition to being time consuming and expensive, the scoring of these assessments is subjective and thus not a reasonable basis for an accountability system. For the most part, even those who point out the shortcomings of the TAAS recognize that some sort of statewide standardized test is necessary.⁴²

A true evaluation of student performance and progress over time in Texas is difficult since testing changes have been so frequent during the last decade. Not only have the actual tests changed, but changes in the administration of the tests, the grades tested, and the timing of the tests also have made it difficult to assess the progress students are making in school.

Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate from a public high school in Texas, students currently need to fulfill certain graduation requirements, including the achievement of a passing score on an exit-level exam and the completion of specific coursework.⁴³

The successful completion of the exit-level TAAS test is perhaps the most rigorous of the graduation requirements. The exit-level test includes objectives for reading comprehension; written communication; and mathematical concepts, operations, and problem solving. A student must score 70 percent or better on each portion of the test in order to graduate.

A second requirement specifies the coursework that must be completed for a student to graduate from high school. Increased graduation requirements approved by the SBOE in 1984 now include 8 semesters of English, 5 semesters of social studies, 6 semesters of mathematics, 4 semesters of science, 1 semester of health, 1 semester of economics, 3 semesters of physical education, and 14 semesters of electives. Action by the State Board of Education in 1992 eliminated the practice of counting below-level courses such as Fundamentals of Math or Correlated Language Arts as credits toward graduation, except as electives.⁴⁴ SBOE action in 1993 also has resulted in a recommended high school program of 24 credits. Students would accumulate 4 credits each of English, math, science, and social studies; 3 foreign language credits (of the same language); and additional credits in electives, the arts, health and physical education, and computer science. Vocational education students could substitute a coherent sequence of technical preparation (3 credits) for a math credit, a science credit, and an elective.⁴⁵ These changes should result in better preparation for the exit-level exam, for end-of-course tests, and for post-graduation career and education opportunities. However, it will be a challenge for many high schools to assemble the facilities and professional staff to offer such an expanded program.

Approximately 70 percent of the high school principals who responded to a fall 1990 survey by TEA believed that the increased graduation requirements, including the exit-level test, had no adverse impact on the probability of graduation for regular students. This suggests that, for the general student population, standards apparently can be raised without negative effects. This is not true for the approximately one-third of the state's public school students who are less likely to achieve these standards and graduate, however. Fifty-five percent of the principals responding to TEA's fall 1990 survey believed that the exit-level test had decreased the likelihood of graduation for these at-risk students, with 49 percent of the principals reporting a similar outcome for at-risk students as a result of the increased coursework required for graduation.⁴⁶

In the site interviews, many high school principals and teachers supported the purpose of the exit-level exam, but they thought that the skills tested are only adequate for low-wage jobs and do not reflect what students really need to know to be successful after graduation.⁴⁷ Respondents in these 1993 site visits, as those in the 1990 TEA survey, believe that graduation requirements have negative effects on at-risk students. Indeed, some principals and teachers believe that the continued failure of some students to pass the exit-level exam is too great a burden for a young person to bear and further lowers self-esteem.

The results of the 1992-93 exit-level TAAS confirm the potential negative effects of inadequate TAAS preparation on at-risk students. Statewide, 13,377 (7.4 percent) of Texas public high school seniors had not passed at least one part of this test by June 1993 and thus were unable to receive their high school diplomas with their classmates.⁴⁸ A substantial proportion of these seniors were African American or Hispanic students, reflecting the significant gap in TAAS scores between the state's major racial and ethnic groups. Although students not yet passing the exit-level TAAS were able to take it again in July 1993, their inability to graduate as planned may diminish their college and career-work opportunities even if they eventually pass the test.

Behavioral Incentives

Texas legislators and education policymakers have believed that linking negative consequences to a student's failure to meet certain school requirements communicates the importance of the established educational standards and encourages students to meet these standards. Three such incentives are the no pass/no play rule, the driver's license requirement, and attendance requirements.

No Pass/No Play Rule

The no pass/no play rule conditions students' participation in extracurricular activities on their academic performance during the prior six-week grading period. Students must receive a grade of 70 percent or higher in each course to remain eligible for participation.⁴⁹ The rule is intended to communicate the importance of academics to students.

In a four-year study by TEA, researchers surveyed and interviewed students, counselors, and principals about the effect of this rule.⁵⁰ They found that students and staff had positive attitudes toward the no pass/no play rule, even though 44 percent of the at-risk students in the study sample reported that they had been denied the chance to participate in an extracurricular activity during the 1989-90 school year because of the rule. The rule had some positive effects, including better communication between coaches and teachers and a perception of teachers that students worked harder to remain eligible. The no pass/no play rule also is seen as a positive reform by an overwhelming number of the high school teachers and principals participating in the site interviews. Many of those interviewed claim that the law has resulted in increased communication between teachers and an increased sense of responsibility for students.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the rule has its critics. No pass/no play is based on the six-week grading period, reducing campus and district flexibility for implementing year-round schedules. The TEA study reported that a consensus among students, faculty, and staff was that the penalty should be reduced to three weeks, with an additional three-week probationary period.⁵² A few respondents in the site interviews expressed concern that many athletes fail to maintain progress in their studies after their sports season ends. Others think the ineligibility period should be reduced from six weeks to three weeks in order to lessen the severity of the punishment. Several site visit interviewees think that the rule discourages students from taking more difficult coursework, even though principals may waive suspension if the course failed is an advanced or honors course.⁵³ At the same time, the rule may negatively affect at-risk students. Indeed, 40 percent of the principals surveyed by TEA in fall 1990 believed that the no pass/no play rule decreased the chances of graduation for at-risk students. Given this spectrum of concern about the rule, continued efforts to persuade the Texas Legislature to weaken it are likely in the next few years.

Driver's License Requirement

The driver's license restriction (HB 850, 1989) requires that no one under age 18 be issued a driver's license unless he or she has a high school diploma, has passed a graduation equivalency exam, or is currently enrolled in a high school or a high school equivalency program.⁵⁴ The primary objective of the law is to reduce the dropout rate. Yet, only about 35 percent of the high school principals responding to a fall 1990 TEA survey perceived that this law had increased the graduation likelihood of either regular or at-risk students. Moreover, TEA case studies of several schools in 1990 and 1991 confirmed that the law brought about little improvement in student graduation rates. Students who knew about the requirement considered it "dumb" and generally questioned its validity. In its report of this 1990 survey and the associated case studies, TEA recommended that the driver's license law be rescinded, since the general disrespect for authority generated by the law may be greater than the law's impact on dropout rates.⁵⁵

Attendance Requirements

In order to receive class credit, a student must be in attendance 90 percent of the days a class is offered, according to legislation enacted in 1993 (SB 7). Petitions for waivers of this policy are heard by local school district attendance committees. As in the past, policies set forth by the individual school districts govern the circumstances under which students make up missed time or regain credit, often even if a waiver is granted.⁵⁶

Among the high school principals responding to TEA's fall 1990 survey, 57 percent believed these attendance requirements had not changed the likelihood that a regular student would graduate; 36 percent believed they had increased the likelihood; and less than 10 percent thought the probability had been decreased. However, almost 30 percent of these respondents perceived that the state's attendance policy encouraged at-risk students to drop out.⁵⁷ To illustrate this point, consider a student who fails to receive course credit (due to class absences) early in a course sequence. The student may have to wait a year before retaking the course, in which case he or she may give up and drop out of school. As reported by one principal participating in the site interviews, this perception makes it more likely that a school administrator will waive the attendance rule if the student is at risk of dropping out.⁵⁸

A 1993 report issued by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts confirms and responds to these observations. The report recommends that attendance rules be more flexible and that schools place greater emphasis on performance than on attendance. The report also suggests that more flexible attendance policies would lead to a higher graduation rate and a reduced burden on the criminal justice system.⁵⁹ However, the Texas Legislature has set aside this advice, maintaining the attendance system. Indeed, in at least one respect the 73rd Texas Legislature tightened attendance requirements in SB 7, doubling the fines levied against parents whose children have unexcused voluntary absences.⁶⁰

Recommendations: Setting Standards

1. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should ensure that information on priority occupations and available jobs is disseminated to all school districts and is linked effectively by districts with their academic, vocational education, and school-to-work transition programs.

The Texas Education Agency maintains a list of SBOE-adopted priority occupations in Texas and has access to the list of targeted occupations and jobs identified by each of the regional Quality Workforce Planning Committees. Working with the Texas Department of Commerce, the Texas Employment Commission, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, TEA and the SBOE should ensure that this information is regularly updated and disseminated to school district officials responsible for informing curriculum leaders, principals, teachers, school counselors, and parents about the job opportunities available to high school graduates. Teachers and counselors should in turn use this information to help students design and follow coherent curriculum paths to meet their individual goals. Youths and their parents often have high but unrealistic expectations of the career and training opportunities that await students following high school and can benefit from the advice of school personnel regarding appropriate academic preparation.

Many vocational education programs in the state are not training students for the jobs that will be available to them. Information on effective vocational education and school-to-work transition programs should be communicated regularly to school districts so that program developers can consider them in planning local programs. The 20 regional education service centers (ESCs), governed by the SBOE and charged with providing educational services and technical assistance to school districts, should assist districts to integrate challenging academic programs with vocational education and school-to-work transition programs linked to the available jobs in the 1990s and beyond.

Another important academic, vocational education, and school-to-work transition linkage is between school districts and nearby postsecondary education institutions. A state agency task force should evaluate existing linkages in Texas and other states (including the tech prep 2+2 and 2+2+2 programs) to identify "best practices" to disseminate to school districts and education service centers.

School districts themselves need to assume greater responsibility to ensure that these linkages occur. The state should maintain records (received from districts) for placing graduates in jobs or in postsecondary education or training opportunities. District officials should be encouraged by TEA, SBOE, and other state agencies to become more actively involved in their respective regional QWPCs and tech prep consortia. If

additional incentives are needed to encourage school districts to focus more than they do currently on preparing students to enter the workforce, the SBOE and the state education commissioner should recommend that the Texas Legislature offer financial incentives to districts through the foundation program or through the QWPCs.

2. The Texas Education Agency should inform vocational education teachers about state and regional occupational opportunities and should establish a program to retrain, as appropriate, these teachers in subject areas relevant to student and employer needs.

As vocational education programs are increasingly linked to state and regional employment opportunities, vocational education teachers must be fully knowledgeable about state and regional priority occupation lists, workplace competencies necessary for high-skill jobs, school-to-work transition programs, and regional QWPC and tech prep consortia responsibilities.

When these linkages between vocational education programs and occupational developments are more fully developed, some vocational education teachers in Texas public schools may find themselves skilled in subject areas no longer viewed as critical by a school district and its local community. These teachers face the loss of their jobs unless they have opportunities to be retrained for higher priority areas. As recommended in 1993 by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, TEA should take the lead to work, directly and through the ESCs, with colleges, employers, and business groups to develop courses and certificate programs directed to these targeted areas. Instructors for these courses should include skilled supervisors from projected regional employers. Part of the state vocational education funding allotments should be used as support for vocational education teachers to obtain this training as well as for vocational and technical pilot programs. The Texas Department of Commerce, the Texas Employment Commission, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should be active participants in this process as well.

3. The Texas Education Agency should assist schools in designing student records that provide employers useful and timely information about the academic and personal achievements, skills, and proficiencies of high school students.

Currently, high school transcripts are seldom used by or useful to employers when they make hiring decisions concerning high school students and graduates. Information on transcripts often is irrelevant to or incomprehensible by employers. Some employers report that they have had difficulty obtaining transcripts in a timely manner. Since student achievements, skills, and proficiencies are poorly communicated to employers, high school students who are not college bound see little motivation to learn and achieve in high school and to graduate.

TEA should assist school districts in designing improved ways to document and communicate student knowledge and skills, achievements, personal growth, work experience, community service, and other areas important to the student, potential employers, and postsecondary education institutions. Each district should adopt one or more types of student records (e.g., redesigned transcripts, career passports) that facilitate transition from high school to a job or to college, thereby increasing the motivation for Texas high school students to do well in school.

4. The State Board of Education and the Texas public education system should continue to accord a high priority to state policies that enhance academic learning for all students.

An emphasis on academic learning encompasses several areas of school activity. Academic performance as a prerequisite for participation in extracurricular activities (i.e., the no pass/no play rule) should be retained as a state policy. However, the State Board of Education should consider ways to apply this policy in school districts that follow a plan that does not include the standard six-week grading period. Attendance requirements should be retained, but performance in school should be regarded as more important than attendance in school. To this end, the State Board of Education should expand upon the provisions of SB 7 by

adopting policies that encourage school districts to develop alternatives to help students make up missed work, such as more intensive summer school programs and credit by examination.

5. The Texas Education Agency should expand its efforts to encourage and assist school districts to enhance and assess student performance.

Standardized tests, although valuable as performance indicators, fail to assess sustained work, performance abilities, and advanced applications to actual problems. Thus, the Texas Education Agency should expand its program of research and development in validating the current TAAS test and in performance assessment. This program could eventually lead to a supplemental program of alternative assessment that would be available to school districts on a voluntary basis, with TEA assistance provided as needed. The Texas Education Agency should consider the performance assessment programs of other states and research organizations during the articulation of its research and development plans. TEA also should take into account the future needs and concerns of school districts, ESCs, local education and employment planning groups (e.g., QWPCs and tech prep consortia), and colleges, universities, and technical schools in this process. In addition, TEA should seek to maintain the new student assessment requirements of SB 7 for several years in order to provide useful data on student performance and progress.

Achieving Standards

Some students bring to school social, economic, and physical differences that inhibit learning and academic achievement in a traditional school environment. Thus, several reforms enacted by Texas legislators in the 1980s were designed to ensure that students with special needs were provided the foundation upon which to learn at the same level as the general student population. These reforms include compensatory education programs, tutoring and remediation, prekindergarten, teen pregnancy and parenting programs, bilingual education, and special education. In general, these reforms have one priority—to keep students in school and learning.

Compensatory education programs are funded through Chapter 1 of Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and through the state's foundation program compensatory education allotment. State compensatory education support is based on the number of low-income students within a district. Although federal funds are used to aid low-income students, state compensatory education funds may be used to support any student needing additional help, regardless of income. State compensatory education dollars thus are the primary funding source for a variety of activities, including tutoring and remediation, teen pregnancy and parenting programs, parental involvement, and innovative support services for at-risk students. Statewide remediation and tutoring efforts provide additional help to at-risk students who fail the TAAS and whose grades are below 70. Prekindergarten programs, funded through the foundation program, prepare potentially at-risk children academically and socially for kindergarten and later grades. In an attempt to keep pregnant and parenting teens in school, funding is provided that may support child care, health and nutrition counseling, transportation, parent education, and pre-employment services. Bilingual education and special education, also funded through the foundation program, facilitate the integration of linguistically different students and students with special learning needs, respectively, into the regular curriculum.

The design and implementation of reforms to assist students with special needs in achieving high educational standards requires the identification of the target student population. The term "at-risk student" is commonly used to describe students less likely, for any number of reasons, to achieve these standards and to graduate.

The state has specified the criteria to be used in identifying at-risk students for participation in compensatory education and remediation programs. Legislation effective in 1987 characterized as at-risk any student in grades 7 through 12 who was under age 21 and

1. "was not advanced from one grade level to the next [grade level] two or more school years";
2. "has mathematics or reading skills that are two or more years below grade level";
3. "did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more courses during a semester, or is not maintaining such an average in two or more courses in the current semester, and is not expected to graduate within four years of the date the student begins ninth grade"; or
4. "did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument [currently the TAAS] administered . . . in the seventh, ninth, or twelfth grade."⁶¹

Two years later, the Texas Legislature amended the Texas Education Code by expanding the specification of at-risk to include any student in prekindergarten through grade 6 who

1. "did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered at the beginning of the school year" [e.g., performed below the 30th percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Reading Test];
2. "did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument [currently the TAAS] administered . . . in the third or fifth grade";
3. "is a student of limited English proficiency . . .";
4. "is sexually, physically, or psychologically abused";
5. "engages in [delinquent] conduct described by Section 51.03 (a), Family Code"; or
6. "is otherwise identified as at risk under rules adopted by the State Board of Education."⁶²

In addition, nonhandicapped students at any grade level were said to be at-risk if they lived "in a residential placement facility in a district in which the student's parent or legal guardian does not reside, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster family group home."⁶³

Educators do not agree upon the usefulness of these state criteria in identifying at-risk youths, however. Some believe the criteria are too broad, while others complain they are too narrow. One principal interviewed in the site visits pointed out that the state criteria do not account for attitudes of the child or parent that may make the student at-risk, regardless of grades or test scores. Another teacher stated that students should not be told if they have been classified as at-risk; such classification may affect a student's motivation and self-esteem, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Additionally, schools often feel they do not have the flexibility to remove students from the at-risk category.⁶⁴ Districts can alter a student's status, but as shown in a 1992 TEA report on how reforms have affected at-risk students, this practice is rare.⁶⁵

School districts and campuses may use additional criteria in determining risk, including psychosocial, behavioral, and family and home characteristics.⁶⁶ This practice increases the number of students statewide who are identified as at-risk. For example, because the Austin ISD centralized student files do not identify whether students have been abused, are delinquent, are homeless, or reside in a treatment facility, school staff are asked by the district office to identify and serve students on their campus whom they believe are at-risk, adding the names to the school district's comprehensive list of at-risk students. In 1991-92, 23 Austin ISD elementary schools added a total of 358 student names; 84 percent of these students were low-income and below grade level in achievement but did not meet the mandated state criteria. The total number of Austin ISD students identified

as at-risk in 1991-92 was approximately 12,000 in grades 7 through 12 (46 percent of all students) and 14,300 in prekindergarten through grade 6 (37 percent of all students).⁶⁷

Students are identified as at-risk in order that the school can better allocate resources to meet their learning needs and prevent dropouts. Yet many students not identified as at-risk also drop out due to personal and family circumstances in their lives, such as the death of a family member or friend, long illness, or the responsibility of caring for a younger sibling. Teachers also describe students who do not meet the at-risk criteria but who don't care, are not serious about learning, or do not complete their schoolwork. Thus, being identified as a student at-risk is a relative, not absolute, condition, and school districts need the flexibility to respond to students' learning needs and changing social conditions as necessary.⁶⁸

The following sections describe and assess the primary programs through which districts respond to the social and educational needs of their at-risk students.

Compensatory Education

Eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch is used as a proxy for student need in determining compensatory education allocations through the foundation school program. There has been a steady increase in the number of Texas children qualifying for the free and reduced-price lunch program,⁶⁹ and TEA predicts that 50 percent of Texas students will qualify by 1997. Consequently, more state and local resources will be devoted to this group of students in the future through compensatory education programs.⁷⁰

Districts must provide a minimum of four compensatory education programs:

1. a remediation program for elementary students failing the TAAS;
2. a remediation program for students failing any section of the exit-level test;
3. a remediation program for students scoring below a standard established by the SBOE; and
4. a remediation program for students at risk of dropping out of school.⁷¹

TEA is required to provide materials covering topics on the TAAS tests for students and parents to use over the summer in order to improve students' TAAS performance.⁷² In addition, a district with a dropout rate that exceeds the state average must use a certain percentage of its compensatory education allotment for dropout retention and recovery programs. To serve these students, school districts have the flexibility to implement programs they deem appropriate and to distribute compensatory education money according to student needs. In all districts, no more than 15 percent of the state allotment can be used on administrative costs.

TEA has completed several studies of compensatory education. A 1988 study found that a variety of techniques, methods, and instructional arrangements were used to educate compensatory education students.⁷³ A subsequent study (1990) found that parental involvement and frequent coordination between the regular and compensatory education teachers were associated with improved academic performance. Compensatory education students who received grade-level instruction in the regular classroom were generally more successful as well. More than half of the compensatory education students who received before-school or after-school tutoring were successful academically, and compensatory education students who tutored other peers were even more successful.⁷⁴

In 1992, the Texas Center for Educational Research studied the outcomes and costs of Texas compensatory education programs.⁷⁵ That research yielded five major findings. First, compensatory education planning often fails to include clear specification of intended outcomes for each program offered by a district or a school. Vaguely stated or missing objectives prevent program administrators from conducting evaluations to

determine program effectiveness. A second finding is that eligibility for compensatory education is very broad, enabling school districts to serve a wide spectrum of students with special needs. Flexible service policies encourage local control, but they leave open the question of how well resources are targeted to students with severe or multiple needs. Third, the costs of compensatory education vary widely across districts and across programs. Alternative schools and programs for parenting students were the most costly, and summer school and whole school programs were the least costly. Support services such as tutoring and parent involvement activities were also less costly. Fourth, compensatory education cost estimation is an inexact process, made more difficult because program budgets usually are not developed. Fifth, compensatory education programs with the greatest promise include whole school approaches like Success for All and accelerated schools.⁷⁶ These programs remove children from the stigma of pull-out programs and low-level basic instruction that are still common in many compensatory education programs. Relatively few schools have implemented these promising programs, although the numbers in Texas are growing. TEA has explicitly endorsed the concept of acceleration for compensatory programs and encourages districts and campuses to explore the benefits of this approach.

Tutoring and Remediation

School districts must provide tutoring and remediation services. For example, students whose grades are below 70 in one grading period may be required to attend tutorials at least twice per week during the following grading period.⁷⁷ According to a 1989 report issued by the TEA Dropout Information Clearinghouse, "Tutoring may be the most cost-effective way to raise achievement levels. It yields greater achievement per dollar than any other educational innovation."⁷⁸ A Texas Research League survey found that one in six Texas businesses supported tutoring as part of local dropout prevention efforts.⁷⁹ Tutors may include teachers, peers, employees of local businesses, and community members, but tutoring services must be provided at the schools.

Lack of transportation to tutoring sessions remains a barrier to attendance for some students. According to site interviews with principals and teachers, these students often are those most in need of tutoring. Some schools offer tutoring and academic assistance programs before or after school; other schools offer 30-minute advisory periods for tutoring, remediation, and makeup work during the school day, although several teachers interviewed feel that this is not enough time to help everyone needing assistance.⁸⁰

Historically, remediation in the regular education program occurred through low-level courses such as Correlated Language Arts and Fundamentals of Math. Since these courses are now being phased out, some districts, including Austin, are considering teaching some traditionally year-long courses (e.g., algebra) in a year and a half or two years.⁸¹ This approach is an opportunity for all students to learn challenging subjects such as algebra and geometry and moves schools away from a "seat time" model to a "mastery of concepts" model. Students needing remediation must have teachers who are encouraged to teach concepts in innovative ways and do more than just slow down what they have always taught. Teaching with more problem solving, games, real world applications, and technology gives students more time as well as different avenues to master concepts while still promoting higher-order thinking skills.⁸² It is important to note that this strategy relies on an expanded investment in staff development.

In 1993, the education commissioner proposed a restructured summer school academic assistance program for students in kindergarten through grade 8. Implementation of such a program would be less costly than retention in grade for a full year and would decrease the likelihood that students will forget what they have learned in the previous year.⁸³ The 73rd Texas Legislature responded to this proposal by establishing a state-funded extended-year (i.e., summer school) pilot program in 1993-94 for students who otherwise would be retained in grade 1 and extending it to include both grades 1 and 2 in 1994-95. School districts also may apply to the commissioner of education for approval to conduct an extended-year program for students in kindergarten through grade 8 who are identified as unlikely to be promoted. Districts, with the approval of the commissioner, would fund the summer program by reducing their regular school program by up to five days. They also may use pilot program funds for transportation. At the same time, any district providing one of these

extended-year programs must adopt a policy to lead to immediate reduction and ultimate elimination of student retention.⁸⁴

Recent research has shown that one-to-one tutoring (provided by trained adults) for grade 1 students who are having trouble reading is an effective intervention that has long-term results.⁸⁵ Peer and cross-age tutoring are other successful strategies used by Texas schools. Peer tutors may use a technique that is more suited to the student's learning style than the traditional approach used by a teacher.⁸⁶ Peer tutors can be honor students, older at-risk students, or college students. Tutoring other students builds self-esteem, especially for older at-risk students who tutor younger students. TEA found that at-risk middle and senior high students who were peer tutors had decreased truancy rates, less class tardiness, and better attitudes about school.⁸⁷

Technological innovations in remediation—including computers, interactive video, graphing calculators, and materials that can be manipulated—can supplement traditional remediation techniques. They also can be used to reach students with non-traditional learning styles in the regular education program. Local business partnerships often fund these learning tools, with the ESCs and school districts providing training on the use of technology in instruction and tutoring.

Because of the variety of tutoring and remediation approaches and the different characteristics of Texas schools, there is not one best way to offer tutoring. Each school district must set goals and outcomes and develop a program that meets its schools' needs. Whatever approach is adopted, the district and local community should be held accountable for the outcomes.

Prekindergarten

Research reported by the National Governors' Association and others has shown that prekindergarten programs are extremely valuable in preparing students academically, socially, and emotionally for school.⁸⁸ Texas funds prekindergarten education for bilingual and low-income three- and four-year-olds through the foundation program. A school district *must* offer prekindergarten classes if it identifies at least 15 eligible students in the district who are at least four years old, and the district *may* offer such classes if it identifies 15 or more three-year-old students. To be eligible, a child must be either "(1) unable to speak and comprehend the English language; or (2) from a family whose income, according to standards set by the State Board of Education, is at or below subsistence level."⁸⁹

A May 1993 interim report of a five-year evaluation of prekindergarten education in Texas shows that students who attend prekindergarten are less likely than similar students to be retained in grade, are more likely to read closer to grade level, and are perceived by their teachers to be more ready for the next grade. Disadvantaged students who do not attend prekindergarten are more likely to be placed in special education, have greater speech and communication difficulties, and have a higher retention rate. Yet, the report also recommends changes to improve prekindergarten programs. Activities of current programs appear to be similar to elementary school, with the teacher leading and directing the children most of the time. Experts recommend that prekindergarten be child-directed rather than primarily teacher-led. Child development experts also recommend that early childhood teachers spend more time on activities that require student interaction to help students' social and intellectual development. The report notes that classes often are too big and recommends that schools reduce the student-teacher ratio to 16:2. Specialized staff development for prekindergarten teachers and greater use of students' primary language in bilingual classes also would improve the programs.⁹⁰

Teachers and principals interviewed in site visits strongly reaffirmed the effectiveness of the prekindergarten programs. Indeed, several teachers commented that they could identify those students in their classes who had attended prekindergarten programs, and they were able to see the positive impact of the programs on these students.⁹¹

Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

In response to findings that marriage and pregnancy are major causes of students dropping out of school,⁹² the 71st Texas Legislature (SB 151) designated \$10 million annually from state compensatory education funding for pilot programs to reduce dropout rates of pregnant and parenting teenage students. For returning dropouts who are parents, the programs also create a more supportive educational system. The programs provide enrollment in academic courses, training in parenting and child development, pre-employment assistance, counseling support, child care, transportation, and coordination with government and nonprofit agencies that offer support to pregnant and parenting teens. These programs operate in a variety of settings—home campuses, alternative campuses, school- and community-based child care facilities, the worksites and homes of student parents and their families, and facilities operated by social service agencies. While some programs offer services only when students are enrolled in school during the academic year, most offer opportunities for child care, parenting education, and transportation during the summer months as well.

In the program's first year (FY 1990), 26 pilot projects served 1,254 student parents and 1,088 children. In FY 1991, the program grew to 51 sites serving approximately 5,000 students and 3,600 infants. Females accounted for 92 percent of teen program participants. Fifty-seven percent of the students were low-income. Hispanics constituted 45 percent of the participants and African Americans 33 percent. Thirty-one percent of the students were enrolled in college preparatory courses. Annual program costs ranged from \$1,095 per student to \$7,398 per student.⁹³

According to a 1992 TEA review of these pregnant and parenting pilot programs, they have succeeded in helping to prevent dropouts. Had it not been for the pilot programs' child care component, school personnel believed that most of the student parents would have left school within two years. While attendance remained a problem for some participants, the programs provided many students the extra support they needed to graduate. Equally important, once in the programs the students performed at the same level academically as a control group of students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who did not have pregnancy or parenting responsibilities. The programs were effective in establishing connections between student parents and various social services. Nearly seven times as many students received work-related training as a result of the program, while four-and-a-half times as many students received job placements.⁹⁴ However, program participants did have lower attendance rates in grades 7 through 12 than the average attendance rates for all students. While 90 percent of program staff and participants surveyed for a 1992 TEA report thought programs helped participants both as students and as parents and believed the programs should continue and spread to other schools and districts, respondents identified difficulties that student parents continue to encounter in meeting class attendance requirements. For example, young mothers often become discouraged and drop out; they are not "pushed out" by a district's policies. Moreover, for some students "attendance" problems may be a smoke screen for not wanting to cope with parenting responsibilities and regular high school requirements.⁹⁵ Indeed, the greatest problem with the program may be the 14 percent annual dropout rate among participating students, compared to a statewide rate of 3.8 percent among students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who are neither pregnant nor parents.⁹⁶

Teen pregnancy and parenting pilot programs vary in size and scope across the state. At some schools the school nurse and part-time counselors operate the program. Other teen programs are more ambitious. One program reviewed in site interviews is administered by school officials who actively recruit pregnant women and girls in housing projects, inviting them to come to the schools for advice on parenting. The goal is to help new teen parents rear their children so that these children will not have the same problems as their parents when they enter school, thereby breaking a cycle of dysfunction and dependency.⁹⁷

Bilingual Education

More than 100 different languages are spoken in Texas homes. In the 1991-92 school year, approximately 10 percent (361,127) of the students in Texas public schools were limited English proficient

(LEP).⁹⁸ Although students are eligible for bilingual education at all grade levels and language categories, a LEP student generally does not remain in the program throughout all the grades.

The Texas Legislature has mandated the provision of bilingual instruction in prekindergarten through the elementary grades if the district identifies 20 or more students of limited English proficiency. Students not being served by the bilingual program (where two languages of instruction are used full-time) in prekindergarten through grade 12 are taught English as a second language (where English is the language of instruction and special methodology is used in language arts classes). The purpose of bilingual education is to facilitate the integration of language-minority students into the regular school program by giving them opportunities to learn the curriculum in a familiar language. Approximately 25 to 40 percent of students leave the bilingual program each year to enter the regular all-English program. Some districts have a student make this transition when the student scores between the 23rd and 40th percentiles in English reading and language; others only do so after the student scores at the 40th percentile. From an administrative perspective, a quick transition requires a less complex curriculum and fewer teachers trained in bilingual education. However, students who move out before scoring at the 40th percentile generally required further academic assistance. Students who enter the regular instructional program upon achieving the 40th percentile need up to 22 percent less remediation in English reading and language arts.⁹⁹ The evidence for the effectiveness of bilingual education over English as a second language is not conclusive. Language experts have begun to advocate two-way or dual language programs where all students have continual exposure to intensive use of two languages rather than programs that seek to develop English language dominance in children.¹⁰⁰ This approach would require expanded staff development as well as revised incentives for pre-service teachers to master a second language.

Per-pupil bilingual education costs vary considerably from district to district. This is primarily due to wide-ranging student-teacher ratios. The average cost for 1990-91 (without federal monies) was \$802 per student. In 1990-91, statewide expenditures for the bilingual program totalled more than \$236 million, of which \$229 million was state and local funds.¹⁰¹

Special Education

For more than two decades Texas has sought to provide educational services for children with handicaps through special education programs. Since 1969, Texas has provided a free appropriate public education to all handicapped children between the ages of 3 and 21.¹⁰² Between 1969 and 1991, the percentage of all students in average daily attendance served by special education programs increased from 5.6 percent to 12 percent.¹⁰³ In the 1991-92 school year, Texas public schools served 340,919 students in special education.

In the 1980s much of the state's legislation regarding special education focused on appropriate funding for special education students and further integration of students with special needs into the mainstream. Prior to 1984, Texas allotted special education dollars according to the number of special education teachers within each district. Critics argued that this method led to a disproportionately large amount of funding to wealthier districts that could afford additional teachers. HB 72 replaced this system with the current practice of student-based weights (or adjustments) to funding dependent upon the number of students requiring special education and the type of service received. The funding system received continuing criticism, however, on the grounds that greater weights placed on the more intensive services provided an incentive to retain students in more restrictive environments. To compensate for this imbalance, legislation in 1989 amended the funding weights with an additional weight for special education students that are integrated or mainstreamed into the regular classroom. Additionally, state law provided a one-time payment of \$2,500 for every student moved from a totally self-contained to a partially contained setting. Districts were required to use the additional money to assist students in transitioning to less-restrictive settings.¹⁰⁴

In March 1991, the State Board of Education issued a study examining the personal and social developmental skills necessary to enable individuals to advance personal growth; participate in their communities; and engage in productive social, vocational, and educational activities. It found that more than

half of Texas' special education graduates are employed, compared to a national rate of 40 percent. Approximately 25 percent attend some type of postsecondary education, which is roughly equal to the national average. About 21 percent of the state's special education graduates are not participating in productive activity, compared to 32 percent nationally. The SBOE report strongly recommended systematic and cooperative planning between special education, regular education, and outside public agencies to prepare special education students for life after leaving public schools. Additionally, the report recommended that parental involvement become a major focus of transition planning as it increases the opportunity for special education students to develop life skills. Finally, special education programs for emotionally disabled students must focus on dropout prevention, because dropout rates for these students have approached 50 percent.¹⁰⁵

The Texas Legislature enacted a number of special education changes in 1993. Effective 1994-95, a special education mainstream student is funded at 1.1 times the district's basic allotment. SB 7 also adjusts downward many of the weights for special education students in nonmainstream instructional arrangements. A school district that implements an "extended-year program required by federal law for special education students who may regress" can receive additional funding, but total state funding for these programs may not exceed \$10 million. SB 7 repealed transitional funding for moving special education students into the mainstream, and the education commissioner now may reduce a district's special education allotments if it "maintains a ratio of students in partially or totally self-contained classrooms to students in resource room or mainstream instructional arrangements that is 25 percent higher than the statewide average ratio."¹⁰⁶

Recommendations: Achieving Standards

6. The Texas Education Agency should expand its assessment of at-risk student identification criteria and recommend to the 74th Legislature a revised identification framework within which schools are better able to meet, cost-effectively, the needs of their students who are most at-risk.

With many school districts identifying over 50 percent of their students as at-risk, limited program resources existing to meet the educational needs of these students, and site-based decisionmaking being implemented in public education, current at-risk student identification criteria need to be reformulated. Given Texas school management and accountability trends, particular attention must be given to the development of an identification framework which enables school districts to better identify severely at-risk students and to meet their education needs. TEA should conduct an assessment of at-risk identification criteria in such a way that school and community views throughout Texas are effectively represented. The TEA-recommended at-risk student identification framework should be integrated with other state programs (e.g., health, transportation, day care) that also assist at-risk students. In addition, Texas should explore the effect of more flexibility regarding students with good academic performance but substandard attendance. The use of end-of-course exams to assess achievement of students with poor attendance should be pilot tested.

7. The Texas Education Agency should make available guidelines and technical assistance to school districts so they can develop educational programs that explicitly address state and district goals. TEA should also develop programs of assistance to school districts that are consistent with the new results-based monitoring process.

It is critical that districts retain the flexibility to design their own compensatory education, tutoring, and remediation programs. However, the state should require the districts to set goals for these programs and then evaluate progress toward these goals. TEA or the education service centers should offer training for district people to evaluate programs and make available lists of reputable program evaluation services. TEA should use the results of its recent pilot program to examine the effectiveness of results-based monitoring and to develop planning and implementation guidelines that assist districts in identifying their own program goals and outcomes. A results-based monitoring system offers a shift in evaluation priorities from examining process to examining product. Instead of a single method of program review, results-based monitoring employs multiple indicators to assess district performance, including test improvement, degree of parent and community involvement, and student demographics. The frequency of TEA evaluation visits and the provision of TEA

technical assistance services should be determined jointly by TEA and the school districts. Technical assistance services should serve as guidance to the districts throughout program development, not just as post-monitoring support.

8. The Texas Education Agency should identify and conduct pilot projects on promising tutoring and remediation programs and should regularly encourage school districts to implement and evaluate compensatory education programs that are effective and compatible with district goals.

Peer tutoring, community involvement, early intervention, and one-to-one tutoring all have been successful methods of assisting students with special needs in Texas public schools. TEA should expand its evaluation of program models and its support for pilot projects, disseminating information regarding successful programs through national information networks such as the National Diffusion Network and, in Texas, through the regional education service centers and the Texas Education Network (TENET). Staff development is critical to the successful implementation of new models for learning, and the ESCs should take the lead in organizing workshops and preparing materials for sharing information and for training teachers as tutoring and remediation program leaders. Each school district should evaluate regularly its compensatory education programs in light of its instructional goals and outcomes.

9. The Texas Education Agency should foster expanded staff development programs for prekindergarten teachers to enhance students' social and intellectual development.

Given the long-term benefits of a quality preschool education, the Texas Education Agency should continue to evaluate the effectiveness of current prekindergarten programs and should expand its dissemination of information on successful programs through the regional education service centers. These activities should be accompanied by an expansion of specialized staff development opportunities for prekindergarten staff at the state's education service centers and university teacher centers. Prekindergarten teachers should learn instructional techniques and practices that increase student involvement in the learning process and lessen the role of the teacher as "class director." Prekindergarten programs will be more effective in fostering students' social and intellectual development if these programs are coordinated with local social service programs.

10. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should encourage the Texas Legislature to fully fund the teen pregnancy and parenting program on an annual basis and should actively encourage school districts to seek waivers from student attendance and other requirements if they can be shown to limit the program's effectiveness.

The success of current pilot projects demonstrates a statewide need for supportive teen pregnancy and parenting programs to help ensure that these students remain in school to graduate. Annual appropriations should provide full funding for eligible programs in all interested districts to enable them to employ well-trained staff. In addition, TEA should disseminate to all districts guidelines on the most effective program models statewide.

Currently, school districts receive weighted funding (2.41) for each pregnant student but not for parenting students, even though these latter students' need for child care and other social services is crucial. For each parenting couple, at least one individual should receive funding at the 2.41 weight.

In addition, schools should give even greater flexibility to pregnant and parenting teens with regard to class attendance and makeup requirements. Traditional school-year calendars and rigid course schedules often lead to involuntary pregnant or parenting student absences. As long as student parents are increasing their mastery of the essential elements and showing responsibility for their children, these students should be encouraged and supported by the public education system.

11. The Texas Education Agency should encourage school districts to provide curricular options for bilingual students until they score at the 40th percentile on English reading and language tests and should disseminate to school districts information on best practices for achieving this objective cost-effectively.

As a school district learns more about students' academic performance through academic indicators, it will better understand the needs of its special student groups, including bilingual students. Since moving students prematurely out of bilingual programs generally requires further remediation in later years, districts should be encouraged to retain students in bilingual programs until they score at the 40th percentile on English reading and language tests. Because a district often concludes it is too costly to provide the supplemental curricular options necessary to serve students in bilingual programs until they score at the 40th percentile, TEA should identify and disseminate to school districts information on cost-effective strategies successfully implemented locally throughout Texas. The use of a two-way (or dual) language program is one strategy that should be expanded in Texas schools and evaluated in terms of student outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

12. The Texas Education Agency should foster greater integration of special education students into mainstream school activity, including academic classes, vocational education, school-to-work transition programs, and other initiatives that increase student opportunities to develop life and employment skills.

Advocates for special education believe that students with disabilities learn more, achieve more, and are better prepared for life after graduation when they are integrated into a school's full spectrum of activities. This is especially true with respect to the assimilation of the basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, and competencies needed after high school graduation. Regional Quality Workforce Planning Committees and tech prep consortia, as well as local business-education partnerships, should consider special education students in their planning activities. Among the initiatives TEA should consider are additional flexibility and discretion for special education programs, additional training for educators and parents in the implementation of an inclusive learning environment, and increased quality and availability of instructional services. (These are some of the activities the TEA Special Education Task Force may undertake.) TEA should support a broad array of new assessment techniques and instruments, expansion of education "boundaries" to include community and interagency programs, and a focus on early intervention. Collaboration between TEA, the Texas Employment Commission, and the Texas Department of Commerce is essential to the success of such initiatives.

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Chapter 3. Teacher Reforms

Teachers are responsible for imparting the knowledge necessary for our students' and our society's future. For more than 35 hours a week, 1,260 hours per year, Texas students rely on their teachers for their intellectual and social development.

Teacher reforms in the past decade have sought to strengthen the profession through a two-pronged approach. The first prong is attracting talented newcomers to the teaching field. Policymakers understand that high-quality teachers must be attracted to, prepared for, and retained in the public schools of Texas if students are to receive an excellent education. The second prong is teacher professionalism. Experienced teachers must have an effective system of rewards and professional advancement as well as a network of opportunities to enhance their skills and update their knowledge.

By and large, Texas public school teachers are dedicated to meeting their students' educational needs and to enhancing their professional qualifications. However, the call to social responsibility and personal fulfillment, when combined with limited financial rewards and career advancement opportunities, has not been enough to draw Texas' highest academic achievers into careers as educators. Among those who become teachers, some are ill-prepared to teach their subjects or to handle the responsibilities of the classroom. Others experience "burnout," often leaving the profession or continuing to teach with a minimal investment in their professional development. Reforms regarding certification, retention, staff development, and accountability for teachers have attempted to strengthen the standards and rewards that have characterized the teaching profession, but the reforms have not been wholly successful in achieving their goals.

Teacher quality (through preparation and certification) and professional development must continue to be a priority for state policymakers if the Texas public education system is to achieve its learning objectives for students. This chapter assesses the reforms of the 1980s in the two areas of teacher quality and professional development.

Teacher Preparation and Certification

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, in *A Nation At Risk*, concluded that too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students.¹ Stevenson and Stigler reached a similar judgment, observing that the students "attracted to the teaching profession are not among the most able students in our colleges and universities; in fact, year after year, reports of college entrance scores reveal that the lowest average scores are obtained by students in colleges of education."²

These statements suggest an alarming conclusion: that Texas school teachers may not be of exceptional quality. Although this assertion would be disputed on an individual basis—and correctly so—by many excellent Texas public school teachers, there is agreement that the fundamental impetus behind the teacher reforms of the 1980s was the perception that the quality of teachers could be and should be improved.³

Texas legislators have attempted to improve the quality of the teaching profession through four primary initiatives:

1. the elimination of the undergraduate major in education to improve prospective teachers' mastery of their subject areas;
2. the adoption of the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) to ensure that teachers have reached a minimum level of competence;

3. the approval of alternative certification programs to enlarge the pool of high-quality teachers; and
4. the inclusion of mentoring provisions in the Teacher Induction Program and alternative certification programs to help beginning teachers develop their teaching skills.

Elimination of the Education Major

In the 1980s, national research indicated that teachers who graduated with undergraduate degrees in education often had taken insufficient subject-oriented courses to teach subjects such as science or math in elementary and secondary schools.⁴ As a result, Texas legislators mandated that a prospective secondary school teacher must have a bachelor's degree in an academic major and a prospective primary school teacher must have a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies. These changes went into effect September 1, 1991.

It is difficult to ascertain the effect that eliminating the education major has had on teacher subject mastery. Many studies have asserted that American teachers are overly versed in teaching methodology at the expense of subject mastery, evoking images of teachers who are experts in knowing how to teach or lecture but who know little of the subject itself.⁵ Teachers develop subject mastery primarily from their college academic courses, but it can also come from their student teaching experiences. Texas teachers interviewed in site visits noted that their methods courses were the least worthwhile component of their undergraduate education, while their student teaching experiences were the most valuable in preparing them to teach.⁶

Yet a 1987 study by Harold Stevenson found that teachers took "an average of 4.8 college courses in methods for teaching reading and mathematics,"⁷ while the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) reported that teachers averaged only two courses in academic mathematics.⁸ The SREB also compared transcripts of liberal arts graduates to those of education graduates. The education graduates consistently had fewer hours in all academic subjects (except social sciences) and in all upper-level coursework. Elementary teacher transcripts were particularly striking. More than three-fourths of the elementary teachers took over 30 percent of their coursework in methodology classes.⁹ This correlates with a 1993 TEA study of math and science teachers which found that disturbing numbers (often over 50 percent) of elementary teachers did not have the knowledge to teach the required competencies in these subjects.¹⁰

As of mid-1993, only two classes have graduated from Texas teacher certification programs in which none of the graduates have been education majors. Since there are more than 219,000 public school teachers in Texas,¹¹ these last two graduating classes constitute less than 15 percent of the total number of active public school teachers.¹² Thus, the small number of teachers graduating under this reform to date makes it difficult to assess accurately the effect of the elimination of the education major on teacher subject mastery.¹³

A comparison of ExCET passing rates before and after the elimination of the education major provides only limited insight into the reform's effect on teacher subject mastery. (The ExCET passing rate is determined by dividing the number of individuals who passed the test by the number who took the test.) All prospective teachers must take the ExCET to become certified as teachers. The examination includes a professional development test (to assess teaching skills) and a subject mastery test in the prospective teacher's subject area. In 1989-90 and 1990-91, before the elimination of the education major, the average passing rate on an ExCET professional development test was 92.4 percent. The average passing rate on the 55 subject mastery tests over the same period was 85.1 percent. In the following two years, when teachers were required to graduate with an academic or interdisciplinary major, their passing rates remained relatively the same. The average passing rates were 89.6 percent on the professional development tests and 84.8 percent on the subject mastery tests.¹⁴ Thus, students who majored in education and whose curriculum was more focused toward pedagogy than that of non-education majors scored slightly higher on the pedagogy tests and about the same on the subject mastery tests.

While the elimination of the education major was a good first step in increasing the academic coursework taken by prospective teachers, there is no conclusive evidence that teacher subject mastery is

improving. One explanation could be that college courses in mathematics, sciences, language arts, and other disciplines may cover material that is very different from the approved public school curriculum. Prospective teachers need to complement and reinforce their academic coursework with expanded student teaching opportunities that provide experience in teaching their subject areas if they are to master this knowledge. Greater teacher quality as reflected by subject matter mastery, therefore, is most likely to result from expanded student teaching requirements for certification and programs to attract high-achieving individuals into teaching.

ExCET (Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas)

All individuals seeking certification as educators in Texas are required to pass the appropriate Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET). Implemented in 1986, the ExCET is a multiple-choice criterion-referenced test "designed to measure a candidate's knowledge in relation to an established standard of competence (criterion) rather than in relation to the performance of other candidates."¹⁵ Its purpose is to ensure that certified teachers have the knowledge necessary to begin teaching in Texas public schools.

The ExCET evaluates what teachers should know in order to teach, not their total knowledge of a subject area. Each test is developed by committees of Texas educators from public schools and universities who are specialists in the various content areas. The committees review all test objectives, test items, and other information relating to the test for appropriateness, job relatedness (i.e., correlation with teaching the essential elements), accuracy, and elimination of ethnic and gender bias. In addition, the test's competencies are validated by a survey of Texas educators currently teaching in that field. The passing standard is set by the State Board of Education, with advice from educators. The exams are revised, as needed, on the basis of their continuing consistency with the essential elements and test takers' comments. This is a valid and carefully administered development process for creating a fair examination that tests what educators need to know in order to teach effectively in Texas classrooms.

The ExCET does not ensure a high level of teaching competence, however, because the goals of certification examinations are somewhat contradictory. The exams are criterion-referenced and are indicators of, not means to improve, teacher quality. The exams seek to ensure that the most qualified students pass, but at the same time enough individuals must pass to meet the demand for teachers. As a result, minimum passing requirements reflect the qualifications of those who take the test. Thus, the effectiveness of ExCET certification examinations cannot be assessed simply on the basis of how many students passed or failed. Rather, the examinations should be considered successful if the test results accurately reflect the relative quality of those students being tested.

One way to investigate the ExCET's accuracy in evaluating relative teacher quality would be to compare teachers' ExCET scores with their students' academic achievement. Although TEA has not had the time or the resources to undertake such a comparison, a 1993 TEA study rated the teaching preparedness of new secondary science teachers based on assessments by their high school science department heads. Teachers received ratings from one to four in each of the science areas, with a rating of one meaning a teacher is not at all prepared and a rating of four meaning a teacher is very prepared. Interestingly, these assessments of secondary science teacher preparedness correlate with science teachers' scores on the 1992 ExCET content tests. That is, science fields in which teachers received the highest ratings from their department heads were those in which the highest ExCET scores also were reported. Thus, the ExCET appears to reflect accurately relative teacher quality, at least in the sciences.¹⁶

The ExCET tests knowledge that is specifically related to teaching, and its results reflect the knowledge of the individuals taking the test. By itself, however, the ExCET is unlikely to improve significantly the overall quality of public education teachers in Texas. For this reason other teacher reforms are important, including attracting high-quality individuals through the alternative certification programs and making teaching a more professional career.

Alternative Certification

Alternative teacher certification has been permitted since 1984, when legislators passed a law stating that districts *may* develop alternative certification programs (ACPs) should there be perceived teacher shortages in critical areas such as bilingual education and special education. The law was modified in 1989 to allow all school districts to develop ACPs, regardless of need.

Alternative certification programs offer college graduates who did not follow the traditional certification route a chance to become teachers in public schools after passing a standardized basic skills test and undergoing evening or summer training. The duration, content, and time of the training is determined by each regional or district program in Texas.¹⁷ Alternative certification is seen as a means to address the actual and projected shortages of well-qualified teachers in Texas public schools.¹⁸ It is envisioned that ACPs will draw professionals from other fields who are interested in the teaching profession, but who have been discouraged by the course requirements of the traditional certification route.

Over 28 percent of new teachers entering the public school system in Texas in 1991-92 were alternatively certified. The number of school districts participating in alternative certification programs reached 378 during the 1992-93 school year. ACPs served more than 2,400 interns in 1992-93, compared to 1,807 interns in the preceding year and 240 in the first intern class during the 1985-86 academic year. In total, 8,891 interns were certified through alternative programs in Texas between 1985 and 1992.¹⁹

While the number of teachers certified through the ACPs is impressive, the success of alternative certification programs in achieving their objectives is unclear. A primary concern is the potential attrition rate of ACP teachers and, consequently, their ability to alleviate the state's teacher shortages, especially in bilingual and special education. About 12 percent of Texas public school teachers who taught in 1991-92 did not return the following year, leaving about 25,000 vacancies.²⁰ Nationwide, studies have documented similar attrition rates among teachers, reporting that at least 50 percent of teachers leave the profession by the sixth year.²¹ Critics have claimed that ACP teachers are attracted to teaching during economic downturns, only to be lured away by more lucrative job options during economic upswings. Yet a 1992 study comparing the retention rates of more than 2,500 alternatively certified and traditionally certified teachers in the Houston area found the attrition rates to be comparable.²² Once alternatively certified teachers are in the system, they face the same challenges as traditionally certified teachers, including rapid burnout and a dearth of professional support. The primary reasons for leaving the teaching profession, therefore, have not been the promises of better positions elsewhere but, rather, the more systemic problems of the teaching profession.

Since ACP teachers generally have not gone through the years of student teaching experience and pedagogical instruction completed by teachers certified through universities or any of the eight centers of professional development and technology established at Texas universities in 1992, a second concern is whether ACP interns will be quality teachers.²³ ACP interns generally have prior work experience and are older than traditionally certified first year teachers. In a study of Dallas ISD teachers, for example, ACP interns were, on average, about three years older than traditionally certified first year teachers, with about 69 percent of the ACP interns having left positions in business, public service, or other areas to become teachers.²⁴ Nevertheless, critics have questioned whether ACP interns can transmit knowledge to students, claiming these interns are "weak, poorly prepared counterfeits" who are "another obstacle to efforts to advance the teaching profession and to achieve excellence in our educational system."²⁵ Disputing this assertion is a 1988 study comparing test scores for students of alternatively certified teachers and those of university certified teachers in the Houston ISD.²⁶ One school district study comparing ACP interns with first year teachers found ACP interns performing at or above the statewide averages on the ExCET.²⁷ In addition, teacher advisors—or intern mentors—rated the classroom performance of ACP interns comparable or superior to other first year teachers. In site interviews, principals and teachers alike said that the quality of teachers trained under an alternative certification program and the traditional programs are generally comparable, with one principal stating that ACP teachers tend to be

more "seasoned." Another principal said ACP interns could benefit from additional classroom teaching experience before becoming a teacher of record, but that suggestion was almost unanimously made for both traditional and alternative teacher certification programs.²⁸

Another concern is that an ACP candidate's expertise in a professional field such as engineering or business may not guarantee teaching skills or the ability to transmit professional expertise to students. Thus, the alternative certification programs that are most successful at obtaining well-qualified candidates meticulously screen their applicants to maintain a pool of outstanding interns. Moreover, to facilitate this screening process, the SBOE has established minimum standards, including degree requirements, grade point average, basic skills testing, and language proficiency. Because the state does not offer screening criteria regarding applicants' potential as *effective* teachers, however, school districts and regional education service centers offering ACPs must develop their own criteria for screening applicants who would be successful at teaching diverse groups of students and "creating a learning environment for *all* children" [emphasis in the original]. The quality of ACP teachers is partly a reflection of the quality of these screening standards, which vary since the programs are individually set up by each district or region.²⁹

Other factors which vary from program to program are the structure and characteristics of intern training. Generally, ACP interns learn how to teach during the summer prior to their initial appointment as a teacher of record. There is concern that this period may not provide enough student teaching experience to prepare the interns for the actual classroom once the fall semester begins.³⁰

Alternative certification programs in Texas exemplify local action meeting local needs under flexible state guidelines. Districts are not required to operate an ACP; should they decide to do so, there are few state rules governing their design. Monitoring teams composed of peers such as principals, teachers, and administrators review ACP training programs every one to three years. The evaluation criteria are broad and flexible, focusing more on the qualitative aspects of the program such as the amount of planning, the amount of time interns spend with students and mentors, and the extent of coaching and guided practice provided to interns.³¹

The cost of training ACP interns ranges from \$2,500 to \$4,000 per intern for the first year they are trained.³² In most districts, the intern pays this amount, usually with an up-front deposit and monthly deductions from his or her paychecks during the first year of teaching. From the district standpoint, this may be a cost-effective method of obtaining more teachers who are well-qualified. Since districts still must provide the staff support and supervision, however, one principal in the site interviews felt it unfair for a teacher alternatively certified in one district to teach in another district that did not help pay for his or her training.³³

An unexpected benefit of the ACPs has been the influx of minority and male teachers into Texas public schools, since one objective of the State Board of Education is to have a teaching force whose ethnic composition reflects that of the state.³⁴ In 1991-92, 77 percent of Texas public school teachers were white, while only 14 percent were Hispanic and only 9 percent were African American. Students, on the other hand, were 49 percent white, 34 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent African American.³⁵ In the 1992-93 ACP intern class, 34 percent were male; in addition, 33 percent were Hispanic, and 17 percent were African American.³⁶

Alternative certification programs in Texas have succeeded in supplying Texas with teachers in critical needs areas, including special and bilingual education. Generally, alternatively certified teachers are of comparable ability and have attrition rates similar to traditionally certified teachers. The training of ACP interns, like traditional teacher training programs, could improve with additional supervised classroom teaching experience and the use of mentors more committed to working collaboratively with their interns. Indeed, the linchpin of many teacher certification and preparation programs is often the mentoring component.

Teacher Mentoring

Beginning teachers need the support and guidance of their more experienced peers to survive the initial teaching experience, which can be emotionally and physically overwhelming. As many as 30 percent of beginning teachers leave after their first year of teaching, and 50 percent leave by the sixth year.³⁷ Furthermore, research has indicated that those who are more academically talented leave in greater numbers.³⁸

Mentoring may be one way to ameliorate the adverse effects of launching a teaching career. The idea is that the experienced teacher, or mentor, advises the new teacher through difficult situations and provides emotional reassurance when needed for as long as two years so that the beginning teacher does not feel crushed under the weight of his or her responsibilities. Mentoring helps retain high-quality teachers and is integral to preparing them. The sharing of ideas, knowledge, and skills in a teamwork atmosphere strengthens the overall profession and improves student learning.³⁹

A mentor is "one who guides, gives assistance and directs through the transmission of knowledge and skills."⁴⁰ The rationale for mentoring programs is fourfold.

1. Teachers are not gradually immersed into their profession; rather, theirs is a trial by fire with immediate assignment into classroom teaching.
2. Beginning teachers spend most of the day isolated from their peers and unable to seek immediate advice.
3. New teachers, by tradition, are given the most challenging teaching assignments.
4. New teachers are often reluctant to ask for help for fear of appearing incompetent.⁴¹

Without sound mentoring programs, teachers may leave the profession or develop "survival skills" that impede effective teaching.⁴²

In Texas, teacher mentoring occurs through two legislatively established channels. The first is the Teacher Induction Program (TIP), which is designed to help initiate new teachers into the profession and includes a one-year cooperative teaching component with an experienced supervisor, teacher, or administrator. Legislators mandated the TIP in 1987 in response to public concern over the quality of first-year teachers. There were approximately 14,000 first-year teachers in 1992-93; although each new teacher is required to have a mentor under the TIP, there are no data showing how many new teachers actually work with their mentors. The second avenue for mentoring is through the alternative certification programs, where each ACP intern is assigned a mentor teacher. Since there were more than 2,400 ACP interns in 1992-93, it is likely that more than 2,000 teachers served as ACP mentors in 1992-93, although no state data are maintained.⁴³

In addition, many schools throughout the state operate informal mentoring programs that vary in their levels of quality and commitment.⁴⁴ This variation among mentoring programs is testament to the lack of uniform state standards and guidelines, as well as to the state's commitment to local flexibility. Although TEA makes available "best practice" models of mentoring programs, districts are not required to adopt these models. The state does not mandate mentoring other than through the ACPs and the TIP. Further, state law allows school districts, through alternative certification programs and induction programs, to provide mentoring arrangements as they see fit, leaving opportunities for dramatic variations in program quality.

Mentors often receive little or no training in their new roles. TEA makes available various frameworks or models for effective training in such areas as adult communication skills, techniques on giving constructive advice, adult learning, and various coaching styles, but these guidelines are not closely followed by school districts and campuses. A top-down approach to mentor training, however, may not address the unique needs of

districts and campuses. Instead, an outcomes-based system may be more appropriate in assessing the effectiveness of mentoring programs. This could be accomplished either by having beginning teachers evaluate their mentors or by having both mentors and those they advise be held accountable for the performance of beginning teachers' students.

Because of teachers' full workload, they may need incentives to spend the time and effort involved in being a mentor. ACP mentors receive between \$300 to \$500 per year as compensation for their mentorship duties, an amount that educators regard as token since it does not adequately compensate teachers for the time and energy necessary to be an effective mentor. Mentors in the Teacher Induction Program, however, receive no money from the state for their additional work, although some districts have chosen to use local funds to compensate their mentors.

Although this disparity may be viewed as an inequity by some teachers who are mentors or are contemplating becoming mentors, it is unclear whether monetary compensation is the most effective incentive. Few of the teachers interviewed in the site visits mentioned monetary compensation as a prerequisite to their decision to mentor. On the other hand, many said that they would mentor for the "honor" and psychic rewards associated with being a mentor. Three teachers said they saw mentoring as an opportunity to learn and develop professionally and to forge a "spirit of teamwork" among new and old teachers.⁴⁵

The issue of time has been a significant problem in obtaining the commitment of mentors, however. Many teachers have a full instructional load, with little time left each day to observe and advise the beginning teacher. As a result, mentoring, in the words of one veteran teacher, occurs around the photocopying machine.⁴⁶ This lack of time also diminishes the number of teachers who volunteer (either for pay or not) to be mentors, requiring some principals to assign teachers as mentors.

Hence, teacher mentoring in Texas has been unevenly pursued, with some districts operating extensive, high-quality programs that go beyond any state requirements and others administering small programs of lesser quality. Rather than criticizing the less effective mentoring programs, however, the state should applaud the effective grassroots efforts occurring on some campuses across the state and encourage replication of these successful mentoring efforts in other districts.

Recommendations: Teacher Preparation and Certification

13. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should take steps to improve teacher preservice preparation by increasing the student-teaching time required for teacher certification and encouraging student-teaching assignments that more effectively prepare future teachers for the classroom and community realities of their initial teaching positions.

Teachers in either the traditional or the alternative certification paths need additional student teaching experience to enhance their subject matter mastery. First-year teachers often enter the classroom unprepared on both emotional and academic levels to carry out their teaching responsibilities. Their high attrition rates are in part attributable to their lack of classroom experience and to their incomplete understanding of how to foster student learning in the classrooms of today. Current teachers indicate that their student-teaching experience was the most valuable aspect of their education. Expanded and improved student-teaching assignments would better prepare future teachers and also would benefit current teachers and students. Undergraduate student-teacher assignments might begin in the student's junior year and include assignments in two schools with different student profiles and school environments to prepare students more effectively for the realities of alternative employment settings. Such assignments would provide opportunities for teacher training programs and school districts to create mentoring arrangements for student teachers that complement and foster mentoring among full-time district instructional staff. Universities, teacher training centers, and the ESCs also should conduct research on the effects of expanded and strengthened student-teacher assignments on student learning, teacher learning, and supervision of student teachers. Clearly, increased student-teaching time and mentoring will increase

instructional costs because experienced teachers will need more released time to work with these new professionals.

14. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should actively promote the adoption and implementation of voluntary state criteria for school districts to use in screening alternative certification program applicants for their abilities to teach the diverse group of students in Texas public schools.

The quality of alternatively certified teachers is often dependent on various screening processes used in the ACPs throughout the state. The state does not mandate screening criteria regarding applicants' potential as effective teachers. At the same time, it is onerous and inefficient for each ACP to develop its own screening criteria for teaching ability. In addition, the lack of uniform state guidelines for this selection process makes it difficult for a district to evaluate the teaching ability of an ACP teacher from another district. The SBOE and TEA should include representatives of diverse ACP programs in the process of identifying state criteria. Particular attention should be given to the feasibility of requiring a longer teaching internship for ACP participants. The ESCs should be active participants in the dissemination and implementation of state criteria and guidelines.

15. School districts and campuses should provide incentives and opportunities for teachers to establish greater numbers of collaborative, team-based mentor relationships.

Mentoring programs aid new teachers in their difficult first years. However, it is hard for veteran teachers to mentor others while maintaining their own teaching duties. Mentoring programs, teachers, and students would benefit if these programs encouraged team mentoring arrangements in addition to one-to-one relationships. Campus administrators also should be involved in the mentoring process, actively monitoring it and providing feedback. A more collaborative approach to mentoring would allow interns to work side-by-side with several mentors in discussing and resolving issues. In addition, the first-year teacher would have more personal interaction with different mentors instead of with a single mentor serving in the role of an observer and hands-off adviser. Attention should be given to innovative ways in which parents and community leaders also could support teacher teaming and collaboration. An essential issue is the development of creative nonsalary incentives (including time off) that stimulate teachers not only to agree to participate in mentoring arrangements but also to take the lead in developing such programs. For example, an experienced teacher-mentor might be permitted to teach one less class, with the school district contracting with a local business to accept one of its employees as a part-time instructional replacement (as now permitted under SB 7). Group incentives should also encourage mentorship. For example, an entire campus could receive recognition and other support for campuswide mentoring activities.

16. Regional education service centers and school districts should offer more workshops for teachers and school administrators on how to increase the level and effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Mentoring is a role that is sufficiently complex so as to require training before one is ready to handle the responsibilities and understand the situations faced by new teachers. The success of mentoring programs depends upon the preparation and ability of the mentors. Expanded training of mentors should result in more satisfying mentoring experiences for both mentors and new teachers. This in turn should encourage both new teachers and experienced teachers to participate more actively in mentoring programs. The success of mentoring programs also depends on the support and encouragement of school administrators. Unless they understand the time implications of mentoring relationships and how to create a work environment that encourages teacher collaboration, simply scheduling more workshops for teachers on how to mentor will not lead to improved mentoring. Thus, workshops that foster creative approaches to increasing the time that teachers have available for mentoring are needed for administrators as well as teachers, as are workshops that incorporate relevant ESC and university research results, including successful mentoring programs throughout the United States.

Professional Development

No matter how well-funded schools are, or how many programs exist to meet student needs, learning will not take place unless classroom teaching efforts are successful. Yet the professional development and advancement of teachers have only recently been addressed seriously by educators and legislators, who realize that teaching must be made more attractive as a profession if the state is to attract and retain good teachers. Teachers should have fair accountability systems, rewarding career paths, and staff development that invests in them and their school environments.

Lawmakers in Texas have addressed the issue of teacher professionalism through three major reforms:

1. the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS), for teacher evaluation;
2. the teacher career ladder, for teacher recognition and career advancement; and
3. teacher preparation and staff development, for classroom preparation and skills building.

These reforms were intended to infuse the field of teaching in Texas with professional standards. Policymakers envisioned these reforms working hand in hand. Teachers would be routinely evaluated and held accountable for their teaching performance; teachers would be provided a career that offered incentives for advancement; and teachers would have continuous opportunities to develop their skills and build upon their knowledge. The career ladder was intended to reward superior teaching and promote self-improvement by providing teachers with a structure for career advancement. The TTAS was meant to standardize teacher evaluation across the state and justify career ladder stipends. Finally, the staff development programs were meant to improve skills and, thus, assist teachers in moving up the career ladder.

The successful design of professional development and evaluation programs is vital to improving the quality of teaching and student success. These programs must be part of a daily, constantly evolving relationship between administrators and teachers. They must be viewed as ongoing processes rather than annual events. While far from complete, the major teacher reforms of the 1980s assessed in this chapter have provided a solid foundation for the more comprehensive approach to teacher professional development necessary to ensure a quality public education system.

Texas Teacher Appraisal System

In 1984, the Texas Legislature mandated the career ladder and the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS), linking teacher pay supplements to statewide performance evaluations. Pay supplements and evaluation both affect the status of teaching as a profession. Pay supplements are important not only as a material return for the time spent teaching, but also as a measure of the value that society places on teaching in relation to other occupations. Evaluation is an important oversight process to ensure that Texas students are taught only by quality teachers. As designed for Texas schools, the evaluation system is also intended to aid the development of teacher skills. State law requires that the TTAS "be used to assess specific skills primarily for the purpose of remediation and improvement."⁴⁷

In practice, however, the legislative linkage of teacher pay supplements and teacher evaluation muted the purposes of both the supplements and the statewide evaluation system. While the financial incentive for some teachers was significant, the career ladder was never fully funded or fully implemented—and, indeed, has now been eliminated by the 73rd Texas Legislature. The TTAS, which is still in use, has been somewhat more effective, although its utility has never been fully realized because of its failure to make a compelling link between performance and salary decisions.

TEA developed the TTAS through an inclusive process, seeking ideas from teachers and administrators as well as faculty at teacher education institutions. The TTAS is designed to evaluate teacher instructional interaction with students, classroom management skills, and skill in presenting the subject matter of lessons. Student performance is not a criterion for teacher evaluation. The TTAS form is filled out by a trained appraiser on the basis of a teacher's performance during a pre-scheduled class period. Teachers were initially evaluated twice a year. Recent legislation reduced the number of required annual evaluations to one. The appraisers (generally principals and superintendents), as well as the teachers, receive training on the expectations and mechanics of the TTAS process. Teachers are given a rating on their performance and placed into one of five ranks: Unsatisfactory, Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, Exceeds Expectations, and Clearly Outstanding. During the years of the career ladder, TTAS scores were then used as a component of the decisionmaking process for career ladder placement.

Since implementation of the TTAS in 1986, well over 90 percent of the TTAS scores statewide have fallen into the Exceeds Expectations or Clearly Outstanding categories. Table 1 illustrates this skewed distribution using 1989-90 data. These results suggest that the TTAS scores are not reflecting differences in teaching quality. In 1991, TEA reported that 72 percent of principals, 60 percent of superintendents, but only 46 percent of teachers felt that the TTAS accurately assessed teaching ability and competence.⁴⁸ All of the groups, including teachers, were somewhat more confident of its usefulness in identifying poor teaching.

**Table 1. Distribution of Texas Teachers by
Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) Category: 1989-90**

TTAS Category	No. of Teachers	Percent	TTAS Score
Unsatisfactory	37	0.0	below 79.9
Below Expectations	257	0.2	80-103.9
Meets Expectations	11,771	6.6	104-135.9
Exceeds Expectations	82,447	46.2	136-159.9
Clearly Outstanding	<u>83,761</u>	<u>47.0</u>	160-184
Totals	178,273	100.0	

Source: Texas Education Agency, Division of Program Evaluation, *Evaluation Study of the Texas Teacher Appraisal System* (Austin, Tex., 1991), p. 41.

Many teachers and principals participating in the site interviews confirmed that high TTAS scores are not necessarily an indication of accomplished teaching. A teacher can achieve a high score by covering all of the items listed on the TTAS form during the two pre-scheduled evaluation periods each year. Certainly, the TTAS measures (e.g., providing an introduction and conclusion to the teaching session, calling on every student in the class) skills teachers should use every day. But a teacher evaluation system should assess teacher performance on a regular basis, not just twice a year. In one site interview, a teacher remarked that another teacher had borrowed a colleague's lesson plan for her evaluation, and as a result she had received a good TTAS score. Another interviewee reported an instance in which unruly students had been temporarily removed from a teacher's classroom before the appraiser's visit. Teachers also reported that the formality of the TTAS evaluations makes some of them nervous, causing them to perform below their capabilities. Furthermore, several

teachers participating in the site interviews expressed the opinion that the validity of the TTAS is primarily dependent upon the ability of the evaluators.⁴⁹

The second purpose of the TTAS is to serve as a remediation and improvement tool for teachers. After each observed class period, the appraiser must provide a written report of the evaluation, discuss it with the teacher, and provide suggestions as to how the teacher may improve his or her skills.⁵⁰ The TTAS sections that address teaching methodology are perhaps most relevant to the remedial and improvement purposes of the TTAS. These sections give both teachers and principals an idea of the types of teaching techniques and levels of practice which TEA approves. This guidance is most helpful to new teachers. Teachers as a whole, however, are divided as to whether the TTAS has improved classroom teaching. In a 1991 TEA survey, 53.5 percent of the teachers said the TTAS adequately improved teaching, while 46.5 percent said it did not. Principals and superintendents were far more positive; 80 percent and 74 percent, respectively, of these respondents felt that the TTAS led to improvements in teaching.⁵¹

One reason many principals and superintendents like the TTAS is that it encourages increased communication between teachers and administrators. In many schools, interaction between principals and teachers is already high, yet in others the TTAS did increase interaction between teachers and administrators, particularly principals.⁵² Principals participating in the site interviews were more impressed with the role of the TTAS in strengthening relationships between principals and teachers than were the teachers interviewed. One teacher reported that the TTAS did encourage her principal to provide useful feedback. On the whole, the teachers participating in the site interviews expressed dissatisfaction with the TTAS. However, a significant number agreed that the TTAS was helpful in defining standards for teachers and in focusing evaluation on teaching methods.⁵³

Teachers reported that one of the main reasons they have not been satisfied with the TTAS has been that its linkage to the career ladder diminished collegiality among teachers.⁵⁴ The Texas Legislature intended that career ladder supplements would be awarded selectively on the basis of merit, not distributed to a majority of teachers.⁵⁵ Therefore, since the TTAS scores were a primary component in career ladder placement and since funding for pay supplements was always inadequate, teachers in essence have competed on the TTAS in order to obtain pay supplements. This situation was regarded by many teachers as detrimental to the teaching process, because teachers said they were less willing to discuss teaching methods and share materials when they were placed in what they perceived to be a competitive situation. Furthermore, principals and teachers agreed that the TTAS reduced teacher morale.⁵⁶ Moreover, the resulting decline in teacher collegiality has not been balanced by an increase in incentives as a result of TTAS implementation. Because the vast majority of teachers have scored on the highest two levels (see Table 1), they have not derived special satisfaction or pride from scoring well. Whether this reflects teachers' lack of understanding that the TTAS is a competency-based instrument or the inability of large numbers of districts to pay stipends is unclear. What is clear, however, is that there has been a strong negative incentive not to rank in or below the Meets Expectations category of the TTAS.⁵⁷

Teacher evaluations could be enhanced by measures that assess teacher skills on a continuous basis and in settings in addition to the twice-yearly class sessions. In the site interviews, principals and teachers suggested other means of evaluation, including routine classroom walk-throughs in which principals note not only what the teacher is doing but also how students are reacting to the teacher. Teachers and principals agreed that principals can obtain better information about their teachers from unscheduled classroom visits. Such walk-throughs were not viewed by teachers as offensive and seem to happen on a routine basis in many of the schools, although it is difficult to say whether teachers would endorse the specific inclusion of unscheduled visits as part of the evaluation process. Several teachers and principals also indicated that student performance and nonclassroom factors such as interaction with parents and attention to administrative duties should be given greater attention in teacher assessments. Teachers seemed to favor such changes because they felt the changes would provide a more accurate assessment, not necessarily because the teachers thought they could score higher on such evaluations.⁵⁸

Partly in response to these concerns, the legislature and TEA have now given districts far greater flexibility in the appraisal of teacher performance. Elimination of the teacher career ladder and the annual reassessment of a teacher's career ladder placement based on the TTAS score has removed much of the competition-like complexion of the TTAS. The elimination of the career ladder also made uniform adherence to TTAS procedures from campus to campus and district to district less necessary. Under recent legislation (SB 7), districts may now develop alternative appraisal systems to substitute for the TTAS, provided that they submit the substitute system to the commissioner of education for approval before it is implemented. Although few districts thus far have developed such alternatives, one that has is Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, which is in the process of developing a system that diagnoses and assesses "the teacher's capacity for self-modification. The focus for this system will be the degree to which teachers are competent at . . . problem identification and solving in a professional collegial atmosphere."

In addition to offering districts the option of developing their own, commissioner-approved appraisal systems, the SBOE and TEA now also allow districts considerable latitude in the way the TTAS is implemented. In particular, rules on implementing the TTAS now allow districts to develop alternative scoring procedures for the TTAS, including holistic scoring, instead of following the rigid scoring procedures used in the past. Officials hope that increased flexibility in how the TTAS is implemented will help districts use the system more successfully to identify teacher strengths and weaknesses and plan for more effective staff development.

TEA is also in the process of reviewing recent developments in teacher appraisal research, with an eye to developing an alternative to the TTAS. Pilot testing of an alternative may begin as early as the 1994-95 school year.

Career Ladder

A significant teacher-related statutory change adopted by the 73rd Texas Legislature (SB 7) was the elimination of the career ladder. Although teachers will continue to be evaluated annually, teacher performance with respect to a district's appraisal system no longer will be used for assignment to a career ladder level. Nevertheless, the career ladder was an important teacher reform, and the teacher recognition and motivation issues (including salary supplements and the articulation of a career development path) to which it sought to respond remain important in Texas.

The career ladder was created by the Texas Legislature in 1984 to reward good teaching and to motivate teachers to improve. It had four levels. All teachers were automatically placed on Level One after they successfully finished their first probationary year of teaching. Promotion to higher levels of the career ladder was determined by the district and was contingent on years of teaching experience and number of post-degree credits, in addition to TTAS scores. Student achievement was not a determinant of career ladder placement. No career ladder pay supplement was provided to teachers on Level One. Teachers on Level Two received an annual stipend of \$1,500-2,000, while those on Level Three received \$3,000-4,000. Level Four, the Master Teacher level, was never implemented because the Texas Legislature did not appropriate money to complete the development of a special Master Teacher designation process. In 1989, a Master Teacher written test was developed and taken by 2,720 teachers, 202 of whom passed.⁶¹ Yet these 202 teachers were never given the opportunity to prove they were worthy of Master Teacher status. The only benefit they received was an exemption from the TTAS every other year.

The career ladder created a pyramid-like pay structure in which it was envisioned that only a few teachers would be on Level Four, more would be on Level Three and Level Two, and most would be on Level One. In reality, however, the distribution was much flatter. Using the 1989-90 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data, TEA examined a random sample of teachers. The agency found that 41.7 percent of the sample was on Level One, 40.3 percent was on Level Two, and 18 percent was on Level Three.⁶² Although they did not update this study, officials at TEA believe that the distribution has remained similar in subsequent years.⁶³

While the purpose of the career ladder was not to reward all teachers, it was intended to present all teachers with an equal opportunity to progress up the four levels. The main determinants for career ladder placement—TTAS scores, years of experience, and advanced credits—represent the state's effort to standardize criteria across districts. Unfortunately, the TTAS was not as useful for career ladder placement as the Texas Legislature had intended. By themselves, the TTAS criteria would have made more than 90 percent of Texas teachers eligible for placement on Level Three of the career ladder, because more than 90 percent of the teachers scored in the Exceeds Expectations or Clearly Outstanding ranks. As it was, about 60 percent of the teachers met all criteria for placement on Level Two or Level Three. Given that funds for the career ladder were limited, however, not all of those teachers received supplements.

The career ladder was funded by the state through the foundation program and by the districts with local money. The foundation program included—and still includes, even with the elimination of the career ladder—a \$90 annual allotment per student in average district attendance. Districts' shares of this fixed allotment differ, depending on their property wealth. Districts, however, can contribute more money if they wish. Nevertheless, when TEA compared career ladder placement according to district wealth, the agency found that while there was some correlation between wealth and the number of teachers receiving career ladder pay supplements, wealth was not a critical determinant (see Table 2).

Table 2. Teacher Career Ladder Placement by District Wealth: 1989-90

Number of Districts	District Wealth Per Student	Percent Teachers on Level One	Percent Teachers on Level Two	Percent Teachers on Level Three
105	Under \$82,513	47.8	39.0	13.1
105	\$82,513-99,523	43.3	40.2	16.5
105	\$99,524-115,679	47.6	43.4	9.1
106	\$115,680-133,839	42.0	42.8	15.2
105	\$133,840-157,103	41.9	39.9	18.2
105	\$157,104-181,840	45.5	42.1	12.3
106	\$181,841-220,234	41.8	37.3	20.8
105	\$220,235-287,975	34.9	43.4	21.8
105	\$287,976-443,845	38.1	37.0	24.9
104	Over \$443,845	42.5	42.3	15.2
6	Special Districts	<u>46.6</u>	<u>32.9</u>	<u>20.5</u>
	State Average	41.7	40.3	18.0

Source: Texas Education Agency, Division of Program Evaluation, *Evaluation Study of the Texas Teacher Appraisal System* (Austin, Tex., 1991), p. 161.

The Texas Education Code declares the following: "Teaching is hereby declared to be and is recognized as a profession."⁶⁴ As such, teaching could benefit from a professional path which allows teachers to advance substantially in pay and responsibility while remaining in the classroom. The career ladder accomplished neither, however. It provided 60 percent of Texas teachers with pay supplements rather than serving as a career path. Moreover, it did not increase a teacher's pay by as much as would have occurred had the teacher moved into school administration. Nor did the career ladder enable teachers to advance to teaching positions with greater responsibilities, because the Master Teacher level was never developed. Indeed, teachers viewed the failure to develop the Master Teacher level as an affront. Teachers who took the test had to pay \$145 each. Although relatively few passed, those who did received neither recognition (i.e., Master Teacher designation) nor additional money.

The critical issue in the ongoing debate over the utility of a career ladder has been whether and how teachers should be recognized and motivated. Some teachers interviewed in the site visits thought that there was no need for official recognition; they derived their satisfaction through interaction with students and received enough positive feedback from their principal and peers. In terms of motivation, one teacher said that recognition is unnecessary, because good teachers will be good regardless of the rewards, and bad teachers will not be motivated by rewards or special recognition to improve their teaching. Other teachers thought that recognition was quite important, but they differed on how it should be displayed. Some thought awards or teacher of the year titles were sufficient. Others felt that mere respect would suffice. However, there was also a significant group which stressed the importance of pay increases in rewarding teachers for their work and in elevating the profession.⁶⁵

With the 73rd Legislature requiring every school district to use a teacher appraisal system, either the state-adopted system or a district-adopted system approved by the commissioner of education, the issues of teacher recognition and career motivation are as important now as they were prior to the elimination of the career ladder. The Texas Legislature essentially removed the state from any significant role in articulating and fostering a professional (or, career) advancement path for teachers, leaving to school districts the responsibility for identifying ways and means to recognize and encourage their teachers whose performance and appraisal system ratings are the best. This remains a primary responsibility for districts as they assume greater local control over the educational processes in their schools.

Staff Development

Teaching can be a demanding profession that offers little support. Educators often find themselves in a social system that is neglecting children, a political system that regulates more than it facilitates learning, and an educational system that is centralized, bureaucratic, and inflexible. As a result, many of the most promising educators leave the profession each year, and those that remain are often demoralized by a culture of failure. In order for teachers to feel satisfied with their job, they must gain professional satisfaction, be integrated into the school environment, and develop professional competence.⁶⁶

In an effort to enhance the skills of educators and to promote the use of new teaching methods, in 1984 the Texas Legislature required districts to start providing yearly staff development activities to teachers and administrators. Legislators believed that, as professionals, educators needed to continue to build upon their skills and increase their knowledge throughout their careers. There was a concern that teachers were not keeping abreast of the latest teaching techniques and of issues that affected the current generation of students. There was also concern that ineffective teachers were remaining in the classroom and receiving little assistance or attention. Often the only option for these teachers was dismissal, but due to teacher shortages and an inadequate accountability system, firing poor teachers occurred rarely. Staff development was seen by legislators as well as by educators as a way for teachers to build upon their skills, which would translate into higher achieving students.⁶⁷

Staff development for educators has been primarily a top-down operation. To meet state mandates that districts provide no less than 20 hours of staff development activities for teachers and administrators each year, TEA has created a staff development department and the education service centers have expanded their staff development programs. TEA sets standards as to the types of training and subjects that meet the requirements, with regional education service centers and districts organizing the training. While some Texas schools have obtained waivers to extend and control their staff development activities, most schools have benefitted only from the programs offered to them. The districts and the regional education service centers provide an array of workshops throughout the year; universities, consultants, and teacher organizations also offer a number of staff development activities. During site interviews, teachers and administrators had different ideas about how staff development activities could be expanded and restructured to be more effective. Many observed that staff development is improving and were satisfied with the services provided by the ESCs, districts, and schools; others commented on the need to improve the effectiveness of these services.⁶⁸

Yet it is difficult to assess how much impact staff development programs have had on improving the teaching environment and increasing student achievement. In order for staff development activity to have a significant impact on students throughout Texas, it must be more locally focused, better coordinated, and more strongly supported by the state. The program's statewide success is still hampered by a lack of resources. For example, SB 351 extended the school year by five days without increased funding. This was done by reducing the required number of days for teacher preparation and inservice training from eight to three, while increasing the number of teaching days from 175 to 180. Despite the reduced time available within the contract year for staff development, districts must provide a minimum of 20 hours of staff development training. This lack of time available to teachers for staff development forces them to attend activities independently, sporadically, and at times that fit their personal schedules. A lack of designated staff development time also makes it difficult for schools to coordinate group activities and fails to give schools adequate support to develop their own comprehensive site-based staff development. Teachers interviewed in the site visits felt that sporadic activities throughout the year are less effective than one intensive training session followed by planned follow-up activities throughout the year. The most successful workshops often were those designed and organized by teachers. They also thought that discussing and evaluating new instructional techniques with their colleagues was necessary for the successful implementation of these techniques, but felt they had lacked opportunities to collaborate in this way.⁶⁹

While staff development reforms have generally been successful in providing accessible workshops for teachers, they have not succeeded in building stronger faculty networks within schools. Staff development has emphasized the provision of services to teachers, not the empowerment of teachers to try and refine new teaching techniques, to share their ideas and experiences with their colleagues, and to feel responsible for the success or failure of the school as a whole. Yet staff development must be more comprehensive and broader in scope if it is to have a positive and significant impact on the school environment.⁷⁰

An effective staff development program must flow from the bottom up. It should be designed at the local level, responsive to the needs of the teachers and the district, and supported by the regional education service centers and the state.⁷¹ In the past, professional development has been fragmented, perceived as activities imposed on the educator as opposed to activities designed to provide professional growth.⁷² In order for staff development reforms in Texas to have an impact on schools, they must provide the following:

1. time for teachers to prepare, refine, and evaluate their own teaching and that of their peers;
2. a more interactive school environment, with more effective communication channels between the teachers themselves and between the teachers and administrators at both the campus and district level; and
3. a coordinated school and district staff development approach.

One of the greatest impediments to teacher collaboration and the implementation of new techniques is lack of time. This was noted repeatedly during the site visits by teacher respondents, who regretted the lack of time available during the day to collaborate with other teachers. Many teachers wished they had a common planning period during the day to meet with faculty members in their department. Teachers who had an interest in mentoring felt that the lack of time inhibited them from seeking mentoring positions or doing an adequate job if a mentoring responsibility were assigned.⁷³

Although replicating the Asian education system in the United States is not culturally feasible, the extent to which Asian teachers daily have opportunities and time for professional development is striking. Teachers in Beijing, People's Republic of China, are responsible for classes at most three hours a day; for those with homeroom duties, the total is four hours. In Japan and Taiwan, teachers are in charge of classes only 60 percent of the time they are at school. During the hours that the Asian teachers are not in the classroom, they plan lessons and meet with each other to discuss techniques and devise lesson plans. Experienced teachers take time to work with newer ones. Teachers in Asia share a room with desks where they keep their books and teaching materials. When not teaching, they spend most of their time at their desks, preparing lessons. Teachers in Beijing were incredulous when they heard about the typical day for teachers in American schools. When, they asked, did the teachers prepare lessons, consult with one another about teaching techniques, grade the students' papers, and work with individual students who were having difficulties?⁷⁴

In Texas, by contrast, most teachers plan their lessons in the evenings. They plan them alone, after a full day of work. During the time they are not teaching but at school, most teachers must attend to duties such as monitoring halls, meeting with parents, or doing necessary paperwork. The expectation that teachers can also take time to prepare well-planned, clear, innovative classroom activities for as many as six classes every day is not realistic. By making better use of administrators, using parent or community volunteers, or employing creative scheduling, teachers could be relieved of some of their nonteaching duties and be given more time for curricular planning.

Another option to give teachers more time on a daily basis would be to increase the size of their classes, hence allowing the teachers one more period during the day for preparation. This option may be more easily adopted by some schools than by others; however, the option could at least be available to school personnel who believe they could improve the education of their students by employing it. Although the issue of time may seem peripheral to staff development, it must be addressed by policymakers if schools are to create a school environment that encourages planning and improves the quality of teaching.

Collaboration with colleagues also is an important component of staff development. Creating a more interactive environment among school faculty is pivotal to the success of staff development plans. At the heart of successful schools lies a sense of community, a shared belief among teachers, students, and administrators that what they contribute to the school is important. When the school community breaks down, the school, like a neighborhood, loses its ability to progress and function effectively. For a school to be effective, it must be organized like a team, with a clear set of goals, a mission, a strong principal, and teachers who work together closely as colleagues.⁷⁵

The site interviews confirmed that teachers feel a strong need for more cooperative planning. There was a consensus that meeting with each other to discuss classes was valuable. Teachers want to be a part of an education community. They need opportunities to observe and consult with each other, at their own schools and at other schools within their district. Teachers also need opportunities to work with their school administrators. Rather than merely being "evaluators" of teachers, administrators need to be participants in and supporters of staff development activities. At Roosevelt High School in San Antonio, for example, the principal, assistant principals, and counselors all play active roles in coordinating and supporting staff development activities. The teachers and administrators work together to implement and evaluate teaching techniques in the classroom. The relationship is cooperative and supportive, rather than hierarchical and evaluative.⁷⁶

Staff development must be addressed comprehensively through a site-based plan created jointly by the campus and district. Such a plan will increase the likelihood that staff development activities will have an impact in the classroom. Only ten percent of teachers are able to transfer new learning into the classroom as the result of effective presentations; in fact, it may take up to 20 follow-up and coaching sessions to ensure the successful implementation of a particular teaching strategy.⁷⁷ Consequently, no matter how high the quality of staff development workshops, the successful implementation of workshop material will probably not happen if the training programs are offered irregularly and without reinforcement. Successful staff development efforts require a substantial amount of participant time and commitment.⁷⁸ The implementation of a new technique is a long-term process. Teachers need to invest in the decisionmaking process of how techniques are implemented and evaluated. Follow-up activities and teacher and administrator commitments are necessary components of a staff development plan. Time and money are wasted if no structure is in place to facilitate the implementation of new teaching methods addressed in staff development workshops.

A site-based staff development plan has been adopted and used successfully in several Texas school districts. For example, one district in the San Antonio area has asked each of its schools to commit to one type of major staff development activity for three years. The rationale is that using new programs takes practice and that significant outcomes can be achieved only through a concerted and continuous effort. Site interviews at one high school in this district confirmed that this occurred in the second year of using a cooperative approach, which entails teachers meeting in groups once a month to discuss new teaching techniques. Each teacher uses the same new technique for the month, and then all teachers come together to evaluate the method and discuss ways of perfecting it. Administrators at the school play an active role in the group interaction. The assistant principal helps distribute information about new teaching techniques and does the logistical planning for the groups. School counselors give the teachers feedback on ways the techniques can be adapted and improved. The interviewed teachers and administrators all believe the program is having a positive effect on student learning in the classroom and on school morale. Although the principal commented that the first year was a little difficult because some teachers were hesitant to try something new, he felt the second year was running more smoothly.⁷⁹

Similar site-based programs exist in more than 80 schools around the state through TEA's Partnership Schools Initiative, a pilot program that attempts to achieve school improvement through intensive and well-planned staff development activities. By requesting and obtaining waivers, these schools add up to 15 days each year for staff development in lieu of student attendance. In order to create programs to meet their students' specific needs, the schools have produced long-term staff development plans that address the professional needs of all members of the campus community. How these campuses achieve their goals will be determined by individual campus needs, but the accountability measure will be student achievement in all population groups.⁸⁰

Funding pilot programs such as the Partnership Schools Initiative is a critical state responsibility in a comprehensive bottom-up staff development system. The state, through TEA and the SBOE, also could assume an even greater role in generating and disseminating information about teaching techniques and school restructuring as they relate to staff development, as well as in fostering policy research on alternative staff development approaches. Supportive initiatives by the state could include the publication of a quarterly journal or the use of communications networks linking all school districts in order to share results from new studies across the country and to highlight staff development programs that Texas schools are successfully using.

The state's staff development initiatives of the 1980s and early 1990s have clearly contributed to the enhancement of teachers' classroom skills and career opportunities. However, these programs often have been intermittent and not part of a comprehensive staff development plan adopted at the district and campus levels to meet local needs. Moreover, reforms have tended to focus more on individual teachers than on the education community as a whole, reinforcing a sense of competition and isolation among teachers. Teachers often lack the opportunity over the long term to discuss and evaluate instructional ideas, techniques, and plans with their colleagues, as well as the support structure in their respective schools necessary for successful implementation.

Nevertheless, the major teacher reforms of the 1980s have been important first steps toward addressing and meeting the professional development needs of educators. These reforms have begun to stimulate broad-based local initiatives that are more focused and interactive, as well as increased resources, more accessible research, and more paid time for school or district staff development activities. What is critical now to the success of systemic education reform in Texas is the creation of a staff development plan at every level of the school system and the commitment of resources for its implementation.

Recommendations: Professional Development

17. The Texas Education Agency should design and conduct a multiyear assessment of the effectiveness of both state- and district-developed teacher appraisal systems relative to fiscal, instructional, career advancement, and other measures and should disseminate assessment results on a timely basis to policymakers and school districts.

The 73rd Legislature enacted a provision (SB 7) allowing school districts, with the approval of the commissioner of education, to develop and implement their own local teacher appraisal systems. A representative task force of Texas public school teachers and administrators should be asked to recommend to the SBOE for its approval a set of measures to serve as the basis for commissioner approval of local appraisal systems, for TEA's assessment of these systems, and for the periodic (e.g., every five years) review of approved local systems by the commissioner. Measures should include student performance (on standardized tests as well performance criteria such as observations, projects, and portfolios) and the quality and quantity of teacher service in support of local district educational plans and priorities.

18. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency, working closely with Texas educational organizations, should articulate a professional career path for teachers. The career path recommendations should include professional development objectives matched to stages of advancement for teachers.

Teachers need opportunities for career advancement (i.e., a career path) within the teaching profession; otherwise, the better teachers are likely to move into school administration or to leave public education entirely. As an alternative to the career ladder, which was eliminated by the Texas Legislature in 1993, the SBOE and TEA should collaborate with representative Texas teacher organizations to adopt a two- or three-level career path for teachers that rewards extended outstanding teaching service by providing greater opportunities for schoolwide leadership as a *teacher*. Criteria for advancement in the teacher career path would be consistent with state and local teacher appraisal systems and with the Texas Legislature's 1993 education reforms. These criteria could include, in some form, years of instructional service as well as the quality and breadth of exceptional performance in the classroom and the school (e.g., teaching quality, student outcomes, mentoring leadership, classroom creativity and innovation, commitment to professional development). Teachers advancing to the highest level of the career path might be called head teachers (or senior teachers) and could have such assignments as directing mentoring or student teacher programs, initiating and developing staff development workshops, and assisting other teachers in applying research results on instructional techniques. These teachers could teach part-time, as well as have year-round appointments. In return, they would receive substantial pay increases (e.g., at least 30 percent of their base salary). The number of head teachers should be based upon school enrollment (e.g., one per elementary school, and perhaps one per academic department in large high schools). State funding would be provided through the foundation program. Money used by a district for career ladder pay supplements also could be reallocated to pay head teachers as teachers currently receiving these supplements retire or leave a district.

19. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should ensure that staff development is included in the plan that each district is required to prepare for itself and each of its campuses.

SB 7 (1993) requires that each Texas school district develop a plan and a planning process for the district and each of its schools. The SBOE and TEA should take the necessary steps to ensure that each of these plans includes a comprehensive staff development component consistent with the district's performance objectives, teacher appraisal system and teacher profile, student needs, and other relevant considerations. Teachers, especially those who have been most involved and effective in their own and in their school's professional development, should participate in the development of this plan. The staff development plan must address the needs of all teachers and students, and it should be specific rather than general in its recommended actions. Through workshops and materials, the education service centers should inform districts about effective staff development plans and practices in comparable Texas districts and in other states.

20. The Texas Legislature should ensure that staff development requirements and increased professional responsibilities of school staff are appropriately funded.

Staff development cannot be pursued as an extracurricular activity by teachers, periodically squeezed into an already busy instructional year or pushed out to the summer months. Campus instructional staff need on-going professional development to develop new teaching techniques, plan for the successful introduction of technology, and implement site-based decisionmaking. Released time for training, peer coaching, and planning carries a corresponding cost for additional teachers and support staff. Equipment and expertise represent an additional cost for many school districts, and additional work days also carry increased salary costs. The Texas Legislature should ensure that adequate resources are allocated for professional development.

21. The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency should assess the impact of expanded use of class-size waivers to provide teachers additional time for professional development and collaboration.

Texas public school teachers generally lack the time each day to prepare clear, innovative, successful classroom activities for six classes and to collaborate with other teachers for this purpose. The SBOE and TEA, with the commissioner of education, should encourage districts to design and implement staffing plans that improve the quality of instruction without increasing staff size. In particular, districts should be encouraged to seek waivers to the statutory provision limiting class size if they develop plans setting aside one period each day for teachers to plan and prepare their classroom activities and to do so collaboratively. To ascertain whether improved teacher preparation results in student outcomes at least as high as they were prior to the class-size waiver, TEA should assess the impacts of granting greater numbers of class-size waivers for the purpose specified above.

22. The Texas Legislature should expand funding for research on successful teaching techniques and staff development programs and for dissemination of research results.

Comprehensive staff development planning is relatively new in Texas public education. Nevertheless, it has become an important component of district planning and management activities, given the large portion of a district's operating budget committed to staff salaries. School districts and individual campuses need to know what types of staff development foster improvements in teacher performance and student learning and which types engender low morale and antipathy toward the teaching profession and students. Yet districts cannot by themselves conduct the research to identify and assess alternative teaching techniques and staff development programs. State resources should support this research by TEA or other research organizations, as well as its dissemination in print and electronically. Research groups working on the studies should invite participation by teachers and administrators in the identification of "model programs" to be assessed. The service centers should actively disseminate the research results through workshops in which effective teachers and administrators again are involved. Moreover, TENET, the statewide electronic network for educators, should be used more extensively and creatively for staff development programs as well as for dissemination of the research reports.

Notes

1. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1983), p. 22.
2. Harold Stevenson and James Stigler, *The Learning Gap* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), p. 172.
3. Texas Education Agency (TEA), Policy Planning and Evaluation Division, *Professional Educator Preparation Policy Development in Texas*, Policy Research Report Number 1 (Austin, Tex., 1993), p. 1.
4. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*; and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), *An Analysis of Transcripts of Teachers and Arts and Sciences Graduates* (Atlanta, Ga., 1985).
5. Harold Stevenson and James Stigler, *The Learning Gap*, pp. 157-173; SREB, *An Analysis of Transcripts*; Eva Galambos, "The Current Status of General Education of Teachers," in *Improving Teacher Education*, ed. Eva Galambos (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986), pp. 5-15; and Francis Griffith, "Teachers Are Part of the Problem," in *Taking Sides*, ed. James Noll (Guilford, Conn: Dushkin Publishing Group, 1987), pp. 330-337.
6. Interviews with principals and teachers in Texas school districts, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993 (see Appendix C for a listing of interviewees).
7. Stevenson and Stigler, *The Learning Gap*, p. 159.
8. SREB, *An Analysis of Transcripts*, p. 20.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19, 22, 29, 31, 33, and 108.
10. Texas Education Agency (TEA), "Evaluation of 1987 Standards for Teacher Preparation, Licensing, Certification, and Endorsement for Elementary and Secondary Mathematics and Science in Texas" (Austin, Tex., February 1993). (Draft)
11. Texas Education Agency, *Snapshot '93: 1992-93 School District Profiles* (Austin, Tex., Fall 1993), p. 15.
12. Texas Education Agency (TEA), *ExCET Reports* (annual) (Austin, Tex., 1990-1992), pp. i and 3.
13. An ongoing study by Dr. Robert Houston, College of Education, University of Houston, of education students' transcripts before and after the elimination of the education major should offer insights into this question.
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15. TEA, *ExCET Report (1991-92)* (Austin, Tex., 1992), p. 1.
16. TEA, "Evaluation of 1987 Standards."

17. Texas Education Agency (TEA), *Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas* (Austin, Tex., 1991), pp. 1-9.
18. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 13.035.
19. TEA, *Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas*, pp. 4, 32; and interview by Alex Pham with Lynda Haynes, Director, Professional Educator Preparation Division, Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas, February 22, 1993.
20. TEA, *Professional Educator Preparation Policy Development in Texas*, pp. 3, 7.
21. R. J. Murnane, "Understanding Teacher Attrition," *Harvard Education Review*, vol. 57, no. 2 (1987), pp. 177-182.
22. Micah Dial, "A Comparison of Retention Rates of Alternately Certified and Traditionally Certified Teachers," *ERS Spectrum*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Summer 1992), p. 13.
23. TEA, *Professional Educator Preparation Policy Development in Texas*, p. 3.
24. Frank W. Lutz and Jerry B. Hutton, "Alternative Teacher Certification: Its Policy Implications for Classroom and Personnel Practice," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall 1989), pp. 242.
25. D. Watts, "Alternative routes to teacher certification: A dangerous trend," *Action in Teacher Education*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1986), pp. 25-29. See also J.A. Boser and P.D. Wiley, "An alternative teacher preparation program: Is the promise fulfilled?" *Peabody Journal of Education*, vol. 65, no. 2 (1988), pp. 130-142.
26. S. D. Goebel, *An Evaluation of the Houston Independent School District's Alternative Certification Program, 1987-88* (Houston: Department of Research and Evaluation, Houston Independent School District, 1988).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
28. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
29. Interview by Alex Pham with Lynda Haynes, February 22, 1993. See also: M. M. Kennedy, "Some surprise findings on how teachers learn to teach," *Educational Leadership*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1991), pp. 14-17.
30. Lutz and Hutton, "Alternative Teacher Certification," p. 252; and interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
31. TEA reviews form the basis for future program approvals. The review teams examine the interns' ExCET results and TTAS scores, intern supervision, and support of new ACP teachers in evaluating the quality of alternative certification programs. See TEA, *Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas*, p. 14.
32. Interview by Alex Pham with Lynda Haynes, February 22, 1993. Costs are often lower in more populated areas, where some fixed costs can be spread over more interns. These figures reflect the costs of materials only and do not include the costs of employee time devoted to training and administration.

33. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
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36. TEA, *Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas*.
37. Murnane, "Understanding Teacher Attrition," pp. 177-182.
38. Philip Schlechty and V. Vance, "Recruitment, Selection and Retention: The Shape of the Teaching Force," *The Elementary School Journal*, vol. 83, no. 4 (1982), pp. 468-87.
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53. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
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60. Texas Education Agency (TEA), "Report on Waivers Granted" (monthly) (Austin, Tex., March 1992 - March 1993).
61. Interview by Robin Lessie with Jim Salmon, November 2, 1992.
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63. Interview by Robin Lessie with Jim Salmon, November 2, 1992.
64. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 13.201.
65. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
66. Stephanie Hirsh and Gerald Ponder, "New Plots, New Heroes in Staff Development," *Educational Leadership* (November 1991), p. 45.
67. Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, *Student Achievement Through Staff Development* (New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 1-15.
68. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
69. Ibid.
70. Hirsh and Ponder, "New Plots, New Heroes," p. 43.
71. SB 7 (1993) has provisions that require staff development to be primarily "campus-based" and to have been designed with input from campus teachers.
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Chapter 4. School Management Reforms

Traditionally, reformers have sought to influence educational outcomes by regulating school inputs such as the number, qualifications, and salaries of teachers; the textbooks to be used; the length of the school day and year; and the number of hours per week spent teaching specific subjects. By the late 1980s, it was becoming apparent that this approach was not working. Research by economists failed to show a direct correlation between various school inputs and educational outcomes.¹ Major school reforms to regulate inputs that were enacted earlier in the decade seemed to be producing school improvement at a glacial pace.²

Clues for change processes that might work better come from two places: educational research and the business management literature. Educational research shows that some campuses do perform strikingly better than others. Typically, these campuses have a sense of community, collaborative planning and strong collegial relationships, commonly shared high goals and expectations, and a safe and orderly environment. In turn, many educators attribute these desirable characteristics to the way these campuses are organized, particularly with respect to campus autonomy and school-site management.³ Business management literature stresses the desirability of decentralization for improvement: eliminating layers of middle management and pushing authority and responsibility down to lower levels in the organization.⁴ The educational counterpart to this idea is that authority and responsibility should be shifted from state regulators and school district administrators to teachers and principals.⁵ The business literature also emphasizes a focus on results: the responsibility of each organizational unit to satisfy the needs of the customer and to keep costs under control. Companies use personal recognition and financial incentives to motivate employees to accomplish these results. The educational counterpart to this idea is accountability, in which teachers and principals are held responsible for the academic success of students and rewarded when it occurs. Just as private sector employees earn bonuses if they are successful and face layoffs if they are not, this analogy suggests that educators might receive recognition and rewards if they are successful at conveying knowledge to their students and face retraining, reassignment, or the loss of employment if they are not.

A strong link exists between the issues of decentralization and accountability. If teachers and campus-level administrators receive increased authority as a result of decentralization, they should receive additional responsibility for educational outcomes. Conversely, it is difficult to hold individuals responsible for outcomes unless they have the authority to make decisions which affect those outcomes.

Decentralization

Historical Background

Texas has gradually undergone a centralization of school administrative units. About 8,500 Texas school districts operated in 1910; by 1980, the number of those districts had been reduced to 1,090 by consolidation. There were 1,048 districts in the 1992-93 school year, with 6,184 campuses.⁶

The rules under which teachers could be certified were first established by an act of the Texas Legislature in 1905 (SB 218). This law also set the length of the school day at "not less than seven hours" and defined the curricular requirements as follows:

All public schools in this State shall be required to have taught in them orthography, reading in English, penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, modern geography, composition, physiology and hygiene, including the effects of alcoholic stimulants and narcotics on the human system, mental arithmetic, Texas history, United States history, civil government and other branches, as may be agreed upon by the trustees or directed by the State Superintendent of Education; provided, further, that

suitable instruction shall be given in the primary grades once each week regarding kindness to animals of the brute creation and the protection of birds and their nests and eggs.⁷

Textbook adoption was regulated in 1925 with the establishment of the Texas State Textbook Commission. In 1949, the Gilmer-Aikin Act (SB 116) created the Texas Education Agency, the elected State Board of Education, and the office of commissioner of education. SB 116 also set a minimum monthly teacher salary. In 1975, HB 1126 established a minimum pay scale for teachers and other school professionals based on experience, responsibility, and credentials. The law also specified that districts receiving state funding must be state-accredited, have a minimum school year of 180 days, and maintain at least a 1:25 teacher-pupil ratio.⁸ In 1981, the Texas Legislature passed HB 246, which established a uniform state curriculum. This law was supplemented in 1984 by regulations, adopted by the State Board of Education, requiring that specific amounts of time be allocated to each instructional subject in the school week. HB 72 (1984) created a class-size cap of 22 in kindergarten through grade 4, instituted a teacher career ladder, and further centralized authority by addressing a wide range of student, teacher, and management concerns.⁹

New Decentralization Reforms

Recent Texas reform efforts that have encouraged a shift to decentralized management of its public education system include a district decision process, campus improvement plans, site-based decisionmaking (SBDM), waivers, and broader use of regional education service centers. "The new outlook at the state level is to clear the path for campus-based initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for all students."¹⁰ According to TEA, the expected outcome of decentralized decisionmaking is improved student performance resulting from better planning, community involvement, clear parameters for student performance, improved staff satisfaction, improved communication, and consensus-based decisions.¹¹

District Decision Process

The district-level decision process requires the school board to adopt a policy to involve professional staff in establishing and reviewing district goals, objectives, and major district-wide instructional programs. Two-thirds of the elected representatives to the process must be teachers and the remaining representatives must be campus staff. The campus representatives meet with the board or a board designee.¹² The level of involvement of this committee of representatives and the activities it undertakes differ among the school districts.

Campus Improvement Plans

The requirement that districts develop an improvement plan for each campus was established by TEA as a part of the accreditation process in May 1987.¹³ In 1990, SB 1 required campuses to set performance objectives, stating that

"For each school year, the principal of each school campus, with the assistance of parents, community residents, and the professional staff of the school . . . shall establish academic and other performance objectives of the campus for each academic excellence indicator"¹⁴

According to guidelines published by TEA, a campus improvement plan should contain the following elements:

1. a needs assessment;
2. a long-range vision or statement of philosophy;
3. a mission statement;

4. a list of long-range goals;
5. "strategies," or "statements that indicate how available resources will be used to accomplish identified long-range goals";
6. measurable short-range objectives;
7. specific activities undertaken to accomplish the short-range objectives;
8. timelines under which these activities will be undertaken;
9. assignment of responsibilities to individuals in the school to carry out the activities;
10. identification of resources needed to carry out the activities;
11. expected outcomes; and
12. methods by which the effectiveness of the activities will be evaluated.¹⁵

After HB 2885 (1991) established school committees to carry out site-based decisionmaking, the commissioner of education determined that these committees may also be in charge of developing the campus improvement plans.¹⁶

To illustrate the implementation of campus planning under these guidelines, consider how one Texas high school campus stated a goal and described the steps intended to achieve that goal. The campus goal was that the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas (NAPT) test scores for all students at the campus "will be at or above State/National levels." Objectives listed under this goal were

1. "Provide instruction to meet the academic needs of students at each campus."
2. "Campus TAAS Scores will improve above prior year by 5% mastering all tests taken; or, 5% increase above prior year for each section of the test."
3. "Campus Norm-Referenced Test Scores will improve by 2% at each grade level."

Under the first objective, specific activities included the emphasis of problem solving and thinking skills in all subject areas; development and continuation of science fairs, learning fairs, and conventions; and incorporating TAAS practice items into the regular curriculum. For the learning fair activity, the school's director of student services, principals, and teachers were listed as responsible parties. The activity was planned to last through the 1992-93 school year at a cost of \$1,000. The success of the activity was to be measured by the level of student participation, with ongoing progress reviews indicating how the activity was received.¹⁷

Ideally, this process should provide a mechanism for holding campus personnel accountable for meeting specific objectives. However, several problems reduce the effectiveness of campus improvement plans for accountability purposes. First, parents and teachers frequently do not know how to establish objectives whose attainment can be measured. Second, parents and teachers may not distinguish goals and objectives from the activities designed to reach those objectives. Third, the participants do not always have the means to evaluate progress toward objectives they set. Fourth, there are no specific consequences for success or failure to make progress, unless the district has established them.¹⁸ Finally, until recently, parents have lacked ready access to information on the performance of other schools, information they might find useful in determining how ambitious the goals ought to be.

Site-Based Decisionmaking

Site-based decisionmaking (SBDM), called for in HB 2885 (1991), describes a system that places more decisionmaking authority at the campus level. Each district has a school board-approved plan to establish site-based decisionmaking at every campus. Permissible areas of authority that could be delegated to campuses under the district plan include goal setting, curriculum, budgeting, staffing patterns, and school organization.¹⁹ Typically, campus SBDM committees make recommendations subject to review by the principal or district administrators. The goal of SBDM is to have teachers, campus staff, parents, and community representatives involved in assisting the principal in setting goals and developing action plans and implementation strategies to increase student performance.²⁰

Site interviews conducted for this project show evidence of support for SBDM among principals and teachers. Many interviewed teachers and principals indicated that some form of shared decisionmaking had been occurring at their campus even before the state mandated it. One elementary school teacher commented, "Having a voice is a new experience." One principal remarked that she had more clout because she received support from the decisionmaking process. Most SBDM teams on which the respondents had participated had undergone some orientation or training which the participants had found helpful.²¹

While decentralization to the teacher level was not necessarily the end goal of SBDM, it has been perceived to be a process whereby teachers were to gain significant decisionmaking authority. Teachers who hold that expectation for SBDM have been disappointed, initially. One high school teacher interviewed during a site visit noted that the "drawback to SBDM is that district administrators can arbitrarily circumvent the process." Parents, too, may have believed that SBDM would result in extensive parent control over campus decisions. However, laws pertaining to decisionmaking and planning refer to the principal as the leader who directs the development of campus performance objectives. Parents and professional staff are called on to assist the principal.²² Interpretive information from TEA confirms the primary role of the principal, who receives input from staff and the community when decisions are made.²³ In short, educators and the communities in which they work are coming to understand what SBDM in Texas schools means. Clearly, there is a need for training so that the committees and individual committee members better understand their roles. Committees also need assistance in learning more about what supports improved student learning, including information about the most effective planning and practices. The next step, when implementation is complete and site-based processes are moving smoothly at most campuses, is to determine the effect of site-directed changes on student outcomes.

Waivers

Waivers are a means of providing regulatory relief to districts and campuses. The commissioner of education receives requests for waivers of a state law or a SBOE rule which a "campus or district determines inhibits student achievement."²⁴ There recently has been an increase in the number of waivers requested and granted. The most common waivers relate to the number of staff development days, curriculum and course requirements, class-size requirements, the Texas Teacher Appraisal System, and teacher certification requirements.²⁵

Some researchers suggest that waivers allow the state to avoid systematically reviewing state education policies.²⁶ This perspective views waivers as a means of piecemeal deregulation which may hinder more coherent deregulation efforts. An alternative view regards waivers as a necessary method of providing flexibility in policy areas, such as curriculum, where continued state regulation is likely.

Education Service Centers

Twenty regional education service centers (ESCs) were created by the Texas Legislature in 1967 "to provide educational services to the school districts and to coordinate educational planning in the region." The State Board of Education was given the authority to adopt rules governing the ESCs.²⁷

In 1988, the State Board of Education adopted the *State Plan for Education Service Centers*, which charged the ESCs with providing the following "core services" to each school district within a region: basic instructional media services; computer and data processing services; regional assistance in the provision of data for the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database; technical assistance to school districts with respect to school accreditation, curriculum development and revision, and administrator, staff, and school board member training; and the display of textbooks offered for state adoption. School district participation in each of these service areas is voluntary. In addition to these core services, ESCs may design services to meet the needs of districts within their region. For example, service centers in regions containing small school districts have helped districts develop cooperative arrangements for resources such as libraries, guidance counselors, and school nurses. ESCs also provide technical assistance in the development and operation of specialized programs, such as programs for gifted students, at-risk students, and students in need of bilingual education.²⁸

The education service centers provide information and technical assistance to school districts during the accreditation process. During the 1989-90 school year, ESCs conducted workshops preparing 330 districts for accreditation monitoring. Before the accreditation visits, service center staff made site visits to 213 districts. ESC staff also accompanied the TEA staff on accreditation visits to 212 districts to help identify both strengths and weaknesses. Upon completion of the visits, follow-up technical assistance was provided to 138 districts.²⁹ An audit conducted by Price Waterhouse maintains that the quality of instruction improved at many campuses as a result of this assistance.³⁰

Education service centers are financed by a combination of federal, state, and local funds. Local funds, which are derived on a fee-for-service basis, are becoming an increasingly large portion of ESC funding. In fiscal year 1993, local revenue was 41 percent of the \$145.5 million ESC revenue, while state revenues made up 28 percent and federal revenue 31 percent of the total.³¹ The fact that less than one-third of ESC revenue comes from the state may limit the flexibility with which they are able to respond to rapidly emerging school district needs, and it may also limit the scope of services they can offer. For essential services, state funding gaps must be closed with local dollars. For example, in fiscal year 1990 the state financed about \$3 million of the \$10.4 million cost of instructional media (a required service), leaving local school districts to finance the remainder. Data processing and information services cost \$21.4 million, with the state providing only \$2.4 million. A similar situation exists in staff development and technical assistance program areas such as gifted education, basic skills, and bilingual education.³²

During the site interviews, principals were asked, "What kind of relationship do you have with your ESC?" Teachers were asked, "Is the ESC a source of staff development for you or your school?" Some teachers rated the ESCs as very helpful and a good source of innovative ideas, while others seemed indifferent to the help they receive from the service centers. Most of the negative responses were centered around the inconvenience or inapplicability of the services that are offered. Several teachers pointed out that many of the workshops are offered on weekends or nights, times that teachers report finding inconvenient. A principal maintained that he often gets information that does not apply to his interests. The criticisms of the ESCs were balanced by respondents who were pleased with them. One principal responded that his ESC is "there when we call them," while another principal maintained that his school has a very good relationship with its ESC. Teachers in a high-poverty district "need all the help they can get," according to one interviewee, and the ESC was a source of support.³³

Recommendations

23. The Texas Education Agency should produce and distribute a pamphlet for parents and teachers on what the legislation says about site-based decisionmaking. School districts or education service centers should conduct training sessions for principals, teachers, and parents on site-based decisionmaking.

The TEA pamphlet should describe the state's accountability system, including its goals and standards. Legislation for site-based decisionmaking and the outcomes expected from SBDM should be clearly stated. The pamphlet should include a section on how to write objectives that can be evaluated. In addition, the pamphlet should explain the difference between goals and objectives as well as the difference between objectives and the activities to accomplish them. An explanation of the state's educational indicator system should also be included in the pamphlet. Training sessions for parents and teachers could occur at meetings of the campus SBDM committee, with the pamphlet forming part of the training materials.

24. The Texas Education Agency should supply district and campus decisionmaking committees with information on best practices as an aid in establishing school improvement activities.

TEA plans to establish a clearinghouse of successful practices and make that database available through TENET, the statewide computer network and bulletin board for educators. Where possible, the information should include outcomes from the strategies profiled. Information on best practices could be provided by the education service centers through training, media centers, or regional distribution networks. This information should include data on the methods used and multiyear data on outcomes. Along with TEA, the ESCs should examine the best practices within Texas schools, as well as assess the extent to which districts and campuses use the information they disseminate.

25. The Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education should review state laws and regulations from which many districts seek waivers to determine if those laws and regulations should be changed.

TEA should identify laws and regulations that may limit the effectiveness of campuses and districts in achieving the state's goals. The Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education should give first priority to changing laws and regulations from which waivers are frequently requested as well as laws and rules that are shown to inhibit teacher and student performance. The Texas Legislature and the SBOE should also consider revising laws and rules that are unnecessarily burdensome to teachers and administrators.

26. The Texas Legislature and the Texas Education Agency should provide additional financial support to education service centers to help them more effectively assist school districts.

State revenues make up about \$41 million of the \$145 million expenditures for the 20 ESCs. Additional support will be needed if ESCs offer more assistance to districts and campuses for staff development, PEIMS data collection, and decentralized decisionmaking. This funding should come from state rather than local sources.

Accountability

American spending on education increased during the 1980s by more than \$35 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars, with average per-pupil expenditures rising from an average of \$3,432 in the 1979-80 school year to \$4,262 ten years later.³⁴ School districts now spend about \$100,000 per classroom, an increase of 24.2 percent over the decade. Moreover, these increases come on top of real increases in public education spending of 26.8 percent in the 1970s and 57.7 percent in the 1960s.³⁵ In the United States, nonteaching staff now outnumber teachers, prompting the question, "Are education dollars spent efficiently?"³⁶

Spending increases in Texas parallel national trends. Total revenue for Texas public schools more than doubled between 1983 and 1993.³⁷ Spending on direct instruction as a percent of total spending has remained roughly constant at 58 percent,³⁸ and the average teacher salary rose from \$17,537 in 1982 to \$29,923 (including the career ladder stipend) in 1993—a 70 percent increase that roughly matched inflationary increases in the economy. The number of teachers hired grew faster than enrollment growth as demonstrated in a pupil-teacher ratio that dropped from 16.4 to 1 in 1982 to 16.1 to 1 in 1993.³⁹ Citizens and taxpayers increasingly question the expenditure of more money for more of the same. They want to know why more money has not produced better results, why their money has not produced the hoped-for dramatic increase in student performance and achievement. Some citizens (and critics of public education within and outside the system) believe that progress is slow because the public education system lacks a means through which accountability for appropriate use of resources and improved student performance is clearly assigned.⁴⁰

Accountability in Texas

The Texas public education accountability system is designed to support the accomplishment of the state's goals (see Chapter 1) by recognizing, rewarding, sanctioning, and intervening with districts and campuses to ensure that students leave the school system with the skills and knowledge to participate fully as contributing members of society.⁴¹ Legislators in Texas initiated the current process of holding schools accountable for education results in 1984. HB 72 required that districts be accredited by the state in order to receive funding. The Texas Legislature instructed TEA to accredit the school districts using a list of indicators that were intended to judge school quality. In practice, districts were not assessed according to how well their students achieved, but by how well the districts complied with state regulations regarding class sizes, spending, teaching practices, and curriculum. At the time, this approach had merit as a means to ensure that districts were implementing new reforms. However, by the 1990s, compliance-based accreditation was not perceived to be effective in stimulating schools to focus on student learning.

In 1990, the process was revised so that districts and campuses would be judged according to student performance on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). In 1992, TEA began using a new procedure for accrediting school districts, initially targeting those that showed poor performance. New legislation in 1993 (SB 7) led to further modification of the accreditation system with stronger sanctions for low-performing districts as well as an accountability system for all campuses.⁴²

The current Texas system can be described in terms of four important elements: clearly identified roles and responsibilities, a good system of information, goals and standards, and consequences for poor performance and rewards for good performance.

Roles and Responsibilities

School districts, led by their boards of trustees, are responsible for establishing district planning processes and ensuring that campus performance throughout the district is at acceptable levels. Campus principals share responsibility for student performance, and their evaluation is tied to that performance. The consequences (both rewards and sanctions) are directed toward boards (for the district) and principals (for the campus). Indirectly, central office staff, teachers, and students are affected by the performance accountability system because results are made public and are intended for wide distribution in order to stimulate pressure for change if performance is low.

Information System

The main source of information about Texas public schools is the PEIMS, a statewide data management system for collecting and organizing the education information required by state and federal law. Within the PEIMS are information tools to assess school system performance: the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and the campus report card system. The SBOE adopted the original plan to design and

implement the PEIMS in July 1986. The basic concept of the plan was to combine school district data collection into a single system to streamline reporting, reduce duplication, and produce a standard set of educational data definitions. The PEIMS information currently available includes district and campus organization, personnel, and financial data, as well as student demographic, program participation, attendance, and performance data.⁴³ Each school district submits its data on standardized computer files as defined by the *PEIMS Data Standards*.⁴⁴ The data are collected at various times during the year. The ESCs provide technical support as well as a preliminary edit of the data, then forward the data to TEA.⁴⁵ Implementation of the PEIMS has been a gradual process. Although this was intended, a lack of funding has further slowed the pace. For example, in fiscal year 1992, \$7.5 million in funding was requested, but only \$4.5 million was received.⁴⁶

Academic Excellence Indicator System. The AEIS is intended to show the quality of learning on a campus and within a district. For each indicator in the system, the SBOE has adopted a standard of performance. These indicators and their standards are shown in Table 3. Indicators such as SAT and ACT scores, end-of-course examinations, and number of students completing the recommended high school program will reflect how many students in a district are preparing for college. Indicators for end-of-course examinations, TAAS and TASP equivalency, and the number of students completing the recommended program have yet to be developed, but they will be included within the next five years. In the future, the system could include other indicators, such as success on advanced vocational tests, to address the accomplishments of the non-college-bound student.

Table 3. Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): 1992-93

AEIS Indicator	Standard
TAAS Tests	90% of students taking the test passing all tests or subjects.
Student Attendance	97% of average daily attendance.
Dropout Rate	1% per year or less (middle and high schools).
End-of-course examinations	No state standard set.
SAT/ACT	70% of all seniors to take the test; at least 35% must score over 1000 on the SAT or 25 on the ACT.
College preparation (TAAS/TASP equivalency)	Percent of graduating seniors who attain a score on the TAAS equivalent to a passing score on the TASP. No state standard set.
Completion of recommended program	No state standard set (high schools).

Source: Texas Education Agency, "DRAFT of Proposed Accountability System: 5-Year Plan (School Years 1994-95 through 1998-99)" (Austin, Tex., December 2, 1993).

High school outcomes are better represented in AEIS than the accomplishments of elementary schools. Average daily attendance and TAAS scores are the only indicators for grades K-6. Additional indicators that could be used include the percent of overage students in grades 3 through 8, a norm-referenced test such as the NAPT, or the results of performance assessments.

Currently, programs such as vocational and applied technology education, special education, and compensatory education are assessed through compliance checks, but TEA is designing a new system to monitor the outcomes of such programs. The outcomes-based monitoring system will give districts the responsibility for complying with state and federal guidelines, while TEA's role will be to provide technical support to districts and to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.⁴⁷ The SBOE is developing a system to assess the quality of vocational programs in compliance with the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990. The new SBOE standard is that at least 95 percent of the students enrolled in a vocational or applied technology program take and pass the TAAS exit-level test.⁴⁸ Vocational students in grade 12 must "either obtain a certification of competency by an accepted licensing or certification agency, successfully complete a validated test of occupational competency, or demonstrate completion and competency in the essential elements for the coherent sequence of courses."⁴⁹ In 1991, the Texas Council on Vocational Education recommended a set of additional indicators to determine how well students are being prepared for employment. These indicators sought to measure employer-desired competencies such as fundamental skills, personal management skills (e.g., self-initiative, displaying a good work ethic, dependability), and general occupational skills.⁵⁰ Judging the quality of vocational programs according to how well they prepare students for work or for postsecondary training is clearly a positive move for Texas. Although the SBOE has set a standard in response to a federal mandate, the board could use the new standard as a part of the AEIS to assess program quality.

The accountability system does not measure or report the annual learning gain for students. Without this information, it is impossible to know how many of the students failing the TAAS are catching up, even though their performance is below passing. Likewise, the system cannot identify how many of the students passing the TAAS are moving ahead academically and how many are just coasting on previous years' accomplishments. The commissioner of education has proposed calculating a TAAS growth factor, but the methodology for calculating comparable improvement is not yet developed.⁵¹

Campus Report Cards. State law (SB 7) now requires TEA to prepare and distribute to each school district a report card for each campus. These reports must include data relative to different student groups and must compare campus performance with previous campus and district performance, established standards, and comparable campus group performance. It is intended that parents throughout Texas will receive copies of the report card for their campus in 1994.⁵²

Goals and Standards

The Texas education goals, specified in the Texas Education Code or articulated by the SBOE in its long-range planning process, set out expectations for the achievement of students; the organization of schools; the quality of personnel; and the expectation that programs will be improved through research, demonstration programs, and technology. The goals are necessarily broad and rely on policymakers and practitioners for explicit interpretation in individual district and school settings. Standards are the interpretation of goals in the language of actual performance. Individual districts and campuses can be held accountable to the standards. In other words, the goals are broad statements of desired results, while the standards set by the state are the explicit expectations for end products or outcomes.

An accountability standard is intended to lead to enhanced or sustained high performance through the setting of reasonable but challenging expectations for desired behavior. Standards that are exceedingly difficult to attain are discouraging; standards that are unchallenging will not stimulate improvement. While the Texas education goals serve well to set high expectations, the standards combine nearly unattainable performance expectations with modest performance expectations. For example, the 90 percent passing standard for TAAS is a standard that may be unattainable, given that the current statewide average passing rate for TAAS is 51 percent.⁵³ As of 1992-93, 99 percent of the districts had 87.5 percent or fewer students passing all TAAS tests taken and 90 percent of the districts had 70 percent or fewer of the students passing all TAAS tests taken.⁵⁴ In other words, for around one percent of districts the 90 percent passing standard is challenging but within reach. Ninety percent of the districts are 20 percentage points or more away from meeting this standard. In contrast,

the attendance rate standard of 97 percent is closer to the actual average rate of 95.1 percent and represents a reasonable challenge.⁵⁵

Consequences

Consequences in an accountability system may include rewards and recognition as well as sanctions. Texas has three distinct mechanisms for rewarding strong performance, whereas sanctions flow through the accreditation system (described in the next section).

Texas Successful Schools Award System. The Texas Successful Schools Award System recognizes and rewards schools and districts that demonstrate progress or success in achieving the education goals of the state.⁵⁶ Law provides that financial awards may be presented to schools or districts that have demonstrated the highest levels of sustained success or the greatest improvement in achieving the goals. The governor may present proclamations or certificates to additional schools and districts that meet or exceed the expectations described in the AEIS. SB 7 also allows the commissioner to establish additional categories of awards for successful schools or districts. Table 4 shows the 1992-93 criteria for awards and certificates.

To receive a 1992-93 high performance award, school performance on each applicable AEIS indicator for each student population had to meet or exceed the state performance standard. To be recognized for outstanding performance effort, school performance had to be at least 10 percent above the state average on each applicable AEIS indicator for each student population. Cash awards ranged from \$30,000 to \$150,000, based on a school's enrollment.

Districts that earn exemplary or recognized accreditation status will automatically have campuses that meet the state's performance criteria for awards. In fact, the criteria for the Texas Successful Schools Award System parallel most of the performance analyses conducted for district accreditation purposes. Both determinations are based on performance in comparison to standards set for the AEIS shown in Table 3.

At the end of the 1992-93 school year, the state recognized 1,289 campuses for high levels of student performance or for significant student performance gains on indicators within the AEIS. Of this group, 124 were recognized for having the highest levels of performance on the indicators in fall 1992. Another 826 schools were recognized for outstanding performance effort. Performance gains resulted in cash awards for 507 schools. Some schools received both cash awards and official recognition.⁵⁷

Clearinghouse of Successful Practices. The Clearinghouse of Successful Practices has been established by the commissioner of education to provide a computerized database to be used through TENET, the Texas electronic network for education. When campuses are identified that meet state standards for exemplary or recognized ratings, they are referenced in the clearinghouse database as a source of information to other campuses statewide. The effective practices used in these schools will be shared through this database, as well as through the elementary, middle, and high school mentor networks that are established in each region.

Nominations for National and State Recognition. TEA staff will ensure that districts and campuses that meet exemplary and recognized accreditation status criteria also are recommended for national awards and recognition. Linkages will be established with state and national professional education associations so that effective programs may be shared at national and state conferences. The annual Commissioner's Mid-Winter Conference will highlight and acknowledge districts and campuses that are exemplary and recognized. Certificates of Award from the governor and the commissioner of education will be presented to all districts identified as exemplary and recognized, and the TEA public relations staff will provide state and local press releases to highlight the successes of these districts.⁵⁸

**Table 4. Texas Successful Schools Award System
Criteria for Awards and Certificates: 1992-93**

	Excellence	Gain
Types of Awards	<p><i>High Performance Award</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special non-monetary award • Certificate <p><i>Recognition of Outstanding Effort</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate <p>Campuses cannot be eligible for both an award and a recognition.</p>	<p><i>Performance Gain Award</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money (minimum of \$30,000) • Certificate <p><i>Recognition of Outstanding Efforts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money (\$10,000-\$25,000) • Certificate <p>Campuses cannot be eligible for both an award and a recognition.</p>
Indicators	For current year performance, all AEIS performance indicators that are applicable to the school.	For performance from 1990 to 1992, all AEIS performance indicators that are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listed for 1992-93; and • applicable to the school.
Weighting for Each Indicator	All indicators are equally important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAAS Passing = 60% • Dropout rate = 25% (applies only to grades 7-12) • College Entrance Exams (applies to grades 9-12): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduates tested = 5% Graduates at or above criterion = 10%
Student Populations	The following are included as applicable: All students; Black; Hispanic; and Economically Disadvantaged.	The following are included as applicable: All students; Black; Hispanic; and Economically Disadvantaged.
Demographic Grouping	Does not apply.	The spring 1993 AEIS demographic index is used to array campuses and form 24 groups of about equal size within which performance gain comparisons can be made. Of the 24 groups, 13 are Elementary; 5 are Middle/Jr.; 5 are Secondary; and 1 is Combination.

Continued on next page

Table 4—Continued

	Excellence	Gain
Criteria to Meet for Eligibility	<p><i>High Performance Award</i> Performance must meet or exceed AEIS state standards on each applicable indicator for each applicable student population.</p> <p><i>Recognition of Outstanding Effort</i> Performance must be at least 10% of the effective range above the state average on each applicable indicator for each applicable student population.</p>	<p><i>Performance Gain Award</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current year performance must exceed the criteria for each student population. • Performance must be in the top 10% of demographic group on overall gain;* and • Gain must be 2% minimum.** <p><i>Recognition of Outstanding Effort</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance must be in the top 10% of demographic group on overall gain.*
Other Considerations	Schools must have current year TAAS data for at least one grade level.	Schools must have a minimum of three years of TAAS data in one grade level.
Percent of Criteria that Must be Met	<p><i>High Performance Award - 100%</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of Outstanding Effort - 80%</i></p>	<i>Performance Gain Award - 90%</i>
Commissioner Discretion	Whether or not a lowered accreditation status in a district will disqualify a campus in that district from consideration.	

* In actual practice, gain scores are computed across the three most recent years of data (two most recent years for college entrance exam indicators) using standard scores so that indicators with different measurement ranges can be combined to obtain an overall gain. Weights are also applied to indicators in this overall gain combination. In addition, performance on all indicators applicable to a campus for each applicable student population on campus are included in the computation of the overall gain.

** Because the range of performance varies across indicators, the minimum gain required must be equivalent to a two percentage point gain based on the effective range of the state-level indicator data values.

Source: Texas Education Agency, May 1993.

Accreditation

Consequences for campus and district performance are integral to the state's accreditation system. A district's accreditation is determined based on an annual TEA analysis of the district performance. State law currently provides three accreditation status ratings for districts: exemplary, recognized, and accredited warned.³⁹ The commissioner of education has included a fourth status for districts that do not fall within these categories, namely, accredited.

1. **Exemplary**—the district's performance meets or exceeds the state exemplary standards.

2. **Recognized**—the district's performance meets or exceeds required improvement and is within 10 percent of state exemplary standards.
3. **Accredited**—the district does not attain required performance levels for exemplary or recognized, nor does its performance fall into the "clearly unacceptable" level as defined by the criteria set by the commissioner of education.
4. **Accredited Warned**—the district's performance is "clearly unacceptable" as defined by criteria set by the commissioner.

The indicators on which accreditation rests include performance on TAAS, attendance, and dropout rates. As other state-approved indicators become available and state standards are established for them (e.g., results of end-of-course tests and graduation rates based on completion of course requirements), these factors will be considered as part of the criteria for determining district accreditation status in future years.

District Status Criteria

Beginning with the 1994-95 school year, each district will be notified of its accreditation status based on an annual analysis of its performance relative to the AEIS.

Exemplary Districts. Districts must meet the state standards for all of the following academic excellence indicators to receive the accreditation status of exemplary:

TAAS—90 percent of all students taking the tests must pass all of the TAAS tests taken for all subjects across all grade levels

Dropout Rate—1 percent or lower annual dropout rate for students in grades 7 through 12

Attendance—94 percent of average daily attendance or higher

The SBOE has not yet adopted Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) equivalency scores on the TAAS exit test, and the recommended high school program (approved in November 1993 by the SBOE) will be included in the accreditation criteria starting September 1997. Therefore, these two indicators are not considered in the data analysis for status decisions in 1993-94.

Recognized Districts. SB 7 provides that recognized districts must be performing within ten percent of the state standard. However, given the present level of performance statewide, the standard has been temporarily adjusted in order to acknowledge districts with high performance relative to other districts. In 1993-94, a district must attain each of the following performance levels to receive a district accreditation rating of recognized:

TAAS—70 percent of all students taking the tests must pass all of the TAAS tests taken for all subjects across all grade levels

Dropout Rate—3.5 percent or lower annual dropout rate for students in grades 7 through 12

Attendance—94 percent of average daily attendance or higher

For the years following 1993-94, the criteria will gradually increase until they are within ten percent of the state exemplary standard.

Accredited Districts. A district is considered accredited unless it meets the criteria for the status of exemplary, recognized, or accredited warned.

Accredited Warned Districts. Any district that has low performance will be accredited warned. During the 1993-94 school year, low performance is defined by two conditions: if 20 percent or fewer of all students pass all TAAS tests taken for all subject areas and all grade levels in spring 1993, or if the annual dropout rate for students in grades 7 through 12 is six percent or higher. It should be noted that 1993-94 provides a transition period for districts to improve performance on the TAAS for all students. Beginning with the 1994-95 school year, the criteria used to determine district status will expand to ensure equity for all student populations. After the 1994-95 school year, the standard for low performance will be adjusted upward each year until the state performance criteria reach an acceptable level.

For the 1993-94 school year, districts that demonstrate unacceptable performance for any African American, Hispanic, white, or economically disadvantaged student population that comprises more than 20 percent of the total population will receive a letter of concern from the commissioner of education notifying the district of the state's expectation for improved performance.

The commissioner must annually review the performance of districts with lowered status due to unacceptable performance, and the commissioner may not raise the status until the district has demonstrated improved performance. The following interventions may be invoked by the commissioner to stimulate desired improvement in an accredited warned district:

Public Notification of Clearly Unacceptable Performance—Districts will receive a letter of notification designating the district accreditation status as accredited warned. The letter to the superintendent and the president of the local board of trustees will constitute public notice of the district's performance.

Public Hearing—Districts that have clearly unacceptable performance may be required to conduct a hearing by the board of trustees to notify the public of the unacceptable performance, explain the improvements expected by TEA, and review the sanctions that may be imposed if the performance does not improve.

Student Achievement Improvement Plan—An accredited warned district may be required to prepare a student achievement improvement plan that addresses each academic excellence indicator for which the district's performance is clearly unacceptable. It should be a revised version of the district plan that focuses directly on objectives and strategies for improving identified areas of clearly unacceptable student performance. A required plan must be submitted to the commissioner for approval. It is expected that districts affected by this requirement would begin immediate implementation to ensure that student performance improves within one year of notification of low performance.

On-Site Peer Evaluation—Accredited warned districts may be scheduled for an on-site evaluation to determine what local circumstances may be contributing to low performance and to provide direction for intervention and/or technical support. The evaluation is conducted by a peer evaluation team (local practitioners trained as peer evaluators within the Texas School Improvement Initiative), logistically managed and facilitated by TEA staff from the Division of Accreditation. The on-site evaluation provides the opportunity for peers to assess actual conditions and ongoing improvement initiatives being implemented at the district level and by campuses where low performance has been identified.

Hearing Before the Commissioner—If the commissioner determines that a district with clearly unacceptable performance is not responding in a timely or appropriate manner to the notification and requirements imposed as a result of the statewide analysis of the academic excellence indicators, the commissioner may order a hearing before the commissioner or a designee for the purpose of allowing the board president and superintendent of the district to explain the low performance, the lack of improvement, and the district's plan for improvement.

Assignment of a Monitor or Master—The commissioner may appoint a monitor, master, management team, or board of managers to oversee the operations of the district and low-performing campuses. The costs for these interventions must be paid by the district. A monitor is charged with observing the progress of the improvement efforts and acting as both an advisor to the district and a liaison to TEA to ensure that the district student achievement improvement plan is being carried out effectively. In the event that observation and advice is inadequate to ensure effective improvement, a master may be appointed to establish direct oversight regarding the actions of the superintendent or the board of trustees. The master has the option of approving or disapproving actions of the district and campus leaders, as well as directing specific actions that must be taken.

Management Team—If a district has been accredited warned for a period of one year or more, the commissioner may appoint a management team in addition to or in lieu of a master. The master or management team appointed to oversee the operations of a district will prepare a plan for the implementation of action for a board of managers or for annexation of the district. The management team also has the authority, on behalf of the commissioner, to approve, disapprove, or direct an action of a campus principal, the superintendent, or the board of trustees of the district.

Board of Managers—The commissioner also may appoint a board of managers to govern a district. Under these conditions, the powers of the board of trustees are suspended for the period of appointment, and the commissioner will also appoint a district superintendent. The board of managers has the authority to amend the district budget, if this is necessary to initiate or effect improvements in student performance.

District Annexation—Finally, if complete failure occurs in meeting students' learning needs despite the intervention of a TEA-appointed master, monitor, or management team, and if the district has remained accredited warned for a period of two years or more, the commissioner is authorized to annex the district to one or more adjoining districts.⁶⁰

Campus Rating Criteria

Campuses are rated, not accredited. The exemplary and recognized ratings are based on the same AEIS criteria used to determine district status. The rating for campuses with clearly unacceptable performance is low-performing and uses the same criteria as those used to identify districts on accredited warned status.

Exemplary Campuses. Campuses must meet the same state standards with respect to each of the designated academic excellence indicators that apply to district exemplary status. Slightly different criteria apply to elementary schools because they do not have dropout rates.

Recognized Campuses. Campuses must meet the criteria for a recognized rating with respect to those academic excellence indicators that apply to district recognized status, with slightly different criteria for elementary schools. Performance for recognized ratings will increase incrementally in the same manner as for districts until they are within ten percent of the state exemplary standard for each applicable academic excellence.

Acceptable Performance Campuses. Campuses are not designated in law as accredited. They are rated as having acceptable performance as long as they maintain performance that is above the criteria set by the commissioner as clearly unacceptable but do not qualify as exemplary or recognized. In other words, in 1993-94 campuses with between 20 percent and 70 percent of students passing all TAAS tests taken will be at acceptable performance levels if the dropout rate is less than six percent.

Low-Performing Campuses. Campuses will be rated as low-performing if they demonstrate clearly unacceptable performance. Low-performing campuses that are the most seriously deficient in performance will receive immediate notification of their rating. Low-performing campuses have 20 percent or fewer of all

students taking the TAAS tests passing all tests taken across all grade level for all subjects, or a dropout rate of six percent or greater.

As with district accreditation status, campuses will have a transition period to improve performance on the TAAS for all students. Beginning with the 1994-95 school year, the criteria used to determine a campus rating will expand to ensure equity for all student populations. That is, whenever any African American, Hispanic, white, or economically disadvantaged student population comprises more than 20 percent of the total population, if 20 percent or fewer of that group pass all TAAS tests taken the campus will be rated as low-performing.

Although a district as a whole may be functioning at an acceptable level with respect to student performance, some of its campuses may be persistently and substantially low in performance and evidence clearly unacceptable performance. If an annual review indicates low performance on one or more of the academic excellence indicators on one or more campuses in a district, TEA may conduct an on-site evaluation of those campuses only.⁶¹ When campuses are rated as low-performing, sanctions may be immediately applied to campuses without impacting district accreditation status. The sanctions include the following:

Public Notification of Low Performance—The district superintendent, campus principal, and president of the board of trustees will receive a letter of notification of the clearly unacceptable performance. The letter will constitute public notice of the low performance from TEA.

Public Hearing—The local board of trustees may be required to conduct a public hearing at each low-performing campus to notify the public of the low performance, to explain improvements in performance expected by TEA, and to review the sanctions that may be imposed by the state if the campus performance fails to improve within the year. The board will also solicit public comment on the initial steps being taken to improve the performance of the campus.

Student Achievement Improvement Plan—Low-performing campuses may be required to submit a student achievement improvement plan for the campus to the commissioner of education for approval. A student achievement plan is not expected to be completed in addition to the required campus plan,⁶¹ but rather to be a revised version of the campus plan that focuses directly on objectives and strategies for improving identified areas of clearly unacceptable student performance.

Special Campus Intervention Team—The commissioner is authorized to appoint a special campus intervention team to conduct a comprehensive on-site evaluation of low-performing campuses to determine the cause for the campus's low performance and lack of progress. The costs of a special campus intervention team may be charged to the district. The team will be comprised of teachers, principals, and other educational professionals who have been trained as peer evaluators within the Texas School Improvement Initiative. The purpose of the on-site evaluation is for the special campus intervention team to assess the nature of the campus problems that impact student performance adversely, and to develop specific recommendations to address the identified problems. The law provides that recommendations may include

1. reallocation of resources and technical assistance;
2. changes in school procedures or operations;
3. staff development for instructional and administrative staff;
4. intervention for individual administrators or teachers;

5. waivers from state statute or rule; or
6. other actions the team considers appropriate.

These recommendations will be made to the school's principal, the site-based decisionmaking committee, the superintendent, the school board, and the commissioner. The special campus intervention team may also assist the school staff in the development of a campus plan for student achievement and may assist the commissioner of education in monitoring the progress of the implementation of the plan.

Board of Managers—If a campus has been low-performing for a period of one year or more, the commissioner may appoint a board of managers to exercise the powers and duties of the board of trustees of the district in relation to the campus. If the commissioner appoints a board of managers to govern a campus, the powers of the board of trustees of the district in relation to the campus are suspended for the period of the appointment, and the commissioner will appoint a campus principal. On behalf of the commissioner, the board of managers may direct the superintendent, the campus principal, or the district board to take specific actions relating to the operations of the campus, or they may approve or disapprove an action of these individuals. The board of managers may submit amendments to the budget of the district for the benefit of the low-performing campus to the commissioner for approval. If approved, the board of trustees of the district must adopt the amendments.

Campus Closure—Finally, if after two years of school intervention, the campus fails to improve outcomes for its students, the commissioner is authorized to order closure of the school program on the campus and provide for transfer of the students to a campus that demonstrates the ability to adequately meet the educational needs of its students.⁶²

Conclusions

Texas has undertaken an ambitious statewide effort to decentralize decisionmaking to the campus level. At the same time, a new accountability system has been instituted that will have far-reaching implications for campuses that fail to reach expected performance levels. Both reforms are intended to invoke change that will lead to better student performance. For some schools and districts just a little more effort and hard work will gain them recognition and rewards, but others—those that have fewer than 20 percent passing all TAAS tests taken—have a long and difficult path to travel to meet expectations set by the state. The penalties for low performance are severe: takeover by a board of managers, district annexation, and campus closure. Implicit in the penalties is the recognition that other leaders and educators will be able to do the job that incumbents failed to do. The outcomes in Texas in years to come will be carefully watched by other states hoping to institute similar changes.

Recommendations

27. The Texas Legislature should provide adequate financial support to the Texas Education Agency for the development of the Public Education Information Management System. The Texas Education Agency should provide adequate financial and technical support to the education service centers so that they can assist school districts in submitting data to the system.

The state is reliant on good data in the PEIMS for the accountability system and for accreditation. Some evidence shows that funding for development and implementation of the PEIMS has been less than adequate. If PEIMS is to be the source of information for decisions about accreditation status and accountability ratings, it should have a high priority in terms of timeliness, accuracy, and completeness. It is crucial that the information system for the state's public schools be appropriately funded so that rating and accreditation decisions are based on complete and accurate information.

28. The commissioner of education and the State Board of Education should continue efforts to develop appropriate academic and vocational indicators for the Academic Excellence Indicator System and the accountability system.

TEA is currently developing end-of-course tests and TASP/TAAS equivalency scores. Vocational indicators are available that could also be developed for use in the AEIS. Standards for these and other new indicators should be developed using existing data and calibrated to be attainable but challenging for the majority of districts. In addition, a methodology for determining TAAS annual gain or growth scores should be developed in consultation with testing experts. Problems arising from student mobility, fluctuations in resources, and the varying difficulty of the TAAS at different grade levels have the potential to taint growth scores, making them less accurate. These problems need to be resolved before gain scores become part of the accountability system.

29. The Texas Education Agency should establish accountability performance objectives for the large number of districts and campuses rated as accredited or acceptable.

Three hundred and thirty-four districts and over 590 campuses have posted student performance between low-performing (20 percent or fewer passing all TAAS tests taken) and recognized (70 percent or more passing all TAAS tests taken). These districts and campuses can make dramatic progress (or show marked declines) while retaining their status. For this reason, these campuses and districts should be encouraged to identify interim performance objectives in order to maintain good performance and stimulate continued improvement. Districts and campuses within this group that post performance gains can receive recognition under the commissioner of education's discretionary authority to recognize good performance.

Notes

1. David H. Monk, "Educational Productivity Research: An Update and Assessment of its Role in Education Finance Reform," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter 1992), pp. 307-332; and Eric A. Hanushek, "The Impact of Differential Expenditures of School Performance" (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, March 1990), pp. 1-9. Many of the analyses cited control for other variables, such as the campus percentage of low-income students.
2. Seymour B. Sarason, *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), pp. 2-5.
3. Stewart C. Purkey and Marshall S. Smith, "Effective Schools: A Review," *Elementary School Journal*, vol. 83, no. 4 (March 1983), pp. 427-452.
4. Edward Lawler, *High Involvement Management* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986).
5. John Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990); Susan Albers Mohrman, Edward E. Lawler III, and Allan M. Mohrman, Jr., "Applying Employee Involvement in Schools," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter 1992), pp. 347-360; Jane L. David, "Synthesis of Research on School-Based Management," *Educational Leadership*, vol. 46, no. 8 (May 1989), pp. 45-53; Betty Malen, Rodney T. Ogawa, and Jennifer Kranz, "What Do We Know About School-Based Management? A Case Study of the Literature—A Call for Research," in *Choice and Control in American Education: The Practice of Choice, Decentralization and School Restructuring*, vol. 2, eds. William H. Clude and John F. Witte (New York: The Falmer Press, 1990), pp. 289-342.
6. Texas Education Agency (TEA), *Snapshot '93: 1992-93 School District Profiles* (Austin, Tex., 1993), pp. 2-3. School district information is also available in the *Texas School Directory*, an annual publication of the Texas Education Agency.
7. SB 218, General Laws of Texas, 29th Legislature, Section 100.
8. HB 1126, General Laws of Texas, 64th Legislature, Chapter 334. The specific wording on teacher-pupil ratios was that a district must "employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 25 students in average daily attendance."
9. Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, *The Initial Effects of House Bill 72 on Texas Public Schools: The Challenges of Equity and Effectiveness*, Policy Research Report Series, no. 70 (Austin, Tex., 1985); and Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and the Texas Center for Educational Research, *A Decade of Change: Public Education Reform in Texas 1981-1992* (Austin, Tex.: Texas Center for Educational Research, 1993), pp. 65-66.
10. Texas Education Agency (TEA), "Guidelines for District and Campus Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation" (Austin, Tex., 1991), p. I-2.
11. *Ibid.*, p. II-1.
12. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 21.930.

13. Letter to district administrators from the Commissioner of Education, William N. Kirby, and the Deputy Commissioner for Educational Quality, Carl Candoli, Texas Education Agency, Austin, Tex., May 20, 1987.
14. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 21.7532, "Campus Performance Objectives." The academic excellence indicators referred to are those in the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), established under Senate Bill 1. A requirement that districts publish annual performance reports was incorporated into HB 72 (1984) as Tex. Educ. Code sec. 21.258. In 1993, sec. 21.258 was repealed because of the availability of district AEIS reports.
15. Texas Education Agency, *Resource Guide on Site-based Decision Making* (Austin, Tex., 1991), pp. IV-5 to IV-10.
16. TEA, *Resource Guide on Site-based Decision Making and District*, pp. I-3 and I-4.
17. *Smithville Independent School District, High School Campus Improvement Plan, 1992-93* (Smithville, Tex., n.d.)
18. Under current law, the poorest performing campuses are a possible exception to this, as they face possible closure or state takeover in the event they fail to improve.
19. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 21.931(b)(3).
20. TEA, *Resource Guide on Site-Based Decision Making*, section I, p. 8.
21. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 19, 1992-February 5, 1993.
22. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 21.7532(a).
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25. Interview by Jeryl Jensen with David Spurgin, Waiver Unit, Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas, April 20, 1993.
26. Michael W. Kirst, "The Design and Architecture of State Education Reform: Assessing Strategic Coherence and Depth," Stanford University, May 8, 1990.
27. Texas Education Agency (TEA), *A Performance Audit of the Regional Education Service Centers* (Austin, Tex., January 1991), p. 1.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 7. A 1991 report from the State Board of Education explains the overall function of the ESCs, saying they act as service agencies in the planning, development, coordination, implementation, and evaluation of education programs. The report maintains that operations of the centers are oriented toward making quality ideas, services, information, and teaching materials available to school districts. See Texas Education Agency, *Biennial Report on Regional Educational Service Centers* (Austin, Tex., April 1991), p. 1.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
30. TEA, *A Performance Audit*, p. 7.

31. John Sharp, Comptroller of Public Accounts, *Texas Education Agency Performance Review* (Austin, Tex., May 1993), p. 98.
32. TEA, *A Performance Audit*, p. 13.
33. Interviews with principals and teachers, December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993.
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35. U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics 1989* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 156; and U.S. Department of Education, "1990 Back-to-School Forecast," 23 August 1992, as cited in Chester Finn, *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 36.
36. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance* (Washington, D.C., 1993).
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38. Texas Research League (TRL), *Bench Marks: 1992-93 School District Budgets in Texas* (Austin, Tex., July 1993), p. 11.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17; and TRL, *Bench Marks: 1983-84 School District Budgets in Texas* (Austin, Tex., July 1983), pp. 8-10.
40. Educational Economic Policy Center (EEPC), *A New System of Accountability in Texas Public Schools*, vol. 1 (Austin, Tex., 1993), p. 6.
41. Office of Accountability, *Statewide Accountability System: An Overview of the Accreditation Procedures as Revised by Senate Bill 7* (Austin, Tex.: Texas Education Agency, July 1993), p. 2.
42. SB 7, 73rd Leg., Reg. Sess. (1993), sections 35.023(a) (annual testing), 35.043 (campus report cards), 35.081-6 (successful school awards), and 35.121(b) (sanctions for poor-performing campuses).
43. Interview by Jeff Brown with Karen Cornwell, Technology Applications, Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas, March 10, 1993.
44. Texas Education Agency, *1992-93 Public Education Information Management System Data Standards* (Austin, Tex., 1992).
45. Texas Education Agency, *PEIMS Orientation Training Packet*, (Austin, Tex., n.d.).
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47. Texas Education Agency, Department of Programs, "Overview of the Outcomes-Based Monitoring System" (Austin, Tex., May 1992), p. 2.
48. Texas Education Agency, "Board adopts new standards for vocational education program," *Texas Education Today* (Austin, Tex., May 1992), p. 2.
49. *Ibid.*

50. Texas Council on Vocational Education, "Demanding Excellence, Rewarding Quality" (Austin, Tex., October 1991), p. 9.
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52. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 35.043.
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54. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
55. Texas Association of School Boards, "Analysis of Proposed Accountability Plan for Texas Public Schools (10/27/93)," Austin, Tex., November 29, 1993, p. 1.
56. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 35.011 to sec. 35.102.
57. Texas Education Agency, "Texas Successful Schools Award System Winners Announced," press release July 13, 1993.
58. Office of Accountability, *Statewide Accountability System*, pp. 20-21.
59. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 35.062.
60. Office of Accountability, *Statewide Accountability System*, pp. 22-24.
61. Tex. Educ. Code sec. 35.064.
62. Office of Accountability, *Statewide Accountability System*, pp. 25-27.

Chapter 5. New Directions for Reform

The contemporary education research community has demonstrated a strong commitment to careful examinations of reform efforts. Scholars have reviewed state and local programs as well as federal reform initiatives. During the 1970s, notable evaluation of federal reform programs was conducted under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.¹ Simultaneously, researchers were engaged in projects at the local level designed to determine the characteristics and nature of effective schools.² The persuasiveness of these and other reform studies prompted some educators and policymakers to attach great importance to one or two major findings as a mooring for large-scale improvement. This had the unfortunate effect of stimulating numerous single-minded and oversimplified change mandates. Coming one after another through the 1970s and 1980s, these approaches were usually regulatory in nature and too narrow to achieve the broad improvements expected of the system.³ Some of what was learned is relevant today, but in a context that is much more complex than reform studies of the past decade or two suggested. State policymakers sustained high levels of reform activity, but to keep reforms manageable the easy-to-implement changes were preferred over more complex approaches.⁴ In large part, state mandates were implemented. School districts did not resist reform; in fact, many were ahead of state government in their quest for improvement.⁵

Even though states and school districts implemented new mandates, the public became frustrated by highly touted reform that seemed to produce so little. Improving minority student performance still failed to keep pace with increasing expectations for equity and excellence. Schools continued to sort out too many low-performing students, with resulting dropout rates of over 20 percent.⁶ Standards, especially those reflected in tests, were too low.⁷ What caused so many well-intentioned efforts to produce so few desired results? Some observers of reform believe that state legislatures have actually done too much, layering on so many mandates and policies that schools have little flexibility or incentive to improve.⁸ One expert compares education to a sick patient who has been given so many pills and therapies for so many ills that it is no longer possible to tell which remedy is working on which symptoms, whether the medicine is having any effect, or whether the problems of today are mostly side effects.⁹ For example, retention in grade, comprehensive high schools, and back-to-basics reforms may have generated the problems of overage students who are likely to drop out, large impersonal campuses, and students with poor analytic and critical skills.

What reform advocates call for today are fundamental changes that will sweep away current schooling structures and give impetus to changes that will improve learning even for the most difficult-to-educate children.¹⁰ The more challenging problem is that as state experience deepens, the complexities of this type of sweeping improvement become more apparent. The easy changes have been accomplished; it is the hard ones that remain,¹¹ including unlearning what custom and tradition (and even recent reforms) have taught.¹²

The Context for Reform in the 1990s

Demographics

The profile of Texas public school students is changing: the student population has grown larger and poorer.¹³ Enrollment in Texas public schools increased 18 percent between 1982 and 1992, and the proportion of poor school children rose to 20 percent in the early 1990s.¹⁴ Mirroring a national trend, the Texas school-age population is more culturally diverse now than a decade ago. Overall, enrollment of minority students exceeds 50 percent. In large Texas cities (except Austin), minorities make up about 80 percent of the poor children and comprise over 80 percent of total enrollment.¹⁵

The environment in which the children live is changing as well. The Texas Commission on the Mental Health of Children and Their Families spent more than two years studying Texas children. It reported that the percentage of children born to women who received no prenatal care rose to 34 percent in the 1980s. Births to teenage mothers accounted for 15 percent of all births. Over 30 percent of children are not covered by health insurance.¹⁶ In addition to health risks, poor urban children are much more familiar with violence. Nearly three million thefts and violent crimes occur in or near United States schools each year, and one in five high school students carries a weapon on a regular basis, often to school.¹⁷ Statistics on violence in Texas schools are similarly unsettling. In short, the environment can create staggering challenges. For schools, it means classrooms of students whose social and educational expectations may be very different from those of their teachers.¹⁸

The implications for schools are obvious. Enrollment growth places strains on cities and suburbs. The need for special and protective services for students is apparent, given the alarming health and safety statistics for youth. Cumulative effects of violence, teen pregnancy, and poor health care increase the potential for declining attendance and low academic performance. In fact, evidence of the need for change is already available in the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report released by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in August 1993.¹⁹ Over 590 campuses received letters of concern from the state in August 1993 because their performance was well below the established standards. Compared to Anglo students, two to three times as many Hispanic and African American students were held back in at least one grade. In the 1992-93 school year, 21.4 percent of Texas students were overage for their grade. Fully 38 percent of ninth graders were overage for their grade.²⁰ Numerous research studies confirm the strong relationship between dropping out and being overage for grade. Scores on the state's Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) examination have risen somewhat in the most recent two years, but they are still low. In grades 7 and 9, fewer than 40 percent of students met the standard for passing all parts of the TAAS exam in 1992-93. Only 49 percent of students in grade 10 passed the TAAS in April 1993. Low-income students score far below their more advantaged peers at every grade level.²¹ These and other statistics depict a troubling scenario for increasing numbers of Texas students.

Revenue

Federal, state, and local resources support public education. In Texas, federal support has been about seven percent of the total revenue for several years, and this share is not expected to increase. The largest federal programs supporting schools are the National School Lunch Program, special education funds, and funds for programs to serve low-income students in Chapter 1 programs. Support for education is very strong at the local level. In the period from 1985 to 1992, average nominal property tax rates in Texas doubled, and the revenue from local property taxes now exceeds state support.²² However, the failure of the state to keep pace with local support increases has kept overall public education revenue levels from rising enough to support increased legislative mandates.²³ In 1992-93, state funds accounted for about 40 percent of revenue from all sources.

Texas schools budgeted \$18.7 billion in the 1992-93 school year, an increase of 11.8 percent over the prior year. Excluding debt service and capital outlay, expenditures averaged \$4,255 per student. Total budgeted expenditures per student were \$5,195.²⁴ In 1992-93, for the first time in many years, the level of state revenue per pupil declined, reflecting the inability of state legislators to appropriate enough money to fund enrollment increases.²⁵ Fewer state revenues for education may become the norm as legislators struggle to balance competing social needs among health care, criminal justice, education, and human services.

The Role of Education

Another factor influencing educational reform is the debate over the role and purpose of public education. Are schools primarily places for academic learning, or should they be a source of multiple services to students and their families? Should schools focus efforts on maintaining the themes and ideas of a common

culture, or should they encourage diversity and adherence to norms and ideas that reflect other cultures? At the present time, the weight of opinion favors standardization and an emphasis on what is perceived to be the traditional role of schools in society. While the public is concerned about the quality of schools, it does not seek the transformation of a familiar institution. Researchers who have examined the process of change in schools found no evidence that communities want or expect schools to depart from the common "script" for school.²⁶ Unlike reform advocates, most citizens want a recognizable organization operating much like the schools they attended.²⁷

If the image of schools remains static, how can change come about? The shifting demographics of schools (and families) suggest one source of change. Groups with different cultures and expectations do not always share a common vision of school. Some groups hope for a new pluralism that values multiple and differing expectations about what is important and how learning should occur.²⁸ The pressure they exert on the system may make a difference. A second source of change is the voice of social reformers who see in schools a community resource that should serve children and their families in many ways. In this vision, schools could be an access point for instruction, health services, parent training and support, before and after school care, and links to other social service agencies.²⁹ Change could also come from the requirements of postsecondary education and training or from fiscal constraints.

The Reform Trajectory: Where is it Going?

More than one observer has noted that the apparent stability in public education can mask slow, profound changes.³⁰ In fact, education is already responding to several reform themes. One theme is increased attention at the national level to issues in teaching and learning. Federal task forces have provided leadership and direction for state and local activities, and federal funding has stimulated numerous university-based research efforts. A second theme is systemic reform. Systemic reform—an outgrowth of discussions about large-scale reform and restructuring of the schools—is a concept discussed primarily among policy researchers. But the language and concepts of systemic reform are becoming part of the national effort because several systemic reform experts now work in and with the United States Department of Education. Teacher professionalism is a third theme. Common sense suggests that it will not be possible to create and sustain conditions for improved student learning if conditions for productive teaching are absent. A number of approaches are being tried to improve the professional preparation and working life of teachers. A fourth theme is the role of incentives in stimulating change in the system. These themes are examined in more detail in the following sections.

National Efforts

The national education goals effort initiated in 1989 by President Bush and the governors is subsumed in the Clinton administration's proposal for Goals 2000. In particular, the Clinton plan retains ambitious outcome expectations for students. This has raised the question of whether schools are ready to help students meet these goals. As a policy response, the dialogue surrounding Goals 2000 has come to include talk of school input standards that could result in uniform, high-quality resources for every school. Both the outcome goals and school standards are subjects of discussion among national policymakers, and high performance standards are already under study by national curriculum and assessment groups.³¹ Taking curriculum reform one step further are experts who favor establishing a voluntary national curriculum with national assessments, all in support of the high performance standards.³² Discussions about curriculum reform, assessments, and high standards are also taking place at the state level. For example, the Texas Committee on Student Learning studied systems of reform, new skills and knowledge standards, and alternative assessments as part of its charge during 1992 and part of 1993. In addition, a thread moving through both the state and national discussions of uniform high standards is the need for improved accountability and productivity.³³

Goals 2000

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act is the Clinton administration's proposal to continue the national momentum for reform. The act would codify the six education goals developed in 1989 and establish a National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) to report on the nation's progress toward meeting the goals. In addition, the act would issue a ten-year challenge to states to develop and carry out action plans to help all students meet the high national standards, with federal funding attached.³⁴ The 1993 House of Representatives and Senate versions of the act differ slightly. The House version (HR 1806) provides less authority and control to the NESIC and prohibits high-stakes testing used for rewards and sanctions for five years. The Senate version (S 1150) provides approval authority to the NESIC for the content standards, assessments, and "opportunity to learn" standards. It also permits high-stakes assessment after three years. Under the Senate version, a 28-member board would stimulate development and adoption of a voluntary national system of job skill standards, assessment, and certification.³⁵

School Delivery Standards. One controversial part of the proposed Goals 2000 legislation deals with "school delivery" standards, also called "opportunity to learn" standards. Under this concept there could be input or resource-level standards as well as process standards that would cover school organization and delivery of instruction. These delivery standards would encourage states and districts to provide the resources needed for success at all schools and ensure that students do not bear the sole burden of attaining the high performance standards.³⁶ The NESIC could set standards for fiscal resources, teacher experience, books, computers, and other inputs. School process standards could be set for instructional and organizational elements of school such as teaching strategies, class size, and grade-level organization.³⁷ Adherence to the standards would be voluntary, except for schools that receive special federal funding under the act.

Strong support for school delivery standards arises from reformers who ask how it can be fair to hold students accountable for attaining goals like mastery of core subjects and preeminence in math and science if they do not have a fair opportunity to learn.³⁸ These advocates note that other countries develop such standards and perhaps the United States should follow their lead.³⁹ Critics of the idea suggest that delivery standards should await development of specific learner outcomes based on the goals. They worry that attention to resource issues (and school finance) will divert interest from the improvement of curriculum and instruction. They believe policymakers ought to communicate what they mean by new learner outcomes to education professionals and the public before embarking on the design of matching input standards, even voluntary ones. In addition, many educators are skeptical about the intent to keep standards voluntary.

Prospects for the Proposed Legislation. The Clinton administration believes that its Goals 2000 proposal would strengthen the national goals process with a well-defined program. It would establish content standards that are sufficiently challenging to prepare American students to compete in the international marketplace and encourage states to move toward systemic reform through school delivery standards and a focus on outcomes. On the other hand, individuals concerned about federal involvement in education reform believe that Goals 2000 will erode local and state control. Voluntary goals, standards, and assessments will soon become mandatory, the critics believe, and the school delivery standards could force states to emphasize inputs rather than outcomes. Policy analysts note that states are already ahead of federal efforts in reform, and they do not need more top-down mandates from Washington.⁴⁰

The outcome of the Goals 2000 legislation is uncertain in fall 1993, but it seems clear that elected officials want some kind of federal education goals program to guide the country's schools. They want standards to introduce an element of uniformity into the current diverse system of education.

High Performance Standards

From the rhetoric of *A Nation at Risk* to the volumes of *The Nation's Report Card*,⁴¹ it is clear that American education is falling short of public expectations for it. Reform directed to raising national standards

for students has been a primary occupation of policymakers for decades, but the concern has been particularly high since the publication of several reports comparing the academic performance of students in the United States to students in other developed countries. The International Assessment of Mathematics and Science reports that 13-year-olds in the United States rank last in math and very low in science.⁴² Other reports describe what various countries expect students to know and explain how this differs from what is expected in the United States.⁴³ In general, the reports point to lax standards in the United States and draw the conclusion that low standards and poor performance are likely to undermine America's economic competitiveness.⁴⁴

Once the call for standards—specific, challenging, measurable standards—was broadcast, many groups assembled to approach the task. Public Law 102-62 charged the National Council on Education Standards and Testing to advise the Congress on the desirability and feasibility of national standards.⁴⁵ More recently, subject matter task forces and curriculum study groups have begun to publish their recommendations for course and subject standards. A major development effort operating as the New Standards Project is creating a performance-based examination system that is intended to drive curriculum and instruction to much higher levels of performance. High standards are widely believed to be good policy.⁴⁶ But how can they be put into effect? Some reform advocates believe they can come from a challenging curriculum.⁴⁷ Others believe that improved testing and assessment will support higher standards.⁴⁸ But the problem remains that the education system today is not equipped to teach to, test for, and support dramatically higher standards of learning. Teachers, with incomplete knowledge about reform policies and limited opportunities for professional development, will not have the ability to promote ambitious new standards. The burdens of learning—and then teaching—new, harder content to larger classes with more students who require extra attention are part of the problem. It is also the case that what appear, to reformers, to be modest changes are major and sometimes difficult changes in the lives of school personnel.⁴⁹

Assessment reform is also an uncertain vehicle for making high standards a reality. Promising new performance assessment programs are just beginning to emerge and are few in number. According to the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), practitioners know relatively little about what works in performance assessment.⁵⁰ Development costs, scoring systems, validity checks, and time required to administer and score the tests are some of the unresolved issues that push the development cycle for performance assessment out several years. There is an additional problem: to date, research has failed to show that testing drives achievement.⁵¹ Researchers have had difficulty consistently relating achievement to any one group of school processes. Family background plus characteristics of teachers and students at the school are the primary statistical predictors of the level of student achievement.⁵²

In addition to the problems of teaching and testing for high standards, there remains a challenge to link the new standards to greater student equity. How, some experts wonder, can high standards and expectations be imposed on students who are already performing poorly and have limited family and community support? How will students in special populations such as bilingual and special education students be able to achieve the high standards? Demanding assessments may have an effect opposite from what is intended and actually increase the achievement gap.⁵³ Chris Popho of the Education Commission of the States characterizes the problem as "gridlock" at the intersection of standards, goals, and performance objectives.⁵⁴

National Curriculum

One way to break up the gridlock is to focus on the specifics of what students should know and be able to do. The current approach is to devise curricular "frameworks" for core school subjects rather than using traditional curricula that represent sets of facts or units of "coverage" for a given year. Frameworks set out the themes, topics, and objectives in long-range blocks of up to four years. With frameworks, teachers can guide students through themes and topics in order to reach the objectives.⁵⁵ National curriculum framework projects are underway in several subject areas. Mathematics curriculum development is complete, and development in other areas has begun. Even some states, notably California, have developed new curriculum frameworks. Observers of the curriculum framework development processes note that the mathematics curriculum is not as

specific in terms of content as curricula developed in many school districts, so it appears that districts and schools have plenty of room for local interpretation.⁵⁶

Advocates for national curriculum frameworks see them as the stimulus for an improved instructional guidance system for all students. Current practices in schools driven by a curriculum that calls for drill and memorization violate what research says about how people learn most effectively. In contrast, curriculum frameworks that are less prescriptive emphasize depth of understanding and application to real-life problems instead of memorization of facts. They permit teachers to make instruction better fit the learning styles in the classroom. Good frameworks let teachers assume the role of guide and reduce student dependence on knowing the "right" answers.⁵⁷

Yet, while no one argues that school curricula currently meet the present or future needs of learners, there is great concern over the development and application of new frameworks. Questions about implementation arise in three areas: teacher preparation, resource allocation, and student equity. The emphasis on providing challenging content in schools finds a system unprepared.⁵⁸ Teachers lack the content knowledge and the repertoire of instructional strategies to teach hard content to diverse populations of students. Materials are not available, and schools are ill-prepared to explain the changes and higher expectations to parents and students. Most teacher preparation programs model a style that relies on the teacher as leader and director of the class, not as a guide or facilitator. So, in order to use the frameworks properly, most teachers will have to embrace a new style of teaching and learn more content.

Current classroom teaching is far from the goal of presenting intellectually challenging content for all students. To get closer to this goal will require a massive change away from deeply ingrained practices like teacher lectures, worksheets, and memorization of lists. Just working longer and harder will not make it happen. Teachers need professional development to increase their own knowledge. Conceptions about schooling that are based on teachers' own experiences must change.⁵⁹ To change instruction, fiscal allocations may also have to change. Schools will require different instructional materials and personnel—in turn calling for different resource allocations. Creating time for changing to curriculum frameworks is also costly, as is the staff development component.⁶⁰

The third area in which questions arise is student equity. A national curriculum may leave poor and minority children at a disadvantage. Whatever its faults, the basic skills push of the 1980s helped narrow the achievement gap between Anglo and non-Anglo students. The gap could widen once more if challenging curriculum frameworks are underfunded and introduced without sufficient teacher training and organizational support in urban schools.⁶¹

The question is not what to do *if* new curricula are developed. They are already coming because the pressure for improvement is so strong. The question is when and how they will be introduced into the public schools. The keys to their success will be appropriate funding, teacher preparation, and attention to achievement for all students.

Accountability

The trajectory of accountability reform (introduced in Chapter 4) is on a path extending through the 1990s as more states adopt well-articulated plans to track student achievement and use them for making decisions. Over half of the states have scheduled discussions of studies of accountability.⁶² In almost every state, more attention is being given to reporting systems (at state and local levels) intended to reveal school productivity to citizens and elected officials. California, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Texas are among the states with the most comprehensive systems. All provide sanctions or rewards, depending on the level of performance. During the 1990s, states will have to make the more difficult transition to explaining and reporting performance on new assessments keyed to changes in the curriculum. Schools will face new pressures to increase test scores and graduation rates. Once the public has a picture of school performance, the

productivity challenge will be framed around the question of how to use current resources for new ways of learning such as analytic thinking and problem solving in teams.⁶³

Systemic Reform

In the 1980s, reform in the states was broad, even sweeping. States overhauled teacher preparation and compensation laws, graduation requirements, testing, reporting, school finance, and approaches to teaching special populations.⁶⁴ According to several case studies, state efforts were uncoordinated, even fragmented.⁶⁵ Policies at the state level were not designed to work together and often conflicted with one another, confusing educators and frustrating policymakers. The reforms of the 1980s touched nearly every part of the system, but failed to bring the distinctive improvement in student achievement for which legislators and reformers had hoped.

In contrast, "systemic reform" policies are integrated to work together and to include all school districts and campuses. Systemic reform means coherent, focused changes directed to achieving ambitious learning outcomes for all students. Integral to the systemic (as opposed to the fragmented) strategy is a high-quality curriculum, new forms of performance assessment keyed to the curriculum standards, development of teacher expertise, and restructured management and governance at the local level. The key aspect of systemic reform is the shift from an inputs focus to an outcomes focus, together with the development of clear and valid student achievement measures.⁶⁶

In practice, systemic reform starts with a vision or a goal for education. Then state leaders set policy, and state education agencies establish approaches to achieving the goal. One systemic approach is the creation of a coherent system of instructional guidance for all students. It is in this approach that curriculum frameworks, assessment keyed to the frameworks, and teacher preparation and development appear as focal points for change. A somewhat different approach is to stimulate reform through decentralizing decisionmaking, with more autonomy and responsibility pushed down to the campus level.⁶⁷ School boards would establish long-range goals and would support schools with resources and technical assistance. State-level governance would allocate resources to support districts and set overall policy direction. The role of the state in a systemic reform effort is to set clear and challenging standards for education and to support local districts through an accountability system that rewards strong performance and sets out consequences for failure to meet the standards.

Improving Instruction

In the curriculum-centered systemic reform framework, instructional reform comes from the top down—ideally from state policymakers, although a national approach would also work. It does little good, reformers assert, to have a handful of exemplary schools using challenging curricula that are locally developed when the majority of students continue to labor under a system that is still driven by a back-to-basics approach.⁶⁸ The point of systemic reform is to effect changes on a large scale. According to this line of reasoning, challenging curriculum frameworks in all subjects should be the focus of instruction in every school. Content and training to provide a school-to-work transition should also be included. The Clinton administration has emphasized the importance of the link between education and job preparation in presenting Goals 2000.⁶⁹ Challenging curriculum frameworks would achieve both fairness and standardization. Fairness comes because all students, not just the advantaged, are exposed to challenging material and expected to perform well. Standardization comes from the systemwide adoption of the frameworks. In effect, all districts would become "lighthouse districts."

To improve instruction, systemic reform will have to address the needs of teachers. They will need to understand the frameworks and master the challenging content that they embody. In addition, teachers will have to know how individuals actually learn hard content in order to tailor instruction and guidance to a diverse student body. Improving students' career foundations will mean that teachers will need a broader understanding

of the public and private sectors. Teachers with these skills may demand higher salaries and different working conditions (such as fewer class preparations and more planning time), inserting further change in the system. As the curriculum changes, the profile of the teaching profession could change as well, with more teachers becoming specialists. Along with staff development, schools would have to invest in instructional materials that are appropriate for use with the frameworks. Texts and materials that accompany a lecture-and-seatwork format will not work. Researchers note that typical texts pack hundreds or even thousands of topics and ideas into a book in order to meet current "coverage" requirements. This approach often leaves students with such shallow information that they are unable to form judgments, make analogies, or conduct analyses.⁷⁰

The tests and assessments that fit the new system will be different, too. Today, most tests are designed to reflect the lecture-and-seatwork model. In many instances they also reflect the prior decade's emphasis on basic skills mastery. Under systemic reform, performance assessment holds promise as an alternative, as do other measures of student achievement such as portfolios. Even low-income students currently served by federal and state compensatory education programs could be tested using new assessments matched to the frameworks.⁷¹ Indeed, recommendations for the federal Chapter 1 program include its alignment with high standards and challenging curricula.⁷² However, the fact remains that assessments are far from being "on line." Development has been slower than anticipated, and the costs may exceed current testing costs.⁷³

According to advocates of systemic reform, if states can overcome fragmented and inconsistent policies with long-range goals for student learning, better materials, professional training, curriculum frameworks, and coordinated assessments, they will have established the conditions for bottom-up control and accountability. Coherence and coordinated policy coming from the state level (the "top") and increased professional discretion through decentralization at the school level (the "bottom") can be a positive and dynamic relationship.⁷⁴

Restructuring Governance

To decentralize decisionmaking is to shift authority for making decisions to lower levels of the public education hierarchy. Decentralized or site-based decisionmaking is associated with less bureaucracy and greater scope for teacher professional discretion. One expert notes that "it has almost become an article of faith that greater freedom from . . . centralized bureaucracy . . . will serve the interests of improving schools."⁷⁵ Teachers are expected to be free to serve the unique needs of their students without some of the barriers posed by the larger education system.

Research suggests at least three requirements for effective decentralization. First, schools need a clear vision of what decentralized or site-based decisionmaking means, particularly in regard to the relationship between the school and the district.⁷⁶ Will the campus make decisions and then be held accountable, or will the campus be a stronger collaborator with the district? How will students benefit from site-based decisionmaking? Second, the change to decentralized decisionmaking will be easier if it coincides with systemic reform changes that focus instruction and assessment.⁷⁷ Third, it will be more successful if control over four important resources is decentralized. These resources are power to make important decisions and to influence practice; knowledge of technical and managerial aspects of the school; information about the performance of the school; and rewards tied to levels of performance.⁷⁸

In practice, site-based decisionmaking (SBDM) does not ensure decisive leadership within the school or democratic governance for teachers. It also does not guarantee that schools will focus on teaching and learning. Current research shows that key decisionmakers in schools spend very little (less than 20 percent) of their time on curriculum and instruction. Most of the time is spent on matters related to budget, personnel, scheduling, pupil behavior, facilities, and parent concerns.⁷⁹ It seems likely that site-based committees could be consumed with the same organizational concerns. SBDM may, in fact, complicate the lives of teachers and principals, particularly if the task of serving students is already overwhelming, goals are conflicting, and resources do not support the efforts the school is supposed to be making to provide appropriate programs. Depending on the

types of relationships that exist among the school faculty, it may take many years before power structures shift to a more effective collegial model.

Once a large number of schools have implemented decentralized processes, it will be possible to determine whether this type of change moves the education system closer to fulfillment of its vision to improve learning. Thus far, research has failed to demonstrate a direct or simple relationship between student learning and SBDM.⁸⁰ It may be the case that the real impact on learning comes not from the ability to make decisions but from the resulting reorganization of the school that leads to strong teamwork among teachers and greater autonomy for the campuses.⁸¹ Ultimately, a combination of decentralization and accountability frameworks may lead to innovation and greater achievement.⁸² At least that is the hope of systemic reform advocates.

States can stimulate systemic reform by providing encouragement, technical assistance, and extra incentives to schools and districts with aggressive plans to improve. The Texas Partnership Schools Initiative is such an effort. Over 80 campuses have received waivers from law and rule to experiment with improvement initiatives intended to raise student performance. They also receive technical assistance as needed. Through accountability systems, states can offer incentives for improvement at the local level as well as flexibility to respond to local conditions. Texas offers financial and recognition rewards through the Texas Successful Schools Award System. The new accountability system in Texas also offers recognition. In addition to these three supports, educators need access to knowledge about restructuring and time to think about its implications.⁸³ In short, the fiscal and intellectual efforts that will be required by systemic reform are considerable.

Policymakers should also be aware of the challenges to educators. Neatly coordinating top-down curricula and standards with bottom-up decisionmaking of the type recommended for systemic reform is an ambitious undertaking. The political problems of allocating power and resources differently are just as difficult as changing tradition-bound schools.⁸⁴ In addition, pressure on policymakers and school administrators to produce memorable results in a short time reinforces "project" mentality.⁸⁵ Even where systemic reform is underway (in Kentucky and California, for example), states have failed to make a direct link between school finance and the systemic reform strategies. Higher goals for public education will require changes in resource allocation, school practice, and instructional delivery. Even attitudes will have to change.⁸⁶

Systemic reform offers a tempting challenge to educators and reformers. It combines top-down approaches familiar to policymakers with bottom-up reform that educators want, such as more flexibility at the campus and decentralized decisionmaking. The political arena, particularly at the national level, appears supportive of systemic reform in the form of more ambitious outcomes and opportunity-to-learn standards.⁸⁷ In addition, state experimentation has begun to show what works.⁸⁸ The challenge of the systemic approach is to balance the desire for standardization and common curriculum with the needs of a society with diverse perspectives.⁸⁹

Teacher Professionalism

Improving the system of public schools will be nearly impossible without well-prepared and knowledgeable teachers.⁹⁰ This fact has long been recognized, and states have struggled to ensure that able teachers enter and stay in the profession. In the 1980s, teacher certification requirements were tightened to provide assurances that teachers have strong content knowledge. Some states, including Texas, instituted teacher testing prior to certification to screen out teachers with low basic skills levels. Some states increased the required number of hours of inservice training, and most school districts rewarded teachers having advanced degrees with higher pay. Experienced teachers in some states and districts have been offered a career ladder program intended to enable them to chart a professional path to greater pay and recognition.

The struggle to obtain and keep good teachers has continued into the 1990s. New teachers are better educated, in general, but well over half of the teaching profession majored in general education rather than a content area.⁹¹ While calling for better-prepared teachers, states have simultaneously developed fast-track entry

programs that bring thousands of new teachers into the system with less preservice background than graduates of teacher training institutions.⁹² What is at work is a conflict between the desire to ensure that only bright, well-prepared people enter teaching and the need to staff schools at a time when thousands of teachers are reaching retirement age and enrollments are increasing.⁹³

Keeping talented teachers in the profession and improving their ability to deliver a rigorous curriculum to a diverse student body is a challenge comparable in its difficulty to preparing and recruiting top teachers. Salaries are modest, advancement within teaching is limited, and work conditions can be frustrating or even life-threatening.⁹⁴ Good teachers already in the system may need more support to meet ambitious new goals. Teachers need to know the content of what they teach "inside out" because new curriculum frameworks do not permit minimally prepared teachers to stay one chapter ahead of the students. New teaching strategies must be added to the repertoire of teachers. In practice, a teacher needs several strategies for presenting and teaching a concept or an idea. Effective professional development includes training, ongoing support, and feedback. A couple of workshops or inservice days during the year (the norm in most schools) are not likely to invoke the changes needed to help teachers transform their classrooms. Research suggests that what currently passes for professional development is a low-effort activity requiring only a fraction of the intellectual or emotional engagement that classroom teaching requires.⁹⁵ It also has inconclusive implications for student achievement.⁹⁶ In addition to high-quality training and support, teachers need appropriate and useful evaluation, rather than the compliance monitoring that is used for evaluation. Something different has to replace the familiar but less effective models of staff development.

Genuine reform for teachers and the profession of teaching is a priority if other reforms like new assessments and decentralization are to succeed. However, the thrust of activities so far suggests that policymakers are counting on mandates and accountability mechanisms to make it happen. A few school districts are experimenting with new conceptions for professional development, but these projects are not widespread.⁹⁷ One effort stands out as a means to improve the professional standing of experienced teachers, and that is national board certification. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is establishing high and rigorous standards for what good teachers should know and be able to do. These standards will anchor a national, voluntary system to assess and certify experienced teachers who meet these standards.⁹⁸ The certification process is just a beginning, but it may prove to be a significant factor in reshaping public perceptions of teaching. Induction-year programs are another mechanism to promote teacher professionalization. Some education schools are working with campuses to promote one- or two-year internships for incoming teachers to replace short-term student teaching experiences.⁹⁹ Mentor programs are also taking shape in some districts.¹⁰⁰

The larger problems of education reform are mirrored when it comes to teacher professional development. First, the task is misinterpreted to have a straightforward solution that can be mandated. In fact, changing teaching is complex and will require a variety of stimuli. Second, policymakers expect quick implementation and results in the form of better test scores. However, experience shows that dramatic test score gains are difficult to obtain in the short run. Third, inadequate time is set aside to enable teachers to become acquainted with possibilities for change.¹⁰¹ Fourth, as mentioned earlier, staff development is episodic, meaning that teachers get a day or two during the year rather than sustained training and support. Fifth, policymakers frequently call for reform without supporting resources. Underfunded mandates can be added to the system, but underfunded reform is not as successfully implemented. And sixth, top-down approaches conflict and further impede reform unless they are coordinated with bottom-up efforts.

Changing the Incentives

Another strand of reform seeks to change education externally by changing the incentives for improvement and change. One type of incentive flows from an accountability system that exposes the success and failure of schools to the world at large. Presumably, educators will work harder to avoid embarrassing public exposure. Going a step further, rewards and sanctions carry the underlying assumption that money or

recognition for better student performance will be a stimulus to campus professionals. For example, the Texas Successful Schools Award System provides money and recognition to campuses with high performance or strong performance gains. The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), as well as the awards system, provides recognition to high-performing districts and campuses. Warnings and other consequences—up to and including school closure—flow to consistently poor performers. Report cards and published performance reports will expose low-performing campuses and districts. The incentive system to stimulate improvement assumes that school professionals will be more focused or work harder if there is a tangible reward or an unpleasant punishment awaiting them.

Another approach offers the incentive of autonomy through magnet schools and charter schools. Magnet schools are schools with a theme or an approach developed to attract students with special interests. High schools for students interested in the performing arts are one example of this approach. Charter schools are public schools that operate through a contract with a school board or other public governing body. The governing body sets objectives and monitors the performance of charter schools, but the charter school is free from education code requirements except for laws pertaining to civil rights, health, and safety. The emphasis is on student outcomes, not on the processes within the school. Incentives are built into the magnet and charter school concepts.¹⁰² First, professional educators could operate a school or a group of schools and exercise autonomy similar to that now exercised by independent schools. A school organized around student interests and educator autonomy may be more likely to influence student achievement than schools in a bureaucratic setting.¹⁰³ In addition, the incentive to be the best would come from the need to attract and keep students.

Decentralization, discussed earlier as a vehicle for systemic reform, can, in and of itself, operate as an incentive system. The assumption is that school professionals are motivated by having the responsibility to make meaningful decisions to better serve students. If school personnel have the full range of freedom to select curricula, establish norms for professional development, and control the staffing and campus budget, they will be free to do what is best for students. Site-based decisionmaking, if it really holds strong incentives for teachers, could be a first step toward providing teachers control of their occupation. Professional control is a matter that some observers feel is central to teacher professionalism and ultimately to improved student learning.¹⁰⁴

Challenges and Obstacles

"The freeway of American education is cluttered with the wrecks of famous bandwagons," notes one prominent American educator.¹⁰⁵ A retrospective look at education reforms since the end of World War II would seem to confirm his impression: Educators have implemented numerous challenging curricula, almost none of which are in use today. Open classrooms, team teaching, minimum competency testing, management by instructional objectives, ability tracking, and other approaches and programs have been heralded, tried, and then abandoned. Teachers have seen career ladders come and go; they have seen school days decreased to 175, then increased to 180, and then subject to waivers. They have had required evaluations and competence testing. They have alternately been encouraged to hold students back and then to promote them. Why have so many policies and programs failed to have a strong impact on education? There are at least four answers to that question.

First, regulatory change is easy to implement. It is the major change, the type that threatens the basic patterns of practice, that is exceedingly difficult to institute on a large scale or over a long period of time.¹⁰⁶ But it is precisely this type of change that is most likely to result in improvement on the scale that the public wants. When the requirements of numerous little changes shift with each legislative session, the foundation for more serious change erodes. Only the things that do not matter very much tend to attract attention.

Second, school reform cannot succeed when goals, standards, mandates, rules, and regulations are all expanded at once as they were in Texas in the late 1980s. Everything begins to look like a priority and, in

practice, very little meaningful change is accomplished.¹⁰⁷ Policy build-up has become a difficult problem for public education.¹⁰⁸

Failure to establish realistic timelines for change is a third reason for the unimpressive impact of public education reform. In schools, time to make changes is usually drawn from the edges of the day and from other activities. When reform means extra work, educators suspect that the reform is not really a priority.¹⁰⁹ Add to this the ambiguous design of some change vehicles, and it begins to make sense for educators not to change but to seek stability in the familiar.

Fourth, teachers' prior exposure to education has a very strong effect on what happens. They hold a vision of school from their own student days, and they attend colleges and universities where the model for teaching has deviated very little over the centuries. Without support to understand new models for instruction, teachers will turn to the familiar when the going becomes difficult. Teachers need exposure to new curricula and ways of teaching as well as time to practice them to be able to succeed in implementing reforms. However, in the current organization of schools there is little or no time to expose teachers to exceptional practice or to extended periods of teaching and coaching under the tutelage of experts. This produces unfortunate results. Without some clear ideas about what successful new teaching strategies look and feel like, teachers usually will revert to doing a good job of what they already know how to do.¹¹⁰ That job is not producing the desired results.

In summary, experience suggests that policymakers should stimulate the introduction of new practices in large-scale efforts rather than tinkering with regulations. Statewide curriculum frameworks offer a vehicle for this type of change. Revised assessments and decentralized decisionmaking may also stimulate change. However, educators need time to be introduced to and to assimilate new practices. During the implementation phase, they need to be free from additional mandates and rules that may distract them from their work. The staff development requirements for real reform are imperative. Teachers need training to know what new standards mean for them, and they need to understand the new curricula before they teach them. Once knowledgeable and trained, they must have time to observe teachers who already use the new techniques, and they need time with one another at the school level to practice and coach one another.

Experience also suggests that policymakers should look at a span of years as a time frame for improvement.¹¹¹ Long-term solutions that are complex and that cause fundamental change to the system take years to implement. Educators need to have some assurance that time and energy expended making difficult changes will be well spent in the long run. For example, they may want some relief from accountability expectations in the first year or two of undertaking an ambitious reform such as curriculum change or the use of performance assessments.

Conclusions: A Role for Texas Policymakers

High expectations for student performance in public schools will continue to guide future reforms. The federal government has made dialogue about education goals and standards almost commonplace in American discourse. Codification of the national goals, if it occurs, will strengthen resolve to stay the course for more ambitious outcomes. States are also developing ambitious goals and standards.¹¹²

Despite apparent problems with its school finance system, Texas has become a leading state in implementing several education reforms. The discussion about standards for the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System has been lively and productive. Education goals are part of the Texas Education Code, and the recently adopted accountability system is perhaps the most comprehensive in the nation, tied to planning processes and school and district accreditation. Rewards and sanctions in the Texas system are based primarily on levels of student performance, not compliance with mandates. In addition, Texas has decentralized

decisionmaking in all schools. The state education agency favors much greater local autonomy for schools as long as it is motivated by desires and plans for improved student learning.

In 1993, the Texas Committee on Student Learning began the ambitious task of rethinking curriculum requirements to reflect more closely the performance requirements for necessary skills and knowledge. The State Board of Education is continuing this process by convening a series of public meetings to learn what the general public thinks students should know and be able to do. If this process continues and dovetails with state development of new performance-based assessments, it could serve as the stimulus for change envisioned by the advocates of systemic reform.

The Academic Excellence Indicator System spells out specific performance goals for students and schools. Never before have expectations for accomplishment been so clear. Moreover, since it is tied to the planning process, the accountability system, and the assessment program, the AEIS has the potential to stimulate major reform. This overview of the future for reform suggests four areas in which Texas policymakers might productively maintain momentum and, at the same time, accomplish some of their goals for better outcomes.

Recommendations

30. The Texas Legislature should target financial support for school districts in order to strengthen schools as learning organizations.

As institutions, schools are now accountable for explicit outcomes. Public accountability of the type called for in Texas will provoke changes and considerable anxiety. One means to create change is already in place—site-based decisionmaking. State education policies to support and strengthen the site-based processes should be a priority for state leaders. Another approach that may strengthen the organization of some schools is to permit them to reorganize themselves in different ways. The Texas Partnership Schools Initiative takes a step in this direction. Policies to encourage path-breaking innovation could include state funding incentives for experimentation with magnet schools or even charter schools. Strengthening schools could also occur through the integration of multiple community resources. Schools are not the only educative force in the lives of children; organized sports, religious organizations, music and performing arts, and even television serve to inform and educate children to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the strength of the community. Texas policymakers should develop ways to help schools work with other community resources to serve the learning needs of students.¹¹³

31. The Texas Education Agency, working with education service centers and school districts, should develop programs to strengthen the professional development of teachers and develop programs to prepare them to assist students in reaching the state's standards for academic performance.

The second area for policy interventions is to find ways to strengthen the professional standards and expectations for teachers. One way to do this is to reconceive staff development to be an ongoing endeavor that engages teachers continuously as they work together year after year. Another is to support professional development schools. A third way to strengthen the profession is to participate actively in efforts to make national board certification important for Texas teachers. Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) should not be mandatory, but a percentage of teachers with board certification could be a school excellence indicator. Policies also should encourage longer contracts for teachers who assume leadership within their schools. Site-based team members need time to plan; instructional team leaders need time to plan; and teachers responsible for implementing new curricula will need time to prepare for that change. Not all teachers want or need to work 12 months, but there is a clear need to have many more teachers working full-time, with blocks of their time spent away from direct instruction of students.

32. The Texas Legislature should limit the number of new policies and reforms for public schools and monitor the progress toward reaching state goals made as a result of reforms already enacted.

Staying the course is the third area in which policymakers can make a contribution. Testing, site-based decisionmaking, campus planning, accountability, and accreditation systems all need time to be fully implemented. In effect, policymakers should consider a moratorium on change to give current promising practices a chance to work. One area that especially needs stability and continuity is the state's assessment program. Frequent changes to the test, the grade level of administration, the timing of administration, and the passing score have left Texas educators without a consistent and comparable record of student achievement over time in Texas, despite the millions of test scores available in state records.

33. The Texas Legislature should link school finance to the state goals for education and to the accountability system.

Texans want a marked improvement of school and student performance, but the change will not occur unless school finance is linked to the education goals. It is not sufficient to provide end-of-year monetary awards when schools need money ahead of time to provide staff development, support for site-based decisionmaking, and upgraded materials and supplies. The awards and recognition are important as a demonstration of the state's commitment to keeping the accountability system in place, but it is also important for the state to assist school districts in attaining the high standards that all students are expected to reach.

The state should underwrite studies that would show policymakers what it costs to have all schools perform at or above the state standards. Such a study would also show the component elements and costs needed to take a low-achieving school up to performance at the expected level. Hundreds of low-achieving campuses currently perform well below the state average and even further below the expected standards. It is not reasonable to expect that student performance will improve steadily and dramatically (10 to 15 percent per year, for example) without some shift in the level and use of resources. The needed resource mix is not likely to be the same for all low-achieving schools. Research findings will be needed to help policymakers establish resource allocations that will support schools within their individual circumstances.

Consequences from the accountability system ultimately flow to principals and teachers. Schools will close and jobs will change or go away if student performance does not rise. Before these consequences occur, professional staff at low-achieving schools need training and assistance in their efforts to do better.

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Appendix A. Legislative Summary

67TH LEGISLATURE-1981

House Bill 246

- established a curriculum for all grades called the essential elements. (This bill was a result of a study mandated by HCR 90 of the 66th Legislature that examined statewide curricula.)

Senate Bill 477

- required school districts to maintain bilingual education programs if 20 or more students were identified as having limited English proficiency.
- required the State Board of Education to develop a plan to meet teacher supply needs created by bilingual education legislation.

68TH LEGISLATURE-1983

House Bill 723

- allowed districts to require a competency test for graduating seniors.

House Bill 2077

- established a pilot program for year-round schools.

68TH LEGISLATURE, SECOND CALLED SESSION-1984

House Bill 72

Student Reforms

- established that extracurricular activities may not be conducted during the school day.
- raised the passing standard to 70 percent for a school year.
- required school districts to offer prekindergarten programs and summer programs for limited English proficient four-year-olds.
- conditioned student participation in extracurricular activities on maintaining passing grades (known as the no pass/no play rule).
- allowed no more than five absences per semester to gain class credit.
- reduced class sizes in grades 1 through 4 to 22 students per teacher, to be phased in between 1985 and 1989.
- established voluntary after-school programs for failing students.
- mandated standardized tests in reading, writing, and math for all students in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9, and a testing of language and math skills in grade 12.
- required students to pass an exit-level exam in order to graduate.
- prohibited school districts from granting social promotions.

Teacher Reforms

- established the Texas Teacher Appraisal System.
- established the teacher career ladder, which provided pay bonuses for teachers who perform well on their appraisals.
- established a basic skills test for teachers.
- required eight days of in-service training per year for teachers.

Governance and Accountability Reforms

- created the Legislative Education Board.
- changed the job description for the commissioner of education.
- established accreditation criteria for school districts.

School Finance Reforms

- average daily attendance now based on the best four weeks of eight weeks of attendance records.
- increased funding for the foundation school program.
- established a price differential index adjustment in the finance formula to reflect geographic variation in resource costs.
- established increased allotments for special populations of students.
- required the State Board of Education to provide a biennial report to the Texas Legislature on the annual average cost to the school districts of meeting accreditation standards.
- entitled districts meeting wealth and tax effort criteria to an enrichment equalization allotment.
- raised local fund assignment by multiplying the ratio of the district's wealth to the average statewide rate by 33.3 percent (up from 30 percent).
- allowed school districts to lift limits set on school taxes in order to make up for the loss of state aid.
- required school districts to pay the state's contribution to the Teacher Retirement System for the amount that exceeds the state minimum for a teacher's salary.
- provided state matching funds for school districts that receive less state aid than for the previous year and raise taxes to offset the loss.
- increased Teacher Retirement System benefits.

69TH LEGISLATURE—1985

House Bill 1393

- authorized districts to develop gifted and talented programs.

House Bill 1731

- allowed special education students to meet the requirements of their individual education plans rather than satisfy the 70 percent passing standard in order to participate in extracurricular activities.

70TH LEGISLATURE—1987

House Bill 173

- separated the Texas Teacher Appraisal System from the administrator appraisal system.
- limited the number of times teachers at Levels Two, Three, and Four of the career ladder would be appraised to once each year.

House Bill 1010

- developed technical definitions for at-risk students and dropouts.
- required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a dropout reduction program and to submit a biennial report concerning dropouts to the governor.
- created a dropout information clearinghouse and an interagency coordinating council to create a resource network for at-risk students and dropouts.
- required school districts to provide support and remedial assistance for at-risk students.

House Bill 1050

- required each school district to provide a program for gifted and talented students.

House Bill 1619

- specified the subject areas that the State Board of Education could suggest to school districts for in-service training of staff.
- required the State Board of Education to develop a statewide design for delivery of services to handicapped students between the ages of 3 and 21.

House Bill 1894

- required the assessment of all students referred to special education within 60 days of referral.

House Bill 2182

- established the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP), a basic skills test for college students.

Senate Bill 994

- required applicants for teaching certification to complete an academic major.
- specified that colleges could require no more than 18 hours of education classes for teacher certification.
- required TEA to develop a program to attract talented students to the teaching profession.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 50

- created a special interim committee on dropouts to study the dropout problem and present a report to the 71st Legislature in January 1989.

71ST LEGISLATURE-1989**House Bill 126**

- required the state to adopt rules to include training in recognition of student drug and alcohol use in teacher in-service training.

House Bill 850

- prohibited persons under the age of 18 from receiving a driver's license unless they have graduated from or are enrolled in school.

House Bill 1292

- established a process for approval and funding of pilot parental involvement and parent education programs for parents of school-age children and parents of children ages 0 to 3.
- required TEA to provide guidelines for schools in developing parent education programs.

House Bill 2195

- allowed a process for funding and approval of demonstration programs of innovative educational practices.

House Bill 2566

- added criteria for appraisal under the teacher career ladder at Levels Three and Four.
- established new criteria for entry to each of the four levels of the teacher career ladder.

Senate Bill 40

- eliminated the Texas Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) for first graders.
- allowed methods other than numerical scoring for evaluating first graders.

Senate Bill 151

- allowed districts to develop programs for pregnant and parenting teens to be funded with compensatory education monies.

Senate Bill 152

- placed further requirements on TEA's dropout reduction plan.
- set an annual longitudinal dropout-rate goal of 5 percent.
- required each district to hire an at-risk coordinator to develop an annual dropout reduction plan for the district.
- required school districts with dropout rates higher than the statewide rate to fund remedial programs based on the number of students who dropped out that year.

Senate Bill 246

- permitted school districts to offer and operate a prekindergarten class for low-income and limited-English-speaking three-year-olds.
- permitted TEA to develop a pilot program for three-year-old prekindergarten programs.

Senate Bill 367

- required secondary schools with at-risk rates higher than ten percent to participate in the Communities in Schools program.

Senate Bill 417**Student Reforms**

- allowed parents to select among schools within the district where they live, with certain restrictions.
- TEAMS expanded to include social studies, science, and a writing component.
- TEAMS to become norm-referenced as well as criterion-referenced.
- TEA directed to fund pilot programs for students in grades 1 through 3 performing below grade level, and to provide study guides to parents of students failing TEAMS at the grade 3, grade 5, and grade 7 levels.
- required districts to establish committees to develop individual education plans for special education students.
- required school districts to develop individual transition plans for all special education students age 16 or older.
- allowed students to take high school equivalency exam at age 16.
- set limit for compulsory attendance at age 17.
- required TEA to develop a pilot program to study intervention strategies for at-risk elementary students.
- created a pilot program to prepare at-risk high school students for graduate equivalency exams.
- allowed school districts to establish teen parenting programs.

Teacher Reforms

- directed the State Board of Education to provide alternative certification programs for educators and administrators.
- prohibited teachers from teaching in subject areas for which they are not certified.
- added topics for in-service training.

Governance and Accountability Reforms

- required TEA to conduct compliance reviews of districts for special education rules every five years.
- directed the State Board of Education to establish a process for allowing school districts with exemplary programs to implement innovative education practices.
- required the State Board of Education to develop a set of performance indicators to determine the quality of learning at the campus level.
- required the State Board of Education to adopt rules for the accreditation process of school districts in order to rate their performance.
- required TEA to consider more minority- and women-owned businesses when awarding contracts.
- required TEA to conduct a study to determine the necessary level of funding to pay for summer school for at-risk students.
- created the Educational Excellence Program for Texas to award and recognize achievement in Texas schools.

Senate Bill 951

- established the School Facilities Aid Fund to issue bonds guaranteed by the Permanent School Fund for the maintenance of school buildings.

Senate Bill 1019

- instituted a guaranteed-yield second tier of equalization for school finance.
- raised the level of foundation program support by increasing the basic allotment.
- added two steps to the ten-step minimum salary schedule (based on experience and education) for teachers.
- raised the minimum salary for teachers at each step.
- established a cost-of-education index.

Senate Bill 1112

- required students to attend at least 80 days during a semester to receive credit.
- established school attendance committees.

71ST LEGISLATURE, SIXTH CALLED SESSION-1990

Senate Bill 1

Student Reforms

- permitted school districts to offer prekindergarten for three-year-olds.
- denied the State Board of Education the authority to designate the methodology and time requirements for certain subjects.

Governance and Accountability Reforms

- established the new provisions for the appointment of the commissioner of education by the governor.
- reduced the authority of the State Board of Education to establish policy and set rules.
- required annual performance reports from local school districts.
- required the use of the Academic Excellence Indicator System for evaluating school districts for accreditation.
- allowed exemption, upon application for waivers, from certain state education requirements for school districts with "exemplary" accreditation ratings.
- permitted schools to operate on a year-round multitrack schedule.
- required the board of trustees for each school district to adopt a policy to involve the professional staff of the district in establishing and reviewing the district's educational goals, objectives, and major districtwide classroom instructional programs.

School Finance Reforms

- increased the basic allotments.
- raised local fund assignments.
- increased guaranteed yield beginning with the 1993-94 school year.
- increased the district enrichment tax rate.
- changed the method of calculating student attendance for state funding purposes.
- required statewide accountable cost studies.
- required the development of a cost-of-education index.
- established an allotment within the foundation program for technology funding.
- provided funding for approved innovative programs.

72ND LEGISLATURE-1991

House Bill 1314

- added criteria for consideration of whether a student with an average below 70 percent should be promoted to the next grade.

House Bill 2175

- established time requirements for laboratory sciences.

Senate Bill 351

Student Reforms

- required school districts to provide prekindergarten programs if there are 15 or more eligible four-year-olds in the district.

Teacher Reforms

- set monthly base salaries for professional and paraprofessional staffs of the school districts.
- provided topics for staff development.

Governance and Accountability Reforms

- called for biennial accountable cost studies.
- allowed the school districts to apply to the commissioner for waivers on current policies for periods not to exceed three years.
- required that TEA assist the regional educational service centers in delivering staff development and technical assistance to the school districts.
- required the school districts to submit an annual report to TEA describing the involvement of the district's professional staff in district-level decisionmaking.
- increased the school year from 175 days to 180 days.

School Finance Reforms

- redefined tier one of the foundation program to include recapture through county education districts (CEDs).
- redefined the requirements for funding in tier two—the guaranteed yield portion of the foundation program.
- established revenue limits and certain tax rate limits.
- redefined attendance counting so that average daily attendance is based on records maintained over the full school year.
- included students in three- and four-year-old prekindergarten programs in regular attendance counts.
- authorized an emergency facilities grant program.
- gave authority to levy and collect property taxes to the county education districts.

Senate Bill 614

- required elementary schools to participate in Communities in Schools under certain circumstances.

Senate Joint Resolution 42

- proposed a constitutional amendment allowing county education districts to adopt tax exemptions for certain residence homesteads and providing for taxation of certain tangible personal property.

72ND LEGISLATURE, SECOND CALLED SESSION-1991

House Bill 2885

- authorized the immediate creation of county education districts (CEDs)
- clarified the powers of CEDs regarding tax collection, exemptions, and distribution of CED funds.
- required that Centers for Professional Development and Technology be established through colleges of education.
- established procedures for assisting low-performing campuses.
- required each school district to develop a site-based decisionmaking plan.
- required the State Board of Education to establish a performance-based statewide assessment program for school districts.
- requires the development and implementation of a set of essential skills and knowledge for all students.
- called for a new statewide assessment program based on the essential skills and knowledge.
- established the Texas Committee on Student Learning.

- revised the Texas Educational Excellence Award System:
 - changed the name to Texas Successful Schools Awards System.
 - charged the commissioner of education with choosing which schools the governor would present with financial awards.
 - required the commissioner of education to appoint a committee to establish the criteria for awards.
- required the State Board of Education to create a long-range plan for fostering computer literacy.
- required the commissioner to report to the governor annually on TEA's implementation of the long-range technology plan.
- required that the school districts offer group health insurance to employees.

73RD LEGISLATURE-1993

House Bill 633

- permitted school boards to commission peace officers and determine their jurisdiction.

House Bill 2585

- abolished 55 TEA advisory committees and gave the commissioner authority to establish advisory committees under specific guidelines.

Senate Bill 7

- established provisions for property wealth equalization so that no district will have wealth exceeding \$280,000 per weighted student.
- reduced allocations for special education arrangements and encouraged mainstreaming of special education students.
- placed limits on administrative costs in school districts.
- established a revised schedule of assessment to ensure accountability for student achievement through a revised testing schedule, performance indicators, performance reports, accreditation, and rewards for performance.
- called for a comprehensive review of the Texas Education Agency by a select committee.
- increased the attendance requirement for a student to receive class credit to 90 percent of the days the class is offered.
- repealed the teacher career ladder system.
- abolished the county education districts.
- repealed the requirement that school districts operate on a semester system.

Senate Bill 155

- created the Texas Commission on Children and Youth charged with developing a proposal to improve and coordinate public programs for children.

Senate Bill 393

- established the Investment Capital Fund to assist eligible schools to deregulate and restructure to improve student achievement and increase parental involvement.

Senate Bill 454

- expanded the Communities in Schools program by up to 135 more schools to be funded from state compensatory education funds.

Senate Bill 617

- abolished the Legislative Education Board.

Senate Bill 642

- created the Council on Workforce and Economic Competitiveness to promote development of a skilled workforce and implement a system to evaluate workforce development programs. (This Council assumed responsibilities previously assigned to seven other councils.)

Senate Bill 679

- established a state-funded optional extended-year program.

Senate Bill 705

- required the State Board of Education to establish a curriculum mastery plan after May 31, 1995.

Senate Joint Resolution 49

- proposed an amendment to the Texas Constitution that any law imposing a personal income tax must be approved by a majority of the voters in a statewide referendum. (This amendment was approved by the voters on November 2, 1993.)

Appendix B.

Priority Occupations for the State of Texas: 1993*

OES**	OES	OES	OES
Code	Title	Code	Title
53123	Adjustment Clerks	13005	Personnel Managers
19999	All Other Managers	21511	Personnel Specialists
55199	All Other Secretaries	87502	Plumbers/Pipefitters
31399	All Other Teachers	63014	Police Patrol Officers
34035	Artists/Related Workers	31302	Preschool Teachers
85302	Auto Mechanics	58008	Production Clerks
53508	Bill and Account Collector	21308	Purchasing Agents
55344	Billing Clerks	32916	Radiological Techs/Technols
97111	Bus Driver, School	15011	Real Estate Managers
43017	Business Services Agents	55305	Receptionist
56011	Computer Operators	32502	Registered Nurses
25104	Computer Programmer/Aide	49008	Sales Repres., Wholesale
65026	Cooks, Restaurant	41002	Sales Supervisors
63017	Correction Officers	49014	Salespersons, Parts
66002	Dental Assistants	89132	Sheet Metal Workers
34038	Designers, except Interior	27310	Social Workers
85311	Diesel Mechanics	31311	Special Education Teachers
22514	Drafters	49021	Stock Clerks, Sales Floor
85723	Elec. Powerline Installer	81005	Supervisors, Constr. Trades
22505	Electric Engineering Techs	51002	Supervisor/Mngr, Clerical
31305	Elementary Teachers	81002	Supervisors, Mechanics
15026	Food Service Managers	81008	Supervisors, Production Wkr
79014	Gardners/Groundskeepers	25102	Systems Analyst, EDP
98312	Helpers-Carpenters	43021	Travel Agents
98313	Helpers-Electricians	97101	Truck Driver, All
98315	Helpers-Plumbers	93914	Welders and Cutters
97947	Industrial Truck Operator	55311	Word Processing Typist
43002	Insurance Sales Agents		
55102	Legal Secretaries		
32505	Licensed Practical Nurses		
89108	Machinists		
85132	Main Repairers, General		
21999	Management Support Workers		
98102	Mechanic Helpers		
66005	Medical Assistants		
55105	Medical Secretaries		
22599	Other Engineering Techs		
81099	Other Firstline Supervisor		
66099	Other Health Service Workers		
63099	Other Protective Service Wkr		
61099	Other Service Supervisors		
87402	Painter/Paperhanger, Constr.		

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), *Career and Technology Education Funding Instructions and Guidelines for School Year 1993-94* (Austin, Tex., April 1993), pp. 73-74.

* Adopted by the State Board of Education, January 1993.

**** OES—Occupational Employment Statistics**

*** NCA—No Code Assigned

Appendix C.
Principals and Teachers Interviewed in Site Visits:
December 10, 1992-February 5, 1993

Adamson High School (Dallas ISD)

Martin Riojas, Principal. Interviewed by Margo Weisz and Alex Pham, January 29, 1993.
Cynthia Billman, Teacher-Mathematics, all levels. Interviewed by Alex Pham, January 29, 1993.
Winona Pulliam, Teacher-English, grade 11. Interviewed by Margo Weisz, January 29, 1993.
Mike Franco, Counselor. Interviewed by Margo Weisz and Alex Pham, January 29, 1993.

Blanco High School (Blanco ISD)

Donald Lynn Boyd, Principal. Interviewed by Chris Shipman, January 29, 1993.
Rosemarie Allen, Counselor. Interviewed by Jeff Brown, January 29, 1993.
Mary Nabers, Teacher-English, grades 10, 12. Interviewed by Chris Shipman, January 29, 1993.
James Caudell, Teacher-Mathematics, grades 10-12. Interviewed by Jeff Brown, January 29, 1993.

Brackenridge Elementary School (San Antonio ISD)

Richard Tobin, Principal. Interviewed by Robin Lessie, Melanie Esten, and Dulcinea Arredondo, February 5, 1993.
Vera Woods, Teacher-grade 5. Interviewed by Melanie Esten, February 5, 1993.
Pura Gloria Gonzales, Teacher-grade 3. Interviewed by Robin Lessie and Melanie Esten, February 5, 1993.
Ron Radle, School of the Future Project Coordinator. Interviewed by Dulcinea Arredondo, February 5, 1993.

Canyon Vista Middle School (Round Rock ISD)

Linda Noblin, Counselor. Interviewed by Jennifer Jordan and Chris Gamble, January 29, 1993.
Barbara Snodgrass, Teacher-Spanish, grades 6-9. Interviewed by Jennifer Jordan and Chris Gamble, January 29, 1993.
Kim Hampton, Teacher-History. Interviewed by Jennifer Jordan and Chris Gamble, January 29, 1993.

D'Hanis School (D'Hanis ISD)

Chris Finger, Principal. Interviewed by Robin Lessie and Melanie Esten, February 4, 1993.
Sheila Rothe, Teacher-Algebra/Geometry. Interviewed by Melanie Esten, February 4, 1993.
Esther Johnson, Teacher-High School Special Education and Kindergarten-grade 12 Chapter 1. Interviewed by Robin Lessie, February 4, 1993.
Jeanice Zinsmeyer, Teacher-Language Arts, grades 6-8. Interviewed by Robin Lessie and Melanie Esten, February 4, 1993.
Deborah Finger, Teacher-grade 5. Interviewed by Robin Lessie and Melanie Esten, February 4, 1993.

Lanier High School (Austin ISD)

Paul Turner, Principal. Interviewed by Carla Fraser, December 16, 1992.
M. Elizabeth Steen, Teacher-Mathematics. Interviewed by Dulcinea Arredondo, December 16, 1992.
Pearl Collins, Teacher/Department Head-English, grade 10. Interviewed by Carla Fraser and Dulcinea Arredondo, December 16, 1992.

Lee Elementary School (Austin ISD)

Mary Lou Clayton, Principal. Interviewed by Carla Fraser, December 10, 1992.
K. Rhonda Heflin, Teacher. Interviewed by Carla Fraser, December 10, 1992.

Locke Hill Elementary School (Northside ISD, San Antonio)

Sheralyn Humble, Principal. Interviewed by Helen Daniels and Brayton Dresser, February 4, 1993.
Becky Burke, Teacher-grade 3. Interviewed by Helen Daniels and Brayton Dresser, February 4, 1993.
Denise Minor, Teacher-grade 2. Interviewed by Helen Daniels and Brayton Dresser, February 4, 1993.

Roosevelt High School (Northeast ISD, San Antonio)

Mark Scheffler, Principal. Interviewed by Margo Weisz, February 1, 1993.
Debra Valdez, Assistant Principal. Interviewed by Margo Weisz, February 1, 1993.
Barbara Rios, Teacher/Department Head-Mathematics. Interviewed by Jeryl Jensen, February 1, 1993.
Calvin Eichler, Teacher-English/Science. Interviewed by Margo Weisz, February 1, 1993.

Smithville High School (Smithville ISD)

Jan Lawrence, Principal. Interviewed by Jennifer Jordan and Chris Gamble, January 28, 1993
Helen Fleck, Teacher-English/German, grade 12. Interviewed by Jennifer Jordan, January 28, 1993.
James Trousdale, Teacher-Typing/Business. Interviewed by Chris Gamble, January 28, 1993.

Socorro High School (Socorro ISD)

Mike Quatrini, Principal. Interviewed by Colleen Mahoney and Eric Nicklas, February 4, 1993.
Tony Baca, Assistant Principal (former Counselor). Interviewed by Colleen Mahoney and Eric Nicklas, February 4, 1993.
Nara Villialba, Teacher-English, grade 10. Interviewed by Colleen Mahoney and Eric Nicklas, February 4, 1993.
Nancy Angness, Teacher-TAAS Language Arts for students who have not passed TAAS. Interviewed by Colleen Mahoney and Eric Nicklas, February 4, 1993.

Wesley Elementary School (Houston ISD)

Thaddeus Lott, Principal. Interviewed by Chris Shipman, January 12, 1993.
Dianne Morris, Teacher-grade 5. Interviewed by Chris Shipman, January 12, 1993.

Westlake High School (Eanes ISD)

John Matysek, Principal. Interviewed by Carla Fraser, January 28, 1993.
Ronald Dodson, Teacher-English/Language Arts. Interviewed by Carla Fraser, January 28, 1993.
Heather Kight, Teacher-Social Studies, grades 9-10. Interviewed by Brayton Dresser, January 28, 1993.

