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Joint Letter to TEA Commissioner Michael Williams

On September 10th, 2014, Representative Huberty and Senator Dan Patrick sent a joint letter to Texas Education Agency Commissioner, Michael Williams, urging him to remind all school districts in Texas that all "Common Core" curriculum was effectively banned from the state during the last legislative session. The letter can be read in full below.

Dear Commissioner Williams:

During the last legislative session, the Texas Legislature passed HB 462, which was authored by Representative Dan Huberty in the House of Representatives and sponsored by Senator Dan Patrick in the Senate. We both have had calls into our offices, where parents are concerned that students are being taught lesson plans that are not authorized under the current law, specifically as it relates to the teaching of Common Core. The 83rd Texas Legislature passed House Bill 462 (HB 462), which contains several important prohibitions relating to curriculum standards. The bill:

1. prohibits the State Board of Education (SBOE) from adopting Common Core State Standards;
2. prohibits school districts from using Common Core State Standards to meet the requirements to provide instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS);
3. prohibits a school district or open enrollment charter school from being required to offer the Common Core; and
4. prohibits the Texas Education Agency from adopting or developing assessments based on Common Core State Standards.

Chapter 28 of the Texas Education Code requires the SBOE to develop the essential knowledge and skills that Texas schools are required to teach. Additionally, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) are based entirely on those TEKS developed and adopted by the SBOE.

General Abbott issued an opinion (GA-1067) June 17, 2014, in response to Senator Patrick's request (RQ-1175-GA) addressing this issue. That opinion states in the summary (emphasis added): "*Texas school districts are required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills at appropriate grade levels, and pursuant to subsection 28.002(b-3) of the Education Code, they may not use the Common Core State Standards Initiative to comply with this requirement.*"

We know you sent out a reminder of this new legislation in November 2013. However, we are concerned that some school districts are either not complying with the law, or not aware that certain "Free" lesson plans that are being used off the Internet by their teachers are violating this statute.

We would ask that you once again remind school districts of the importance of maintaining our State Standards, and not those of the federal government. Please make sure you enforce these standards, it is critical to our student's success. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

State Senator Dan Patrick & State Representative Dan Huberty

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TEA Response to Joint Letter from Sen. Patrick & Rep. Huberty

In response to the letter Sen. Patrick and Rep. Huberty sent to TEA Commissioner Williams urging him to emphasize the ban on all "Common Core" curriculum, the following letter was sent to all school districts in the state and posted on the TEA website.

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

I want to remind you of the provisions in state law prohibiting the adoption or use of the Common Core State Standards. In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature passed House Bill 462 (HB 462), which contains several important prohibitions relating to curriculum standards. The bill:

- 1) prohibits the State Board of Education (SBOE) from adopting Common Core State Standards;
- 2) prohibits school districts from using Common Core State Standards to meet the requirements to provide instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS);
- 3) prohibits a school district or open enrollment charter school from being required to offer the Common Core; and
- 4) prohibits the Texas Education Agency from adopting or developing assessments based on Common Core State Standards.

You may read the full text of HB 462 at:

<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/83R/billtext/pdf/HB00462F.pdf#navpanes=0>.

Chapter 28 of the Texas Education Code requires the SBOE to develop the essential knowledge and skills that Texas schools are required to teach. Additionally, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) are based entirely on those TEKS developed and adopted by the SBOE.

As you consider funding opportunities (especially those offered by the United States Department of Education) that require your district to use college and career readiness standards, please remember that the Texas Legislature required the adoption of college and career readiness standards in 2006, making Texas the first state to mandate the development and use of college readiness standards. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopted the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in 2008. The SBOE has since embedded the CCRS within the TEKS.

You may review the CCRS at: <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/collegereadiness/crs.pdf>.

Sincerely,

Michael Williams - Commissioner of Education

Upcoming Bond Election Roundup

The newly updated Upcoming Bond Election Roundup provides the Comptroller's best accounting of upcoming bond elections across the state, based on research cross-checked with the local entities themselves and a listing prepared by the Municipal Advisory Council. You can view a sortable master list of bond elections for the state, or view elections county by county.

Because of how the Roundup is being compiled, it may not be complete; however, we will update the database as new information becomes available. If you would like more information on bond elections, please visit:

http://texastransparency.org/Special_Features/Bond_Elections/.



DPS Reminds Texans: Election Identification Certificates Available at Driver License Offices

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is reminding Texans in advance of the upcoming November election that Election Identification Certificates (EIC) are available year-round at all Texas driver license offices for individuals in need of proper identification required to vote in elections in Texas. Additional locations to apply for an EIC will be announced in the near future.

The 2014 general election in Texas is November 4, with early voting from Oct. 20 - 31. The last day to register to vote in the 2014 election is Monday, Oct. 6. Most residents already have an acceptable form of photo identification needed for voting and will not need or qualify for an EIC. If an applicant already has any of the following documents, they are **not** eligible to receive an EIC:

- Texas driver license – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
- Texas personal identification card – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
- U.S. passport book or card – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
- Texas concealed handgun license – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
- U.S. Military identification with photo – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
- U.S. Citizenship Certificate or Certificate of Naturalization with photo

To apply for an EIC, applicants may visit a driver license office and complete an [Application for Texas Election Certificate \(DL-14C\)](#). (For the Spanish language version of the EIC application, see <http://www.dps.texas.gov/internetforms/forms/DL-14CS.pdf>)

To qualify for an EIC, an applicant must:

- Bring documentation to verify **U.S. citizenship** and **Identity**
- Be eligible to vote in Texas (Bring a valid voter registration card or submit a voter registration application through the Texas Department of Public Safety)
- Be a Texas resident
- Be 17 years and 10 months or older

To avoid delays or complications, DPS urges potential applicants to make sure they have the necessary documentation before arriving at the office. The EIC receipt an individual receives will include their photo and can be used for voting until the permanent card is delivered by mail. The EIC is free of charge to qualifying applicants and is valid for six years. There is no expiration date for an EIC for citizens 70 years of age or older. The EIC can only be used for the purpose of voting in an election and may not be used as personal identification.

For more information on the requirements, exemptions and process for obtaining an EIC, please visit: <http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/electionID.htm>. For more information on voting in Texas, visit the Secretary of State's website: www.votetexas.gov.

Representative Huberty Announces Start of 2014-2015 High School Aerospace Scholars

Representative Huberty is pleased to announce the launch of the 2014-2015 High School Aerospace Scholars (HAS) project. HAS enables selected Texas high school juniors to explore new frontiers and become a part of NASA's plan for space exploration.

To be eligible, a student must meet the following criteria:

- U.S. Citizen
- Texas resident
- Currently a high school junior
- Interest in science, math, or engineering
- Able to commit to a relationship with Johnson, including a one week residential experience during the summer
- Access to the Internet and e-mail (home, school, or public library)

The state of Texas, in partnership with Johnson and the Texas educational community develop HAS in 1999 to encourage students to pursue studies and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. More than 3600 students from across the state have participated.

Additional partners include the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Rotary National Award for Space Achievement and University of Houston System. High school juniors interested in applying for the 2014-2015 project should visit: <http://HAS.aerospacescholars.org/> or contact Stacey Welch at 281-792-8223.

TEA Releases Metropolitan School District Consolidation Study

The Texas Education Agency today released a study regarding the impact of potential school district consolidation in the state's five largest counties: Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Tarrant and Travis. The analysis reveals creation of such mega-districts would increase costs and would not improve student performance as a result of consolidation.

The study, "Anticipating the Consequences of School District Consolidation in Major Metropolitan Areas," was mandated by the 83rd Texas Legislature as part of Senate Bill 2. The legislation required the Texas Education Agency to provide "an analysis of whether the performance of matched traditional campuses would likely improve if there were consolidation of school districts within the county in which campuses are located." This analysis would only apply to a county that has at least seven school districts and at least ten open-enrollment charter schools. Researchers determined that consolidation of all the school districts in these five counties would create new districts of enormous size by both state and national standards.

- With an enrollment of just over 803,000 students, the consolidated Harris County Independent School District (ISD) would become the second largest district in the country (behind only New York City Schools).
- The consolidated Dallas ISD (with an enrollment 437,642) would be the fourth largest school district in the country – ahead of the Chicago Public School system, but smaller than Los Angeles Unified School district.
- The consolidated Tarrant County ISD (with an enrollment of 341,855) would become the seventh largest school district in the country.
- The consolidated Bexar County ISD (with an enrollment of 321,072) would become the eighth largest school district in the country.
- The consolidated Travis County ISD (with an enrollment of 145,846) would be among the 20 largest districts nationwide.

The study notes that consolidation is usually expected to reduce the cost of education because research has demonstrated the per-pupil cost of operating a very small school district is much higher than the per-pupil cost of operating a larger district. However, following a cost function analysis, three key findings were revealed:

- Cost savings can be expected for consolidations involving small districts, but as the size of the consolidated district increases past 3,200 students, costs are expected to rise, not fall.
- Competitive pressure leads to greater school district efficiency in Texas, so any consolidation is expected to lead to a loss of school district efficiency.
- There is no expected cost savings from any of the targeted consolidations under analysis. Consolidation in the designated counties increases the predicted expenditure per pupil by 6.5 percent in Bexar County; 6.1 percent in Tarrant County; 4.9 percent in Dallas County; 4.1 percent in Harris County; and 2.8 percent in Travis County.

Researchers noted that given the lack of cost savings under the simulation, it is highly unlikely that student performance would improve if there were consolidation in these designated counties.

"Anticipating the Consequences of School District Consolidation in Major Metropolitan Areas" was prepared for the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center by researchers from the Bush School of Governance and Public Service at Texas A&M University, the Texas A&M University Department of Economics and the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. To read the entire report, please visit the Texas Education Agency's webpage at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769815533>.

Permanent School Fund becomes nation's largest educational endowment

Commissioner of Education Michael Williams and Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson announced that the Permanent School Fund has reached a record high value in 2014, making it the largest educational endowment in the country.

Created by the state in 1854 with an initial \$2 million investment, the endowment has now grown to approximately \$37.7 billion in market value as of June 30, 2014. Of that total, approximately \$30.6 billion is managed by the State Board of Education and \$7.1 billion by the School Land Board. Day-to-day oversight of the Fund is handled by staff at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the General Land Office. "Through effective management by the State Board of Education, General Land Office and TEA, the Permanent School Fund continues to grow," said Commissioner Williams. "The true beneficiaries of these sound investments are the schoolchildren across our state."

Advancements in hydraulic fracturing technology, Patterson said, are also earning the school children of Texas hundreds of million dollars a year. "The Texas oil and gas boom isn't just fueling the nation toward energy independence, it is earning hundreds of millions of dollars a year for public education," Patterson said. "For the first time ever, Permanent School Fund lands and investments managed by the School Land Board resulted in deposits of more than \$1.2 billion into the PSF during 2014."

A distribution from the Permanent School Fund is made every year to help purchase instructional materials and pay a portion of education costs in each school district. Since 1960, the PSF has distributed more than \$23 billion to the schools. During the 2014-15 biennium, the PSF is distributing about \$1.7 billion to the schools and anticipates distributing more than \$2 billion during the next biennium. "The State Board of Education exercises its constitutional authority as fiduciaries of the Permanent School Fund with careful deliberation and planning," said SBOE Chair Barbara Cargill. "It is extremely gratifying to see such excellent results of our hard work as we strive to ensure that current and future generations of Texas schoolchildren will benefit from the fund."

"Compliments to the outstanding work of both the Permanent School Fund staff and the GLO for maintaining sound and prudent strategies designed to protect and grow the Fund throughout market cycles, and resulting in such a healthy increase of the endowment that benefits all Texans," said Patricia "Pat" Hardy, chair of the State Board of Education's School Finance/Permanent School Fund Committee.

Along with providing direct support to Texas schools, the PSF provides a guarantee for bonds issued by local school districts and charter schools. The Permanent School Fund guarantee gives districts the equivalent of a AAA credit rating, the highest available. As a result, qualified districts are able to pay lower interest rates when issuing bonds, saving taxpayers billions of dollars. At the end of 2013, the PSF's assets guaranteed \$55.2 billion in school district bonds, providing a cost savings to 810 public school districts.

The Permanent School Fund's \$37.7 billion value as of June 30, 2014, surpasses that of the Harvard University endowment which stood at \$36.4 billion at the same time. To learn more about the Permanent School Fund, visit the TEA website at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147485578&menu_id=2147483695. To learn more about the Texas General Land Office's management of its portion of the Permanent School Fund, visit the GLO website at <http://www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/state-lands/permanent-school-fund/index.html>.

DPS to Assist Medical Professionals with Drug Change

In preparation for the rescheduling of hydrocodone combination products (HCPs), the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) has increased staffing and resources to respond to medical practitioners serving Texas patients who require prescriptions for HCPs.

Effective Oct. 6, 2014, HCPs will move from the classification of a Schedule III drug to the more-restrictive Schedule II. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's rescheduling of HCPs as Schedule II controlled substances will increase the restrictions on prescribing and dispensing practices for hydrocodone combination drugs. Physicians who prescribe HCPs will be required to use prescription pads provided by DPS. To accommodate these changes and to assist medical professionals, DPS is offering the following customer service enhancements:

- Extended customer service availability from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.;
- An automated call-back system allowing customers to make an appointment for an agent's return call;
- Increased staff to help process registration modifications to allow practitioners to change their approved schedules; and
- Extended work hours for staff in both the customer contact center and order fulfillment areas.

In addition, medical practitioners needing assistance can either call (512) 424-7293 or visit the customer contact center at <https://www.txdps.state.tx.us/rsd/contact/default.aspx> and then select "Texas Prescription Program" from the drop-down menu. For answers to common questions related to the HCP change, see <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/RSD/ControlledSubstances/hydrocodoneSchedII.htm>. HCPs are drugs that contain both hydrocodone – which by itself is a Schedule II drug – and specified amounts of other substances, such as acetaminophen or aspirin.

The federal Controlled Substances Act places substances with accepted medical uses into one of four schedules, with the substances with the highest potential for harm and abuse being placed in Schedule II, and substances with progressively less potential for harm and abuse being placed in Schedules III through V. (Schedule I is reserved for those controlled substances with no currently accepted medical use and lack of accepted safety for use.) For additional information on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration announcement, visit: <http://www.justice.gov/dea/divisions/hq/2014/hq082114.shtml>.

Humble ISD Volunteer Honored with SBOE Hero for Children Award

The State Board of Education (SBOE) announced that 15 Texans including a volunteer from Humble ISD who provided hundreds of hours of volunteer service to Texas public schools were honored with the Heroes for Children award at the SBOE meeting on Friday, Sept. 19.

The Heroes for Children honorees are selected by the State Board members and recognized for volunteering their time, talents and skills to help improve the public schools in their communities. Each hero will receive a certificate of honor, a copy of the resolution scheduled for board approval, and photographs commemorating the ceremony. Each hero will also have his or her name engraved on a plaque that is permanently displayed at the Texas Education Agency.

Recipients of the 2014 Heroes for Children award (along with a brief description of the contributions each has made to Texas schoolchildren) appear below:

Herbert Gordon (Humble ISD – SBOE District 8)

Gordon has been a volunteer in the district for 30 years. His contributions include something as simple as working the sign-in table at an event to service on the district-level committees that help shape the future of the Humble ISD and the students.

Texas Tribune Festival - Public Education Panel

The Texas Tribune Festival was held in Austin, Texas, from Friday, September 19th, to Sunday, September 21st. The event hosted keynote speakers from Governor Rick Perry to Republican Nominee for Land Commissioner, George P. Bush. Rep. Huberty was given the opportunity to speak on a panel about Public Education on the second day of the festival. He was joined by Texas Association of Business CEO, Bill Hammond; Alief ISD Superintendent H.D. Chambers; TEA Chief Deputy Commissioner, Lizzette González Reynolds and Moderator, Morgan Smith.



Upcoming Events

Monday, October 6th

Last Day to Register to Vote in the General Election

To register, visit <http://www.hctax.net/Voter/Registration>

Monday, October 20th

First Day of Early Voting in the General Election

To find your polling location, visit <http://www.harrisvotes.com/EarlyVoting/EarlyVotingLocationsSchedule.pdf>

Friday, October 24th

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail for the General Election

To apply, visit <http://www.harrisvotes.com/VotingInfo/BallotByMail.aspx>

Friday, October 31st

Last Day of Early Voting in the General Election

To view a sample ballot, visit <http://www.harrisvotes.com/SampleBallot/SampleBallot.pdf>

Tuesday, November 4th

Election Day

To find your polling location and sample ballot, visit <http://www.harrisvotes.com/VoterBallotSearch.aspx?L=E>