Update on the Progress of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium

A report from the
Texas High Performance Schools Consortium
submitted to
Michael L. Williams
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency

December 2014

In accordance with SB 1557, the commissioner, with assistance of the school districts participating in the Consortium, shall submit reports to the governor and the legislature concerning the performance and progress of the consortium.

Acknowledgements

This report is submitted by the co-chairs of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium, Dawson Orr, Superintendent, Highland Park ISD, and Greg Smith, Superintendent, Clear Creek ISD, on behalf of the Consortium members.

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Texas Education Agency

At the request of the Texas Education Agency, the work of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium is being facilitated by the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), 406 East 11th Street, Austin, TX 78701-2617, 512-477-6361, *www.tasanet.org*

Contents

Background

Establishment of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium

The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium was established in 2011 when the 82nd Texas Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1557, adding §7.0561 to the Texas Education Code. After an extensive application process, Commissioner of Education Michael Williams selected 23 Texas school districts in September 2012 to comprise the Consortium.

According to SB 1557, the Consortium is charged with informing the governor, legislature, and commissioner of education on methods for transforming Texas public schools by improving student learning through the integration of digital tools and resources into student learning, the implementation of high-priority learning standards, the use of multiple assessments to determine student progress, and accountability systems that rely upon community and parental involvement based on the following principles:

- **Digital Learning:** Engagement of students in digital learning on a regular basis, including, but not limited to, the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials, and courses offered through the Texas Virtual School Network;
- **High-Priority Learning Standards:** Using curriculum standards derived from high-priority learning standards as opposed to curriculum that is a "mile wide and an inch deep;"
- **Multiple Assessments:** Authentic assessment of students using various methods of determining student progress that is capable of informing students, parents, educators, and schools concerning the extent to which learning is occurring, rather than overreliance on high-stakes testing, and
- **Local Responsibility:** Accountability systems that rely on local responsibility, enabling communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children and allowing them to determine the success of their schools.

The commissioner was statutorily required to select a variety of districts to represent the diversity of Texas public schools in terms of district type, size, and student demographics. Additionally, the statute limited the number of students who may participate in the Consortium to no more than five percent of the total Texas public school population, or approximately 250,000 students.

The diversity of districts, campuses, and students participating in the Consortium increases the likelihood that proposals and recommendations developed by the Consortium will address the varied circumstances, diversity, and issues facing all Texas schools, and consequently will result in solutions that are relevant and transferable among the many different districts across the state.

Consortium Progress

SB 1557 required the submission of two reports detailing the progress and performance of the Consortium to the governor and legislature, with the first report due in December 2012 and another report in December 2014.

In the Consortium's December 2012 report, the Consortium noted the need for providing meaningful flexibility in graduation plans by establishing multiple pathways to allow for specializations in areas such as CTE, Humanities, Business and Industry, and STEM, as well as optional courses (as defined by the local school board) in visual and performing arts, languages other than English, and technology applications. (December 2012, Appendix B, waiver request # 5).

We are pleased to acknowledge and affirm the flexibility provided by House Bill 5 (HB 5), passed by the Texas Legislature in 2013. HB 5 made substantial changes to the state's curriculum and graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability system.

This notable legislation reduced the number of end-of-course exams required for graduation from 15 to 5, created more flexible graduation plans for students, and placed a new focus on community, workforce, and higher education demands through meaningful course offerings. This, coupled with endorsement pathways for students and a specific emphasis on community engagement, provides for a more balanced and meaningful student educational experience. While HB 5 certainly provides a step in the right direction for Texas public schools, there is still much to be done in the areas of authentic, meaningful learning experiences for students, the development of high-priority learning standards, assessments and accountability to yield a student-centered system.

The goal of the Consortium is to transform education so that all Texas students are future ready. Students should be given the power to create and innovate, and teachers should be given the opportunity to use feedback and assessments to design learning that is both relevant and rigorous. Parents, members of the local business community, and individuals from higher education agree that they are looking for students who are critical thinkers, innovators, problem solvers, collaborators, and good communicators.

Consortium Members

Anderson-Shiro CISD
Clear Creek ISD
College Station ISD
Coppell ISD
Duncanville ISD
Eanes ISD
Glen Rose ISD
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Northwest ISD
Prosper ISD
Richardson ISD
Roscoe Collegiate ISD
Round Rock ISD
White Oak ISD

See Appendix B for detailed information on the commissioner's rule and selection process and Appendix C for characteristics of the Consortium districts.

Legislative Recommendations to the 83rd Legislature

As the Consortium began its work in October 2012, it became clear that their efforts were constrained by trying to operate under the state's current assessment and accountability systems, while at the same time trying to develop new ones. In accordance with the authority granted to the Consortium in SB 1557, the Consortium submitted a number of recommended actions to the Commissioner of Education and the Legislature prior to the convening of the 83rd Legislature. These recommendations were included in House Bill 2824, filed by Rep. Bennett Ratliff, providing the necessary space and flexibility for the 23 school districts in the Consortium to continue their work as a research and development arm for the state.

The passage of HB 2824 would have provided flexibility so that the Consortium could serve as a research and development arm for public education that would benefit all schools in the state with the goal of creating a broad-based accountability system that relies on a variety of measures; that focuses on high-priority learning standards; that enables teachers to customize learning; and that empowers local communities to determine the success of their schools. The bill, in its final form, included the following provisions:

- **R&D Innovation:** A research study would be conducted by a third party evaluator on the effectiveness of teaching high-priority standards in depth and the effectiveness of closing achievement gaps on readiness standards. In addition, the study would evaluate the impact of digital learning, the use of multiple assessments, and the reliance on local control.

- **In-depth teaching:** Participant campuses would be evaluated on "readiness standards" (the TEKS which are considered essential for success) to allow for in-depth teaching. (Currently, students are assessed on both "readiness standards" and "supporting standards.")

- **Targeted assessments:** In grades 3-8, STAAR assessments would be administered in math, reading and science. At the secondary level, EOCs would be administered at the 10th grade in English, math and science, or nationally norm-referenced college preparatory assessments would be administered.

The sheer number of standards in place today (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) creates a significant impediment to profound learning. Profound learning occurs when students have multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful experiences integrating critical competencies, content knowledge, and skills essential for student success. HB 2824 provided the necessary space for the Consortium districts to focus on in-depth teaching and high priority, or "readiness," standards.

Under this bill, the Consortium would have partnered with the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the College Board, and ACT to increase college and career readiness with in-depth teaching to high-priority learning standards and the development of assessments that focus on skills and competencies needed for post-secondary success. Also, through its work, the Consortium would assist the state in promoting, developing and implementing the effective use of technology in the digital learning environment so that our students are well prepared for the ever-changing workforce needs of Texas.

The Consortium was not seeking financial support from the state or the Texas Education Agency for these initiatives, acknowledging that SB 1557 allowed the acceptance of gifts, grants, or donations from private sources to support the initiative. The Consortium has funded its own work, with each district committing time and resources in response to the requirements of SB 1557. Furthermore, since its inception, the Consortium's work has been facilitated by the Texas Association of School Administrators at the request of the Commissioner.

Although more than $40 billion is spent annually from local and state funds, there is no systematic, thoughtful research and development effort to create the next generation PK-12 public education system for Texas public schools. This provided a compelling purpose for the Consortium. To keep Texas at the forefront, there needs to be space for experimentation and piloting for the future, and the Consortium fills that role.

Actions of the 83rd Legislature

Despite unanimous approval in both the Texas House and Senate, Governor Rick Perry vetoed HB 2824. Governor Perry's veto message stated the following:

"Education is changing, and Texas must remain at the forefront of innovation as the digital age evolves. That is why I signed legislation during the 82nd regular session to create the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium." Governor Perry also stated that "House Bill 2824 would exempt consortium districts, which have shown a range of performance levels on the most recent STAAR assessments, from the Texas accountability system and many of the assessments required of other public schools throughout the state. Flexibility and innovation are important, but we will not compromise academic rigor or student outcomes."

While making the task of carrying out the charge established in SB 1557 much more difficult, the veto did not forestall the work of the Consortium.

The consortium's mission to improve student learning with a focus on digital learning environments, to teach students to truly understand and apply meaningful content, rather than memorize information to pass a test, and to assess students in more authentic ways will continue to be at the heart of a new system that is necessary to prepare our students for success in this ever-changing world.

Though hindered by a lack of freedom from the current state system, the Consortium has continued to research, explore, and develop an assessment and accountability framework that is not over-reliant on high-stakes testing and is malleable enough to meet the needs of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Consortium districts have collaborated to design a next-generation accountability system that is well balanced and instructionally sensitive, with a defensible state testing program that emphasizes high-priority learning standards and supports improved instruction and a process for local input.

The preferred future for Texas schools includes an educational system that is built around:

- Dynamic, rigorous curriculum standards in each content area;
- A variety of assessment alternatives that are not limited to paper and pencil tests;
- The use of technology that is integrated into the learning for students;
- Learning that is relevant and responsive to student interests;
- Involvement of local communities in determining the accountability features that are important to that community; and
- A variety of pathways to graduation.

Having such a system will prepare students for post-secondary education, the workforce and productive citizenship.

Ongoing Work

With the veto of HB 2824, the Consortium was forced to revisit its plan for carrying out the research and data collection necessary to inform stakeholders. Due to the limitations imposed, the Consortium established a process to invite other school districts across the state that are engaged in school transformation initiatives to participate in the research efforts and help the Consortium move this important work forward. On November 18, 2013, the Consortium extended an invitation to other Texas school districts to join in the transformation work as Consortium Associates and partner with the Consortium members in its statewide efforts.

Districts that joined as Consortium Associates were expected to share a commitment to the principles and premises outlined in *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas* (Texas Association of School Administrators, 2008) and engage as a contributing partner with Consortium members and other districts in the ongoing transformation work. The application to become one of the Consortium Associates sought the district's agreement with and commitment to the transformation goals and outcomes, evidenced by:

- Securing Board of Trustees support for participation, confirmed by a resolution or board meeting minutes;
- Engaging meaningfully as a contributing and learning member of the group, sharing the work taking place in their district;
- Participating in one or more Consortium working groups (learning standards, multiple assessments, digital integration, community-based accountability);
- Joining the School Transformation Network and participating in a regional consortium;
- Committing staff time and resources to support the district's participation in the work; and
- Commitment to creating a community-based accountability system in accord with the vision principles.

To date, 78 districts from 18 Texas Education Service Center regions have joined the work of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium as Consortium Associates. Consortium Associates include the following districts:

Alamo Heights ISD
Alvin ISD
Amarillo ISD
Bastrop ISD
Beeville ISD
Big Sandy ISD
Bloomington ISD
Blue Ridge ISD
Bryan ISD
Bullard ISD
Callisburg ISD
Channing ISD
Chapel Hill ISD (ESC 07)
Chapel Hill ISD (ESC 08)
Commerce ISD
Corsicana ISD
Denton ISD
Devine ISD
Diboll ISD
Dripping Springs ISD
El Paso ISD
Falls City ISD
Fort Elliott CISD
Friendswood ISD
Frisco ISD
Godley ISD
Goodrich ISD
Graford ISD
Graham ISD
Grand Prairie ISD
Granger ISD
Greenville ISD
Groesbeck ISD
Harleton ISD
Harmony ISD
Hays CISD
Hereford ISD
Hillsboro ISD
Hudson ISD
Huffman ISD
Humble ISD
Hutto ISD
Jayton-Girard ISD
Karnes City ISD
La Villa ISD
Latexo ISD
Leander ISD
Little Elm ISD
Livingston ISD
London ISD
Lufkin ISD
Lytle ISD
Mesquite ISD
Miami ISD
Midway ISD
Millsap ISD
Mission CISD
Montgomery ISD
Nacogdoches ISD
Navasota ISD
New Braunfels ISD
New Caney ISD
O'Donnell ISD
Pine Tree ISD
Royse City ISD
San Angelo ISD
San Marcos CISD
Santa Fe ISD
Splendora ISD
Stephenville ISD
Sunnyvale ISD
Trinity ISD
Vidor ISD
Waxahachie ISD
West ISD
Willis ISD
Wilson ISD
Woodville ISD

Highlights of Consortium Activities to Date

The process and guidelines for applying for membership in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium (THPSC) were developed and published in April 2012. Commissioner Rule implementing SB 1557 followed in May, and the districts selected to participate in the Consortium were announced in September 2012. Consortium work began in October 2012 with superintendents and district teams working through the fall semester to determine strategy for conducting the work of the Consortium as specified in SB 1557 and to develop the first report required by the legislation. The Consortium Report was delivered in December 2012.

The THPSC submitted a number of recommended actions to the Commissioner of Education and the Legislature prior to the convening of the 83rd Legislature. These recommendations were included in House Bill 2824, filed by Rep. Bennett Ratliff, providing the necessary space and flexibility for the 23 school districts in the Consortium to continue their work as a pilot program for the state. Despite unanimous approval in both the Texas House and Senate, Governor Perry vetoed HB 2824.

The Consortium has continued to research, explore, and design in the areas framed in SB 1557; digital integration in the learning environment, high-priority learning standards, multiple assessments of student learning, and community-based accountability. In November 2013 the Consortium extended an invitation to other districts in Texas to join in the Consortium work as Associates. The first meeting and work session of the Consortium/Consortium Associates was held in March 2014. Their most recent meeting was held in September 2014. Much of the focus during the fall of 2014 has been on collaboration with the State Board of Education and TEA staff on development of a process for the English Language Arts and Reading TEKS revision based on the identification of high-priority learning standards and inclusion of curriculum experts from the field on the TEKS review panels.

From Vision to Action:
Student-Centered Schools, Future-Ready Students

According to SB 1557, the Consortium is charged with improving student learning in the state of Texas by developing innovative high-priority learning standards and assessment and accountability systems. The major work of the Consortium revolves around four core principles that include the integration of digital tools and resources into student learning, the development of high-priority learning standards, the use of multiple assessments to determine student progress, and an accountability system that relies upon community and parental involvement regarding the education of their children.

Digital Integration

Schools must embrace and seize technology's potential to capture the hearts and minds of students so that their learning experiences are more engaging and respect their talents. Instruction must be designed through a variety of digital pathways that can be accessed anytime, anywhere and at any pace, seamlessly integrating digital devices, global connections, and flexible student-centered learning environments. Digital integration includes access to the right device for learning, the use of digital portfolios, as well as the integration of virtual learning models (such as flipped classrooms, blended learning, online courses) and digital resources (like electronic textbooks, iTunesU and online collaborative tools).

Research has consistently shown that one of the most important factors contributing to a student's success is the quality of teaching he or she receives. Fully leveraging the opportunities of digital learning and technology in the classroom will require a shift in the role and skills of teachers. Among other roles, teachers will need to:

- **Facilitate Learning:** The teacher's role shifts from instructional "owner"—the lecturer who owns the content—to instructional "designer"—the designer/leader who creates and guides learning experiences.
- **Provide Technical Expertise:** Teachers will need to be comfortable with navigating technology and digital resources to support the learning of students.
- **Leverage Technology to Personalize Learning:** The facilitation of learning includes the use of technology to guide students and customize activities to meet individual student needs.
- **Use Technology to Transform Assessment and Foster Data-driven Instruction:** Technology and digital learning offer teachers the ability to collect and interpret various points of student assessment data. Teachers will need to be trained in how to use these data effectively to inform instruction and increase student learning.

Advancing Professional Development and Teacher Training

With the expansion of digital learning and technology in the classroom, the training and professional development of teachers must transition to fully realize the potential of these resources to foster student learning. This encompasses the use of technology to guide instruction and the use of technology to measure, evaluate and understand student learning through data-driven instructional methods. To make the transition from the traditional role of disseminating content knowledge to that of instructional design in guiding students' discovery and application of information, teachers require a significant investment in time and learning. Teachers have cited professional development as an important component of preparing them to use technology effectively in instruction. Preparing teachers to take full advantage of technology for learning will require new professional learning content centered on several key ideas and skills, including:

- Designing relevant, rigorous learning tasks that leverage the power of technologies and the Internet;
- Developing facilitation and collaboration strategies;
- Creating classroom systems and routines that support collaborative and independent learning;

- Establishing guidelines for ethical and appropriate use of digital media and content;
- Using various technologies and the Internet in instructional planning and decision-making; and
- Using digital technologies in evaluation of learning (assessment, data-driven decision making, portfolios, etc.).

To support the development of these skills and build teachers' comfort with technology will require a strong commitment to professional development. But the reality of creating and implementing professional development to move toward the goal of all students becoming technologically literate and all teachers leveraging the power of technology in their classrooms will require an approach that goes beyond policy requirements and the establishment of standards. Effectively scaling up professional development for teachers on the use of technology to guide instruction will require broad access, ongoing support and accountability.

TASA on iTunes U®

In an effort to further enhance the digital integration facet of the Consortium's work, the Texas Association of School Administrators engaged a number of Consortium districts, among others, beginning in fall 2012 to curate a collection of digital resources to aid districts in their local digital transformation efforts. *TASA on iTunes U* was launched in Spring 2013 following an extensive process of engaging 58 teachers and content specialists from 14 Texas districts over several months in a project to transform the teaching and learning process by developing interactive, online content for high-priority, essential learning standards. The original offering provided course resource collections—fully aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)—for 18 high school courses in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The content—created by teachers for teachers—aims to foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills in an engaging, digitally rich learning environment.

During Spring 2014, in response to the College Preparatory Course requirement in House Bill 5, TASA launched its first expansion of the *TASA on iTunes U* project. This effort engaged teachers and content specialists, along with higher education faculty representatives, to develop a collection of digital content resources that Texas districts can use in responding to this requirement. The framework of the courses is based on the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

In Summer 2014, TASA engaged an additional 60 Texas educators to curate additional digital resources in *TASA on iTunes U,* including the introduction of middle school core subjects and additional high school subject areas, as well as various career and technical education (CTE) and advanced academic areas. Following a nearly three month design process, these curated resource collections were made available free of charge to Texas districts through *TASA on iTunes U* in September 2014 and include such CTE offerings as Anatomy & Physiology, Principles of Health Science, Professional Communications, and Principles of Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications. Additionally in Summer 2014, TASA—in partnership with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)—worked with Texas educators to align two SREB-developed college- and career-readiness courses with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). SREB developed two readiness courses, one in mathematics and one in disciplinary literacy, Math Ready and Literacy Ready, to help underprepared students reach college- and career-readiness benchmarks before high school graduation. The courses—aligned to Texas standards and free of charge—are now available within *TASA on iTunes U*.

Today, 42 courses exist within *TASA on iTunes U,* including digital resource collections to support House Bill 5 College Preparatory Courses, Texas-edition SREB Readiness Courses, resources to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses at the high school level, and other TEKS-aligned secondary core academic courses. Fall 2014 expansion efforts have been underway since October 2014, engaging 133 educators from Texas districts, and include the introduction of additional high school CTE, elementary core-content, additional middle school and high school courses, and a content refresh of the original high school courses from the project. The high school CTE project will focus on the endorsement areas—Arts and Humanities; Business and

Industry; Public Services; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)—to further assist districts with their House Bill 5 implementation efforts. Elementary core-content offerings will be organized into *Early* (Grades K-2) and *Intermediate* (Grades 3-5) collections in the areas of Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. These courses, scheduled to be released in late January 2015, will bring the total number of course resource collections within *TASA on iTunes U* to 58 courses.

The TASA on iTunes U course resource collections can be accessed by searching for *Texas Association of School Administrators* in the iTunes U catalog or by visiting *www.itunes.com/tasa*.

Implications for Policymakers

State-level policy plays an integral role in establishing expectations and standards for schools and teachers. Policymakers can provide both direction and support for increasing teacher effectiveness in the digital environment, including:

- Support professional development programs that recognize and leverage the power and impact of technology and the digital environment on teaching and learning. The teacher's most important role is to be a designer of academically rigorous and engaging experiences for students. Policymakers need to ensure teachers have access to high-quality professional development opportunities that help utilize technology for instruction and student learning.

- Find ways to fund and support equitable access to state-of-the art technology for all public school teachers and children to meet the demands of the digital economy. Research clearly shows that effective teaching is the most important school-related factor in student achievement, yet access to effective teaching remains widely uneven and inequitably distributed. Technology has the potential to improve the effectiveness of teachers in every classroom, but only if there is access to this technology. Policymakers should prioritize investments in classroom technology and teacher training, particularly in high-need schools and districts.

Included below are exemplar artifacts for Digital Integration. A more comprehensive list of exemplars can be found in the Appendix section of this report.

- **Alamo Heights ISD** *Spotlight on Engagement: Technology Integration*
- **Clear Creek ISD** *Transforming Education with "Latitude 2 Learn"*
- **Coppell ISD** *Global Collaboration in Science*
- **McAllen ISD** *TLC³: Transforming Learning in the Classroom, Campus, and Community*
- **Willis ISD** *Digital Transformation*

High-Priority Learning Standards

The Consortium has designed a process for determining high-priority learning standards that emphasizes depth over breadth where the local community is accountable for empowering students to learn, live, and earn in a global and digital environment.

Profound learning occurs when students have multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful experiences, integrating critical competencies and content knowledge for college and career readiness. The sheer number of standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) creates a significant impediment to profound learning. Therefore, the development of high-priority learning standards is essential. These standards should be:

- Reflective of current research around college and career readiness (ACT, SAT, AP, IB, etc.)
- Reflective of national and international standards
- Inclusive of the essential core knowledge and processes of each discipline
- Clear and rigorous
- Manageable in number
- Related within and across grade levels

The TEKS review process comes at a critical period in public education in Texas. In today's world of global competition for college acceptance and entry-level jobs in their chosen careers, our students require in-depth knowledge and skills to be fully prepared to compete and succeed. National and international student achievement comparisons (TIMSS, PISA, NAEP, SAT, ACT, etc.) tell us that our students—while showing progress in some areas—are not at the level of achievement that ensures they are fully prepared to succeed in the world they will encounter. To succeed, our students must have a solid foundation in core academic subject mastery, but this alone is insufficient. Students must also develop the cognitive and social skills that enable them to deal with the complex problems of a rapidly changing world.

High-priority learning standards provide a clear and coherent description of the content, depth of knowledge, and skills students are expected to master to be prepared for success in college and careers. Critical questions in the development or refinement of college/career-ready learning standards at any policy level—national, state, local—include:

- What specific knowledge should students know as a result of mastering the learning standards? ***(Content)***
- What level of cognitive demand, or academic rigor, is appropriate to the content and grade level of the learner? ***(Thinking)***
- With what transferable skills will students leave high school upon graduation, and at each grade level leading up to graduation? ***(Skills)***

In other words…content, thinking, and skills go "hand in hand" and work together in concert as key components of a rigorous K-12 educational program for Texas students.

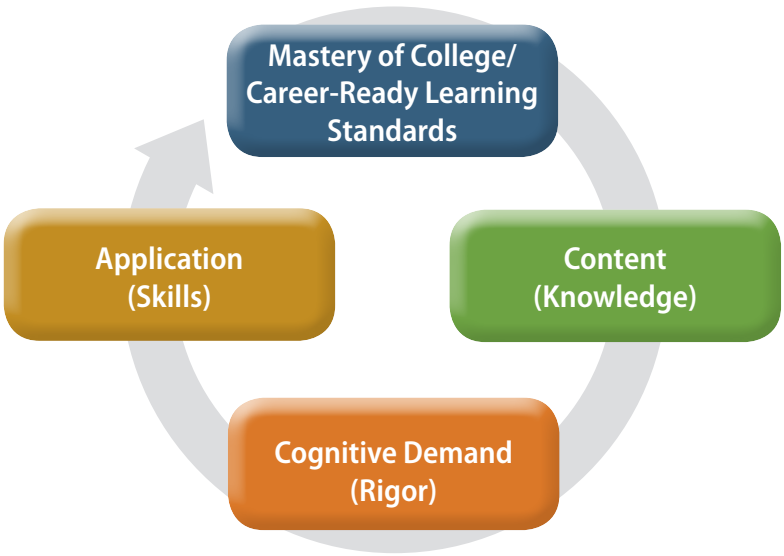

Figure 1.
HIGH-PRIORITY LEARNING STANDARDS COMPONENTS

High-priority learning standards provide a strong foundation for students to apply and master the skills they need, and as they apply their skills, students have more opportunities to build deep understanding of the content of the learning standards.

So, learning standards matter. As the State Board of Education directs, and the TEA engages in, the process of review and revision of the state curriculum standards, this core concept—the interrelationship of content, thinking, and skills—is fundamental to the stated goal of ensuring that "the standards are appropriate in scope and rigor, streamlined, clear, relevant, assessable where appropriate, and aligned across subjects and grade levels." (TEA, RFQ #701-14-025, 2014)

To prepare students for college, the workforce, and success in life, high-priority learning standards should be specified at the "profound" level in recognition that content, thinking, and skills go together "hand in hand" so that students are able to apply their learning to new situations, to synthesize, solve problems, and create knowledge. The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium proposes the following theory of action as a strategy for reviewing and revising the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

If the TEKS revision process results in the development of high-priority learning standards, then revised state curriculum standards will be fewer in number and more rigorous in content—connecting the core concepts of the discipline with the skills and habits of thinking necessary to apply learning—and focus teaching and learning on deep mastery of important concepts at each grade level.

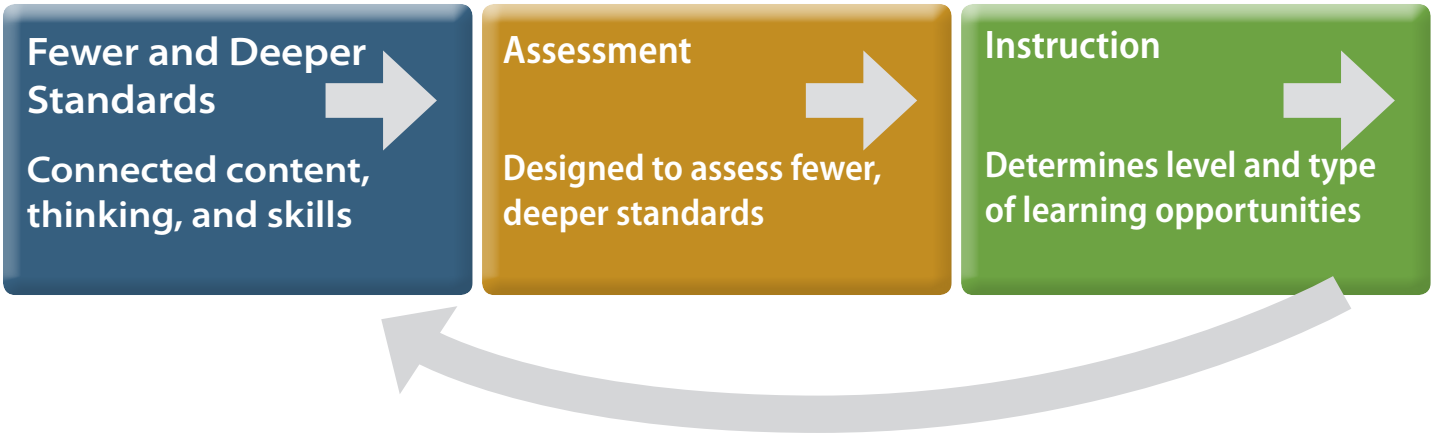

Figure 2.
HIGH-PRIORITY LEARNING STANDARDS TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE

Proposed Design Principles for High-Priority Learning Standards

- **Prioritize and focus on what matters most.**
  Students learn more when we teach what is most important and we teach it well. High-priority learning standards are *fewer and deeper* as opposed to *a mile wide and an inch deep*. Typical state standards attempt to cover a content area so comprehensively, the essential concepts that produce deep mastery can become lost. The chief problem is that there is simply too much to teach—arguably two to three times too much—and too many options for what can be taught. Rather than presenting a long list of facts, standards should communicate the essential understandings and habits of practice within each subject area.

- **Content, thinking, and skills all matter when it comes to standards design.**
  To succeed in today's workplace, young people need more than basic reading and math skills. They need deep knowledge of content and ease with information technology, honed problem-solving skills and the ability to adapt and change. They need the personal skills to work in a very diverse and multicultural environment and the ability to collaborate.

- **Align standards with best evidence on college and career readiness.**
  U.S. executives say they need a workforce equipped with skills beyond the traditional "three Rs" of reading, writing, and arithmetic if they are to grow their businesses in the 21st century. According to the American Management Association, today's employees need to think critically, solve problems, innovate, collaborate, and communicate more effectively.

- **Recognize that standards design influences assessment design, assessment design influences instruction, and instructional decisions determine the level and type of learning opportunities provided to students.**
  Standards-based assessments influence both what teachers teach and how they teach it. Educators must be deliberate about the number of standards they assess. Too many assessed standards forces teachers to push through the curriculum, covering standards rapidly and superficially. Standards-based assessments should help teachers make good decisions about their instruction and promote the design of learning opportunities that drive students to deeper learning and mastery.

Proposed Strategy

As a strategy for moving forward with the development of high-priority learning standards, the consortium districts recommend consideration of short- and long-term strategies.

Short-term solutions:

- Test readiness standards only*
- Include more test items per standard

Long-term solutions:

- Develop/prioritize/coalesce high-quality, fewer, deeper learning standards**
- Establish assessment expectations that rely less on multiple-choice items and more on rigorous, performance tasks
- Reduce the number of tested grade levels and/or standards
- Allow for stratified random sampling of students to accommodate the complexity and cost of administering and scoring performance tasks

Implications for the future of accountability:

- High-priority learning standards and new assessment designs could build the foundation for a new vision of accountability in Texas that aligns with the research on future-ready learning in today's context and reflects a more balanced local and state partnership.***

* Cannot be applied as a long-term strategy due to the progressive, interconnected nature of learning standards from PK-12.
** Learning standards designed in accord with future-ready learning, college/career readiness, and expectations of the global workplace.
*** As described in the TASA vision document, *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas*.

The Consortium has been invited by the State Board of Education to assist the Board and the Texas Education Agency staff as they begin the process of revising the English Language Arts and Reading Standards in 2015. In preparation for this collaboration, SBOE members, staff, and Consortium members met in July 2014 to discuss a coordinated effort for future TEKS revisions. A standards advisor, hired by TEA, trained the State Board of Education in July and trained TEA staff in October.

Specifically, the Consortium will meet with TEA staff and Consortium educators to discuss the process for developing high-priority learning standards. The Consortium will recruit qualified educators, particularly those trained in curriculum or standards writing, to serve on future TEKS review panels. TEA staff will update the training of TEKS panel members in future revisions.

Benefits

To succeed in today's workplace, young people need more than basic reading and math skills. Students need advanced content knowledge, technology skills, thinking skills, and the ability to apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems. High-priority learning standards provide a clear and coherent description of the content, depth of knowledge, and skills students are expected to master to be prepared for success in college and careers.

Designing, implementing and supporting high-priority learning standards as the next step in our state's leadership for standards-based instruction would:

- Further the state's goals for college & career readiness
- Provide a forum for student, parent, & community input in CCR (college & career readiness)
- Bring needed focus to instruction & assessment
- Promote in-depth teaching for the deeper learning needed for success
- Design next steps in instruction
  - Give detailed, descriptive feedback to students
  - Have students self-assess or set goals likely to help them learn more

Students learn most effectively when they are provided with complex, authentic opportunities to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess. The development of high-priority learning standards as described herein would provide the clarity and direction that teachers, principals, and district leaders need to provide this type of instruction for the students in Texas public schools.

Included below are exemplar artifacts for High-Priority Learning Standards. A more comprehensive list of exemplars can be found in the Appendix section of this report.

- **Coppell ISD** *Learning Design: Inquiry*
- **McKinney ISD** *Meaningful and Dynamic Curriculum Strategies with Project Based Learning*
- **Roscoe Collegiate ISD** *The Atmosphere: Creativity, Engagement, Collaboration, Inspiration*

Multiple Assessments

The best way to determine what students have learned is to examine the body of work they create. The digital environment supports the collection and maintenance of robust evidence that documents students' academic performance. Writing samples, project-based learning demonstrations, teacher-developed tests, lab journals, science projects, essays, reading response logs, research papers, rubric assessments, and other student work products provide better evidence on a wider range of student knowledge, skills, and progress than do standardized tests. These types of assessments will be necessary to adequately gauge student mastery of high-priority learning standards, as described in the standards section of this report, that will require students to apply their learning to new situations, to synthesize, solve problems, and create knowledge.

Standardized tests should be used primarily to identify hard-to-learn/difficult-to-teach concepts to differentiate learning experiences and focus attention on the more systemic curricular issues involving student performance. Unfortunately, due to the design of our accountability system and the state's over-reliance on a single-test as the sole measure of learning, the current assessment structure lends itself to teaching to high-stakes standardized tests resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum to tested standards and subject areas and instruction that is co-opted by test preparation. This does not foster-the kinds of thinking habits and skills needed for our students to be future ready. Therefore, it is critical that we change the way we use standardized tests. The Consortium advocates for a system that incorporates multiple assessments *for learning* and *of learning,* that incorporates existing valid and reliable measures, and develops new measures and collections of evidence of student learning, including digital portfolios. These assessments must be capable of informing students, parents, teachers and school districts, on an ongoing basis, concerning the extent to which learning is occurring.

Proposed Strategy

As a strategy for moving forward with the use of multiple assessments to gauge profound learning, the consortium districts recommend consideration of short- and long-term strategies.

Short-term solutions:

- Test readiness standards only*
- Include more test items per standard

Long-term solutions:

- Develop/prioritize/coalesce high-quality, fewer, deeper learning standards**
- Establish assessment expectations that rely less on multiple-choice items and more on rigorous, performance tasks
- Reduce the number of tested grade levels and/or standards
- Allow for stratified random sampling of students to accommodate the complexity and cost of administering and scoring performance tasks
- Strengthen training for teachers and staff in best practices associated with building collections of evidence of student learning. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of rubrics, progress portfolios, display portfolios, journals, observation records, and other such methods of learning.
- Work with the Texas Education Agency to establish definitions and standards for collections of evidence of student learning.
- Establish how student work, local assessments, and diagnostic tests are used to identify students in need of additional support.
- Work with the Texas Education Agency and the State Board of Education to develop high-priority learning standards and determine (by grade, subject) which collections of evidence of learning are to be maintained.

Implications for the future of accountability:

- High-priority learning standards and new assessment designs could build the foundation for a new vision of accountability in Texas that aligns with the research on future-ready learning in today's context and reflects a more balanced local and state partnership.***
- High-quality formative assessments are necessary at the classroom and campus level and are our missing component for a balanced assessment system. Policy-makers should ensure resources are available and should provide support for high-quality training in formative assessment.

* Cannot be applied as a long-term strategy due to the progressive, interconnected nature of learning standards from PK-12.
** Learning standards designed in accord with future-ready learning, college/career readiness, and expectations of the global workplace.
*** As described in the TASA vision document, *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas*.

Examples of Consortium Efforts Related to the Use of Multiple Assessments

Multiple measures of accountability beyond the current state required standardized testing program include the following initiatives:

- Early College implementation with all students completing the Associate Degree prior to graduation from high school—true college readiness.
- Students completing an industry recognized certification in one of the broad STEM fields prior to graduation from high school—true workforce readiness.
- Students conducting student-led collaborative research presentations to be incorporated into evidence-based electronic portfolios.
- Students in grades 3–12 conducting 4-H based research projects, culminating with a yearlong, relevant career path, capstone research project in grade 12, leading to additional scholarship opportunities for students.
- Examining grading practices, designing learning that intrigues and engages students, and observing students who had freedom to learn Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in a way that is personally meaningful to the student.
- Revising grading practices and procedures to create assessments with appropriate grading that informs students, parents, and teachers about the student's learning.

Included below are exemplar artifacts for Multiple Assessments. A more comprehensive list of exemplars can be found in the Appendix section of this report.

- **Coppell ISD** *Assessment for Learning*
- **Highland Park ISD** *Senior Internship Program*
- **Lewisville ISD** *Standards Based Report Card*
- **Northwest ISD** *Standards Based Bulletin Board*

Community-Based Accountability System

A community-based accountability system (CBAS) is an essential component of the transformed PK-12 educational system needed for Texas children and families. Such a system restores balance to the local community schools and the state educational partnership by empowering students, parents, and educators to build a learning community that honors and supports the work of students, teachers, and parents.

Such a system recognizes the state's responsibility and role in promoting an educated citizenry capable of self-governance and economic sufficiency as expressed through the state's goal of college and career readiness. It recognizes the need for local communities, through their locally governed school districts, to have meaningful discretion in how those goals are achieved. The CBAS empowers local school districts to design their own internal systems of assessment and accountability that, while meeting general state standards, allow districts to innovate and customize curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs and interest of their communities.

Proposed System of Accountability

The foundation of CBAS is a four-part system consisting of:

- student and classroom-centered evidence of learning,
- strategic use of standardized testing,
- performance reviews and validation of learning by highly trained visiting teams, and
- rigorous descriptive reporting to parents and communities.

It requires a transformation of the state's highly prescriptive and restrictive approach to curricular standards, multiple-choice testing, and ranking. It requires state policy makers to establish meaningful goals related to post-secondary educational attainment and workforce preparation. This framework builds on an earlier model (Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education, 2007) that proposed a comprehensive decentralized alternative to a bureaucratically structured state and federal standardized assessment and accountability system. This framework also directly incorporates the recommendations for assessment and accountability from the Public Education Visioning Institute that are found in *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas* (2008).

1. Student and classroom-centered evidence of learning

Supporting premises:

Assessments used by teachers are the most critical for improving instruction and student learning, and to be effective must reflect certain characteristics, be interpreted properly in context, and reported clearly. Conducting good assessments is a part of the art and science of teaching that results from teacher experiences and formal professional development opportunities.

Assessments should be used primarily for obtaining student feedback and informing the student and teacher about the level of student conceptual understanding or skill development so that the teacher has accurate information to consider for designing additional or different learning experiences.

Assessments should be continuous and comprehensive, using multiple tools, rubrics, and processes, and should incorporate teacher judgments about student work and performance, as well as the judgment of others, when needed.

The best way to determine what students have learned is to examine the body of work they create. Digital instructional management systems and portfolios support the collection and maintenance of robust evidence that documents students' performance on the high-priority learning standards established by the state. Writing samples, project-based learning demonstrations, teacher-developed tests, lab journals, science projects, essays, reading response logs, research papers, rubric assessments, and other student work products provide better evidence on a wider range of student knowledge, skills, and progress than do standardized tests.

The state's current writing assessments examine students' first-draft samples in an artificial, formulaic context graded by a contracted, minimally trained, hourly worker. Deeper and more meaningful measures of a child's writing skills are reflected by a portfolio that includes varied examples of writing, progressions from drafts to final products, responses to feedback from teachers and peers, and other measures of authentic learning. By going beyond the first draft, teachers can thoroughly measure a student's mastery of meaningful learning standards.

Congruently, a project-based learning portfolio allows each student to demonstrate his or her own incorporation of critical thinking, effective presentation skills, and deep content knowledge on a topic of consequence.

2. Strategic use of standardized testing

Supporting premises:

Assessments should not be limited to, nor even rely substantially on standardized tests that are primarily multiple-choice, paper/pencil or similar online instruments that can be machine-scored.

Sampling techniques (the full range of examinations, evaluation of student work products, and performances, as well as teacher tests and standardized tests) should be used in lieu of testing every child every year.

Standardized tests to which high stakes are attached can become substitutes for the learning standards themselves and result in "teaching to the test," rather than teaching for attainment of the standard.

A standardized test administered once a year with results received at or near the end of a school year offers limited feedback for instruction. By design, it does not track student progress throughout the weeks and months of a school year. That is the job of the classroom teacher, who is responsible for developing the formative assessments that guide and measure learning progress and the summative assessments that reflect mastery of high-priority learning standards.

By allowing local districts to collect and maintain student portfolios and use locally developed assessments, the state can more effectively and economically use standardized testing for its intended purpose: to provide a snapshot based on a single test. Correctly used, that standardized testing snapshot provides a broad measure of how a student population is progressing as a whole, rather than assuming to accurately measure the progress of each individual student. The state should pursue changes in federal policy that would allow it to use stratified random sampling in grades prior to high school, limit the scope of standardized testing in those grades to high-priority learning standards in reading, math, and science, and limit testing of grade-level populations to gateway transition years. For example, the state could choose to coincide with the U.S. Department of Education, which tests grades 4 and 8 using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The state has taken important steps to restoring balance to high school end-of-course standardized testing. Further improvement will be realized by accelerating options for substitution of ACT, SAT, and Advanced Placement assessments for state tests, and by redesigning state tests to focus on high-priority learning standards.

The need for the state to limit its testing to high-priority learning standards is important because the present design of state standardized STAAR tests does not provide meaningful or timely feedback for instruction. The state curriculum is categorized into learning standards that are either "readiness" or "supporting." The state testing blueprints call for 60% to 70% of items to address the readiness standards, which are considered the grade-level curricular standards of greatest importance. That leaves 30% to 40% of state tests to address supporting standards, being those standards that contribute to understanding, but may have been emphasized in the previous year's instruction or may become a readiness standard in a future year.

The efficacy of the tests is sabotaged by the desire to test too many standards. For example, the reading portion of the state's English I end-of-course exam tests 31 standards with 38 multiple-choice items and two short-answer written responses. Thus, some supporting standards are tested by one multiple-choice item. Teachers are appropriately reluctant to draw any conclusions about a student's learning from one question.

Let's use the example of the following supporting standard for English I: "Explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works." In the English I end-of-course exam, this standard may receive zero, one or two questions designed to measure students' abilities to explain the author's use of one or more of the rhetorical devices. Without being able to see the test, it is impossible for an English teacher to surmise which of the three rhetorical devices the student understands. And since, according to the state's blueprint, zero to three questions are included, it is possible that standard isn't covered at all. Under the best of circumstances, the teacher would not know if the standard was even tested until after the school year was over.

In order to be of instructional use to a student or teacher, test results must be known in a timely manner. This allows teachers to adjust instruction to ensure that the student masters the material. For example, if a test reveals that a student is struggling with a certain algebraic concept, the sooner that deficiency is known and corrected, the better. State standardized test results received after a student has completed a course do not provide individualized, diagnostic feedback to teachers or students.

Given the inherent limitations of state standardized tests, the state's legitimate interest in assuring college and career readiness is better met by using existing, validated measures of college readiness. Such measures also satisfy the need to monitor the academic progress of all students, including those who are economically and educationally disadvantaged. One example, among several, of such college readiness is the ACT Aspire and ACT sequence, which guides progression towards college readiness from elementary grades to exit level. Exams such as these draw on national surveys of high schools and universities to identify the learning standards that are crucial to college success.

In addition, College Board Advanced Placement courses and corresponding exams offer students the opportunity to demonstrate college level competencies and receive college credit. Demonstrated competency should be valued over readiness. With fewer days of standardized testing, schools would have greater flexibility to use customized assessments. In those cases when standardized testing makes sense, the state could cut the lag time in order to provide valuable feedback to teachers and students. One approach could include, if resources are available to all, computer adaptive testing. Its very design presents students with items of different levels of difficulty, adapting in real time to student responses. Adaptive testing provides an individualized assessment that more accurately measures student academic readiness, performance, and progress over time.

3. Performance reviews and validation of learning by highly trained visiting teams

Supporting premise:

A multi-year cycle for periodic district and campus performance reviews should be established, using highly trained visiting teams to analyze a predetermined set of student performance information.

A third foundation of school-based assessment and accountability is the use of external review and validation of student learning. A state-centric approach would study and adapt successful practices such as the model of highly trained professional visiting teams or the use of external scoring validation used by the International Baccalaureate Programme.

In addition, the state could draw on its own extensive experience with performance-based monitoring. Such teams would examine the evidence maintained by schools that demonstrate academic performance and progress, and examine important components of school operations not addressed in the current accountability system. External review teams would examine the quality of services provided to diverse student

populations served within the schools. The state would use its extensive annual collection of data that informs the current monitoring system to provide its visiting review teams insight into areas where close examination is needed.

A community-centric approach would allow local districts and campuses to establish, within a state defined framework, a system of inter-district peer visitation and review on a multi-year cycle. Developed in collaboration with the P-16 Council already supported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, peer review would include K-12 educators, higher education professors, parents, and community stakeholders.

In addition to the formative and summative programmatic feedback derived from either or both types of external review teams, the state, as previously described, could administer standardized tests through stratified random sampling for the purpose of verifying academic performance on both the high-priority readiness standards and the supporting standards, with the caveat that the tests have been redesigned to be instructionally sensitive; that is, they include enough items to adequately inform if a standard has been met.

A third level of quality assurance would model the highly successful introduction by the state of the reading Student Success Initiative. Prior to the introduction of the state requirement that all third-graders pass a state reading test for promotion to the fourth grade, the state provided high quality training for all primary teachers responsible for reading. A similar approach would be for the state to assure through both pre-service and in-service training that all teachers have access to evidence-based practices in both formative and summative assessments.

4. Comprehensive, descriptive reporting to parents and communities

Supporting premises:

Accountability systems should be carefully designed on a theoretical base that honors what teachers and students actually do, that empowers and builds integrity, trust, and commitment to the values that define the school.

As single measures, standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced state tests, aptitude tests, end-of-course tests, other oral and written examinations, student performances/projects/portfolios, regular teacher assessments, and grades each give a piece of the picture; and used in combination, can provide a more holistic view. However, if a high-stakes standardized test is given a preponderance of weight, it will become the assessment that really counts, others notwithstanding.

Accountability systems are guided by the fact that to attach any matter highly valued by students, teachers, school leaders, or schools/districts to any single measure such as a standardized test, corrupts the test and the integrity of what it measures, as well as the accountability it was intended to provide.

The fourth pillar of a community-based accountability system envisions a revitalized and transformed system of learning in which school accountability is communicated to students, parents, and community.

To the extent that the state articulates clearer goals for future levels of desired educational attainment and workforce development, districts would have a clearer context for establishing community-based goals. The present state accountability system of reporting drives districts to respond to comparative indices devoid of context or meaning. Districts would articulate the broad inspirational goals held for students, whether traditionally stated or expressed as learner/graduate profiles, the results and outcomes held for students that flow from their goals, and establish performance indicators to help determine progress towards and attainment of desired results.

CBAS reporting would draw from the collections of classroom evidence, strategic and customized testing, and the results of external reviews and validation of student learning. Districts would show evidence of community involvement and engagement in the setting of goals, results, and performance indicators.

These indicators could include general measures of academic performance, academic progress on high-priority learning standards, progress toward post-secondary readiness, participation in advanced curriculum,

graduation rates, enrollment and retention in post-secondary education, and measures that describe unique community goals, such as workforce preparations, creativity and innovation, citizenship preparation, student and parent engagement, climate measures, parent satisfaction, and service learning. While the emphasis of CBAS is on descriptive reporting of progress toward community-established milestones, the reporting would include comparisons to statewide averages and to comparable communities.

In conclusion, the purpose of establishing a community-based accountability system would be to engage the community in the education of its youth by establishing rigorous standards that meet the unique needs of that community. This locally designed accountability system would be more rigorous than the standards currently determined by the state and would eliminate an overreliance on standardized testing. Within a state-designed framework of accreditation, including accountability reporting standards and key common performance indicators, local districts would be accountable to their communities for student learning. In the end, this would result in better public schools, reinvigorate the voices of local communities in the education of their youth, and promote an ethos of customization for students that will better prepare them for responsible citizenship.

Included below are exemplar artifacts highlighted for the area of Community-Based Accountability Systems. A more comprehensive list of exemplars can be found in the Appendix section of this report.

- **Clear Creek ISD** *2013-2014 Community-Based Accountability Report*
- **College Station ISD** *CSISD's Community-Based Accountability*
- **Northwest ISD** *Community Dashboard: Community-Based Accountability Measures of Success*

State Board of Education's Long-Range Plan for Education

The State Board of Education has statutory responsibility to develop and update a long-range plan for public education. Specifically, Section 7.102(c)(1), Texas Education Code, provides that "The board shall develop and update a long-range plan for public education." Additionally, the SBOE has been given the responsibility to develop a Long-Range Plan for Technology. Section 32.001, Texas Education Code, provides that

"The State Board of Education shall develop a long-range plan for:

1. acquiring and using technology in the public school system;
2. fostering professional development related to the use of technology for educators and others associated with child development;
3. fostering computer literacy among public school students so that by the year 2000 each high school graduate in this state has computer-related skills that meet standards adopted by the board; and
4. identifying and, through regional education service centers, distributing information on emerging technology for use in the public schools."

The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium recognizes that its statutory authority creates a unique opportunity for collaboration with the State Board of Education in developing a common vision for public education that supports the interests and expectations of the state so that all Texas students are future-ready. The statute directs the Consortium to focus attention on "methods for transforming public schools in this state by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems," (Section 7.0561(b), Texas Education Code).

These efforts are further supported by the requirement that the "State Board of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in conjunction with other appropriate agencies, shall ensure that long-range plans and educational programs established by each board provide a comprehensive education for the students of this state under the jurisdiction of that board, extending from early childhood education through postgraduate study," through the P-16 Council.

In September 2014, the State Board of Education approved the appointment of an Ad Hoc Committee to review and determine the viability and utility of developing a long-range plan for public education.

Nine Board members were appointed to the committee, chaired by SBOE member Marty Rowley. The committee expects to submit its recommendations to the Board in April 2014, with the expectation that the Board's work on the Long-Range Plan will begin this summer.

In its initial meetings, the committee has outlined a process that will focus on three purposes:

- Internally (create and define the SBOE's vision regarding its role in fulfilling the stated mission)
- Externally (bring together stakeholders in order to identify the core values that will guide Texas public education into the future)
- Globally (identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges going forward)

Legislative Recommendations

Since its inception, the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium has focused on identifying methods to transform learning opportunities for all students in response to its statutory responsibility, as stated in Senate Bill 1557 (82nd Legislature), to "inform the governor, legislature, and commissioner concerning methods for transforming public schools in the state by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems," (Section 7.0561(b), Education Code).

These efforts, as detailed in this report, complement the ongoing legislative initiatives related to the state assessment and accountability system that began with House Bill 5, as well as the State Board of Education's current focus on updating the long-range plan for public education and streamlining the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

The Consortium recommends consideration of legislation consistent with the principles stated in Senate Bill 1557 (82nd Texas Legislature):

(1) Engagement of students in digital learning, including engagement through the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials and courses offered through the state virtual school network,
(2) Emphasis on learning standards that focus on high-priority standards,
(3) Use of multiple assessments of learning capable of being used to inform students, parents, districts, and charter schools on an ongoing basis concerning the extent to which learning is occurring, and
(4) Reliance on local control that enables communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children.

These legislative recommendations include the following:

Digital Integration

Support and encourage professional development programs that recognize and leverage the power and impact of technology and the digital environment on teaching and learning.

Support equitable access to state of the art technology for all public school teachers and children to meet the demands of the digital economy.

High-Priority Learning Standards

Support the State Board of Education in its ongoing revision of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) based on the identification of high-priority learning standards and engaging curriculum experts from the field, beginning with the 2015 revision of the English Language Arts and Reading TEKS.

Multiple Assessments

Continue to move away from the over-reliance on high-stakes standardized tests, incorporating multiple assessments for learning and of learning and provide for the development and implementation of new measures and collections of evidence of student learning, including digital portfolios.

Limit the grades 3–8 student assessment program to include only those assessments necessary to meet NCLB requirements.

Community-based Accountability

Develop an assessment and accountability framework that is not over-reliant on high-stakes testing, that is well balanced and instructionally sensitive, with a defensible state testing program that emphasizes high-priority learning standards, has value for students, parents, and teachers, measures what each community holds important in promoting college and career readiness, and supports improved instruction and a process for local input.

Appendix A: Senate Bill 1557

AN ACT relating to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 7, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 7.0561 to read as follows:

Sec. 7.0561. TEXAS HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS CONSORTIUM. (a) In this section, "consortium" means the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium established under this section.

(b) The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium is established to inform the governor, legislature, and commissioner concerning methods for transforming public schools in this state by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems.

(c) From among school districts and eligible open-enrollment charter schools that apply using the form and in the time and manner established by commissioner rule, the commissioner may select not more than 20 participants for the consortium. The districts selected by the commissioner must represent a range of district types, sizes, and diverse student populations, as determined by the commissioner in accordance with commissioner rule. To be eligible to participate in the consortium, an open-enrollment charter school must have been awarded an exemplary distinction designation under Subchapter G, Chapter 39, during the preceding school year.

(d) The number of students enrolled in consortium participants may not be greater than a number equal to five percent of the total number of students enrolled in public schools in this state according to the most recent agency data.

(e) The application process under Subsection (c) must require school districts and open-enrollment charter schools applying to participate in the consortium to submit a detailed plan designed to both support improved instruction of and learning by students and provide evidence of the accurate assessment of the quality of learning on campuses. The plan submitted by a school district may designate the entire district or one or more district campuses as proposed consortium participants. The plan submitted by a district or open-enrollment charter school must include:

(1) a clear description of each assessed curricular goal included in the learning standards adopted in accordance with Subsection (f)(2);

(2) a plan for acquiring resources to support teachers in improving student learning;

(3) a description of any waiver of an applicable prohibition, requirement, or restriction the district or charter school would want to apply for; and

(4) any other provisions required by the commissioner.

(f) In consultation with interested school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and other appropriate interested persons, the commissioner shall adopt rules applicable to the consortium, according to the following principles for a next generation of higher performing public schools:

(1) engagement of students in digital learning, including engagement through the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials adopted under Subchapters B and B-1, Chapter 31, and courses offered through the state virtual school network under Subchapter 30A;

(2) emphasis on learning standards that focus on high-priority standards identified in coordination with districts and charter schools participating in the consortium;

(3) use of multiple assessments of learning capable of being used to inform students, parents, districts, and charter schools on an ongoing basis concerning the extent to which learning is occurring and the actions consortium participants are taking to improve learning; and

(4) reliance on local control that enables communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children.

(g) The commissioner shall convene consortium leaders periodically to discuss methods to transform learning opportunities for all students, build cross-district and cross-school support systems and training, and share best practices tools and processes.

(h) The commissioner or a school district or open-enrollment charter school participating in the consortium may, for purposes of this section, accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private entity or governmental entity.

(i) To cover the costs of administering the consortium, the commissioner may charge a fee to a school district or open-enrollment charter school participating in the consortium.

(j) With the assistance of the school districts and open-enrollment charter schools participating in the consortium, the commissioner shall submit reports concerning the performance and progress of the consortium to the governor and the legislature not later than December 1, 2012, and not later than December 1, 2014. The report submitted not later than December 1, 2012, must include any recommendation by the commissioner concerning legislative authorization for the commissioner to waive a prohibition, requirement, or restriction that applies to a consortium participant. That report must also include a plan for an effective and efficient accountability system for consortium participants that balances academic excellence and local values to inspire learning and, at the state level, contingent on any necessary waiver of federal law, may incorporate use of a stratified random sampling of students or other objective methodology to hold consortium participants accountable while attempting to reduce the number of state assessment instruments that are required to be administered to students. The commissioner shall seek a federal waiver, to any extent necessary, to prepare for implementation of the plan if enacted by the legislature. This subsection expires January 1, 2018.

SECTION 2. (a) Not later than January 1, 2012, the commissioner of education shall adopt rules as required under Section 7.0561, Education Code, as added by this Act.

(b) Not later than March 1, 2012, the commissioner of education shall make available to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools the application forms required under Section 7.0561, Education Code, as added by this Act. The commissioner of education shall require school districts and open-enrollment charter schools that intend to apply to participate in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium to submit applications not later than June 1, 2012.

(c) Not later than July 1, 2012, the commissioner of education shall formally select participants for the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium established under Section 7.0561, Education Code, as added by this Act. The consortium must begin operating not later than the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2011.

[S.B. No. 1557 passed the Senate on May 3, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 29, Nays 2]

[S.B. No. 1557 passed the House on May 23, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 142, Nays 0, one present not voting]

Appendix B: Commissioner's Rule and Selection Process

Commissioner's Rule

The Commissioner's rule that identified the process, eligibility, criteria and methodology for selecting Consortium participants became effective May 6, 2012. Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 102, Subchapter II §102.1201 set forth the procedures for eligible school districts and charter schools to apply for and participate in the Consortium in compliance with TEC §7.0561.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to apply for participation in the Consortium, the Commissioner's rule required that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools meet the following criteria:

1. A school district or its participating campus(es) must have received either national, statewide, or regional public acknowledgement, from an organization relying on expertise in the field of education, for district-wide or campus-wide excellence in academic performance or innovative practices in one of the areas described by the Consortium principles;

2. A school district and open-enrollment charter school must be in compliance with the TEA audit requirements determined under §109.41. A school district and its participating campus(es) must not have been awarded the lowest performance rating as its most recent state academic accountability rating (i.e. it must have been rated either *Academically Acceptable*, *Recognized*, or *Exemplary* in the 2011-2012 state accountability system); and

3. An open-enrollment charter school must have been awarded an exemplary rating as its most rec*ent* state academic accountability rating as required by statute.

Application Review Criteria

The Texas Education Agency used the following criteria to evaluate and rate districts applying to be a part of the Consortium:

- Strength of applicant's experience
- Quality of the proposed plan
- Quality of project management
- Adequacy of resources committed to the project

In addition to the quality of the application, TEA, used the most recent PEIMS enrollment data, considered the extent to which the applicant's participation would contribute to the Consortium's ability to be representative of the following categories:

- **District Type:** the Consortium should include at least one of each of the following types of districts: Urban, Suburban, Non-metropolitan, and Rural.
- **District Size:** the Consortium should include at least one of each of the following sizes of districts: Large district (≥ 10,000 student population); Mid-size district (1,000 to 9,999 student population); and Small district (≤ 999 student population).
- **Student Demographics:** the Consortium should include an aggregate student population that mirrors the state student population in terms of:
  - Ethnicity and race;
  - Economically disadvantaged;
  - English language learners;
  - Students receiving special education services; and,
  - Gifted and talented students

Selection Process

On April 27, 2012, the commissioner made available the Request for Proposal, including application guidelines and forms, to all school districts and eligible open-enrollment charter schools. By the date the applications were due, June 29, 2012, TEA had received 33 applications from school districts located across eight regions. Upon receipt of the applications, TEA commenced the Consortium application review process using a rubric developed to determine eligibility by measuring the merits of each proposal broken down into specific criteria. Each of the rubric criteria were weighted based on priorities stipulated within the application guidelines. A minimum of three agency staff with expertise in digital learning, learning standards, assessments, and curriculum reviewed each application.

Final scores were averaged and applications placed in rank order. An analysis of the ranking revealed that, for applications ranked 19th through 23rd, the separation in numerical scores was less than one point between each application and the next-ranked application. After reviewing the ranked applications to determine whether the top-scoring districts represented the diversity of the state's public schools given the pool of applicants, the decision was made to select the top 23 applicants for admission into the Consortium. On September 19, 2012, the Commissioner of Education invited these 23 applicant districts to join the Consortium.

Appendix C: Summary of Characteristics of Consortium Districts

The 23 districts selected to participate in the Consortium make up a diverse group of districts ranging from one district that serves 105 students to one serving 51,920 students. The Consortium includes three small districts ranging from 105 to 725 students, seven mid-size districts ranging from 1,449 to 7,803 students, and 13 large districts ranging from 10,676 to 51,920 students. No large urban districts or open-enrollment charter schools applied for admittance to the Consortium.

Consortium Member	County/Region	Total District Enrollment	District Size	District Type
Anderson-Shiro CISD	Grimes (093)/06	725	Small	Non-metropolitan
Clear Creek ISD	Galveston (084)/04	39,209	Large	Suburban
College Station ISD	Brazos (021)/06	10,805	Large	Suburban
Coppell ISD	Dallas (057)/10	10,676	Large	Suburban
Duncanville ISD	Dallas (057)/10	13,079	Large	Suburban
Eanes ISD	Travis (227)/13	7,803	Mid-size	Suburban
Glen Rose ISD	Somerville (213)/11	1,627	Mid-size	Non-metropolitan
Guthrie CSD	King (135)/17	105	Small	Rural
Harlingen CISD	Cameron (031)/01	18,605	Large	Suburban
Highland Park ISD	Dallas (057)/10	6,804	Mid-size	Suburban
Irving ISD	Dallas (057)/10	34,770	Large	Suburban
Klein ISD	Harris (101)/04	46,002	Large	Suburban
Lake Travis ISD	Travis (227)/13	7,412	Mid-size	Suburban
Lancaster ISD	Dallas (057)/10	6,164	Mid-size	Suburban
Lewisville ISD	Denton (061)/11	51,920	Large	Suburban
McAllen ISD	Hidalgo (108)/01	25,252	Large	Non-metropolitan
McKinney ISD	Collin (043)/10	24,773	Large	Non-metropolitan
Northwest ISD	Denton (061)/11	16,626	Large	Suburban
Prosper ISD	Collin (043)/10	4,847	Mid-size	Suburban
Richardson ISD	Dallas (057)/10	37,044	Large	Suburban
Roscoe Collegiate ISD	Nolan (177)/14	367	Small	Rural
Round Rock ISD	Williamson (246)/13	45,034	Large	Suburban
White Oak ISD	Gregg (092)/07	1,449	Mid-size	Suburban

With respect to most demographic features, the Consortium is fairly well aligned with the overall composition of the state's public schools. While there is a smaller percentage of students in the Consortium that are economically disadvantaged, at-risk, and Latino than the statewide student population, the Consortium is generally reflective of the larger statewide student population, particularly given the pool of districts that applied.

Population	Consortium Student Demographic Breakdown	Statewide Student Demographic Breakdown
Economically Disadvantaged	35.9%	60.3%
Limited English Proficient	11.6%	16.8%
At Risk	32.7%	45.4%
Gifted	10.2%	7.6%
Special Education	8.4%	8.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0.4%
African American	12.4%	12.8%
Latino	33.8%	50.8%
White	45.0%	30.6%
Two or more races	2.2%	1.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	7.4%	3.5%

Districts were given the option to include all or some of their campuses in their Consortium application. Seven districts are participating with their full complement of campuses, while 16 districts are participating with various feeder pattern configurations. Feeder patterns represented in the Consortium range from two to 51 campuses. The types of campuses participating include 157 elementary schools, 11 intermediate schools, 50 middle schools, 34 high schools, and five combination campuses.

District	Number of Campuses	Student Populations
Anderson-Shiro CISD	2	725
Clear Creek ISD	7	39,209
College Station ISD	12	10,805
Coppell ISD	14	10,676
Duncanville ISD	17	13,079
Eanes ISD	9	7,803
Glen Rose ISD	4	1,627
Guthrie CSD	1	105
Harlingen CISD	2	18,605
Highland Park ISD	7	6,804
Irving ISD	3	34,770
Klein ISD	3	46,002
Lake Travis ISD	2	7,412
Lancaster ISD	10	6,164
Lewisville ISD	51	51,920
McAllen ISD	31	25,252
McKinney ISD	28	24,773
Northwest ISD	23	16,626
Prosper ISD	6	4,847
Richardson ISD	12	37,044
Roscoe Collegiate ISD	2	367
Round Rock ISD	7	45,034
White Oak ISD	4	1,449
Consortium Totals	**257**	**202,612**

The diversity of districts, campuses, and students participating in the Consortium increases the likelihood that proposals and recommendations developed by the Consortium will address the varied circumstances and issues facing all Texas schools, and consequently will result in solutions that are relevant and transferable among the many different districts across the state.

Note: The summary of characteristics of consortium districts (Appendix C) includes data compiled at the time these districts were selected to participate in the Consortium.

Appendix D: Exemplars Around Major Areas of Work

Provided are various artifacts, consisting primarily of videos, submitted by Consortium and Consortium Associate districts as exemplars of the work within their districts related to school transformation. Selected exemplars (*) are listed in conjunction with each major area of work in the report and are also listed here. These exemplars include, but are not limited to, the areas of:

Digital Integration—Integration of digital tools and resources for student learning

High-Priority Learning Standards—Implementation of dynamic, rigorous curriculum derived from high-priority learning standards

Multiple Assessments—Use of multiple assessments to determine student progress

Community-Based Accountability—Involvement of local communities and parents in developing a community-based accountability system

Alamo Heights ISD

An Engaged Education
Spotlight on Engagement: Launching Learning
Spotlight on Engagement: Making Connections
*Spotlight on Engagement: Technology Integration**

Anderson-Shiro CISD

Digital Tools and Project Based Learning

Chapel Hill ISD

School Enrichment Model

Clear Creek ISD

*2013-2014 Community-Based Accountability Report**
Latitude 2 Learn: Personalized Learning in CCISD
Leading Edge
Long-Range Technology Plan 2013-2016
*Transforming Education with "Latitude 2 Learn"**

College Station ISD

*CSISD's Community-Based Accountability**
Success 24/7: Integration of Digital Tools and Resources into Student Learning

Coppell ISD

*Assessment for Learning**
*Global Collaboration in Science**
*Learning Design: Inquiry**

Highland Park ISD

Classroom Innovation Spotlight: Faux Flipped Classroom
Classroom Innovation Spotlight: Living Wax Museum
Classroom Innovation Spotlight: Model UN Project
Classroom Innovation Spotlight: Relating Math to the Real World
Learner for the Future—Educator for the Future

*Senior Internship Program**
Students Blast into Future with Rocket Project
Students Sharpen Skills at SMU Innovation Gymnasium

Huffman ISD

Transformed Learning

Katy ISD

Digital Tools in Science
Effective Math Instruction with TI Nspire
Project Based Learning
TI Nspire Navigator System: Teacher and Student Reflections
Xtreme Collaboration in Spanish

Lewisville ISD

1:X in Action: Middle School ELA
1:X Science: 3D Gamelab
Elementary Artifacts
Elementary ePortfolio
Middle School Artifacts
Mission, Vision, and Philosophy: Teachers Guiding Student Creation of ePortfolios
*Standards Based Report Card**
Standards Based Report Card: Meaningful, Varied Assessments
Standards Based Report Card: Future Ready Skills

Lytle ISD

Empower Today, Inspire Tomorrow

McAllen ISD

*TLC3: Transforming Learning in the Classroom, Campus, and Community**

McKinney ISD

*Meaningful and Dynamic Curriculum Strategies with Project Based Learning**
Robotics at Mckinney High

Northwest ISD

*Community Dashboard: Community-Based Accountability Measures of Success**
ePortfolios
*Standards Based Bulletin Board**

Roscoe Collegiate ISD

*The Atmosphere: Creativity, Engagement, Collaboration, Inspiration**

Willis ISD

*Digital Transformation**