

# **The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium**

## **Concept Paper on Transforming Texas Public Schools**

**August 2013**

The work of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium is being facilitated by the Texas Association of School Administrators at the request of the Texas Education Agency.

## Establishment of THPS Consortium

The 82nd Texas Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1557 in 2011, creating the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. After an application process, 23 Texas school districts were selected in September 2012 by Commissioner Michael Williams to comprise the Consortium.

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 **development of high-priority learning standards**, the use of **multiple assessments** to determine student progress, an accountability system that relies upon **community and parental involvement** regarding the education of their children, and the **integration of digital tools and resources** into student learning.

## Visioning Institute

SB 1557 is an extension of the work of the Public Education Visioning Institute that began in 2006 when a group of 35 superintendents from across the state of Texas came together and asked the question, “What should curriculum, instruction, assessment and accountability include as districts work to meet the needs of students?” From the work of the Visioning Institute, ideas emerged that included the importance of a) integrating technology into the learning process on a routine basis, b) using a curriculum that is derived from rigorous, high-priority learning standards as opposed to a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep,” c) broad-based accountability that relies on a variety of measures, d) authentic assessment of students as a powerful tool that enables educators to customize learning, and e) local communities maintaining the lion’s share of control in determining the success of schools.

In 2008, the Visioning Institute published *“Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas,”* providing the framework for school transformation throughout the state. Based on the work of the Visioning Institute, the work of the Consortium, as charged by SB 1557, will create a balanced assessment and accountability system that insists upon high standards for all students and provides flexibility to local communities.

## The Consortium

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. Unfortunately, our current system focuses on teaching to high-stakes standardized tests, not fostering the skills needed to be future ready.

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 83<sup>rd</sup> 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. While making the task of carrying out the charge established in SB 1557 much more difficult, the veto will not forestall the work of the Consortium.

The 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 will research, explore, develop and implement 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 will collaborate to create a next-generation accountability system that is well balanced and instructionally sensitive, propose a defensible state testing program that emphasizes high-priority learning standards and supports improved instruction, and establish 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.

## Consortium Members

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. The 23 districts that make up the Consortium include:

Anderson-Shiro CISD	Harlingen CISD	McKinney ISD
Clear Creek ISD	Highland Park ISD	Northwest ISD
College Station ISD	Irving ISD	Prosper ISD
Coppell ISD	Klein ISD	Richardson ISD
Duncanville ISD	Lake Travis ISD	Roscoe ISD
Eanes ISD	Lancaster ISD	Round Rock ISD
Glen Rose ISD	Lewisville ISD	White Oak ISD
Guthrie CSD	McAllen ISD	

## 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, since a true pilot was no longer viable. Due to the limitations imposed, the Consortium will establish a process to invite other school districts across the state that are engaged in school transformation activities to participate in the research efforts and help the Consortium move this important work forward. It is crucial for the Consortium to identify researchers and experts who can assist with gathering evidence, collecting data and evaluating the use of high-priority learning standards, digital integration, multiple measures of student performance, and engagement of the local community in accountability.

### High-Priority Learning Standards:

The Consortium will design a process for determining high-priority learning standards that emphasize depth over breadth where the local community is accountable for empowering students to learn, live, and earn in a global and digital environment. As the State Board of Education begins to examine the issue of “mile wide, inch deep” curriculum standards, the Consortium stands ready to serve as a resource.

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. High-priority learning standards shall be:

- Reflective of current research in the area of 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

### **Digital Integration:**

Schools must embrace and seize technology's potential to capture the hearts and minds of students so that the 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. The Consortium will commit to seamlessly integrate 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).

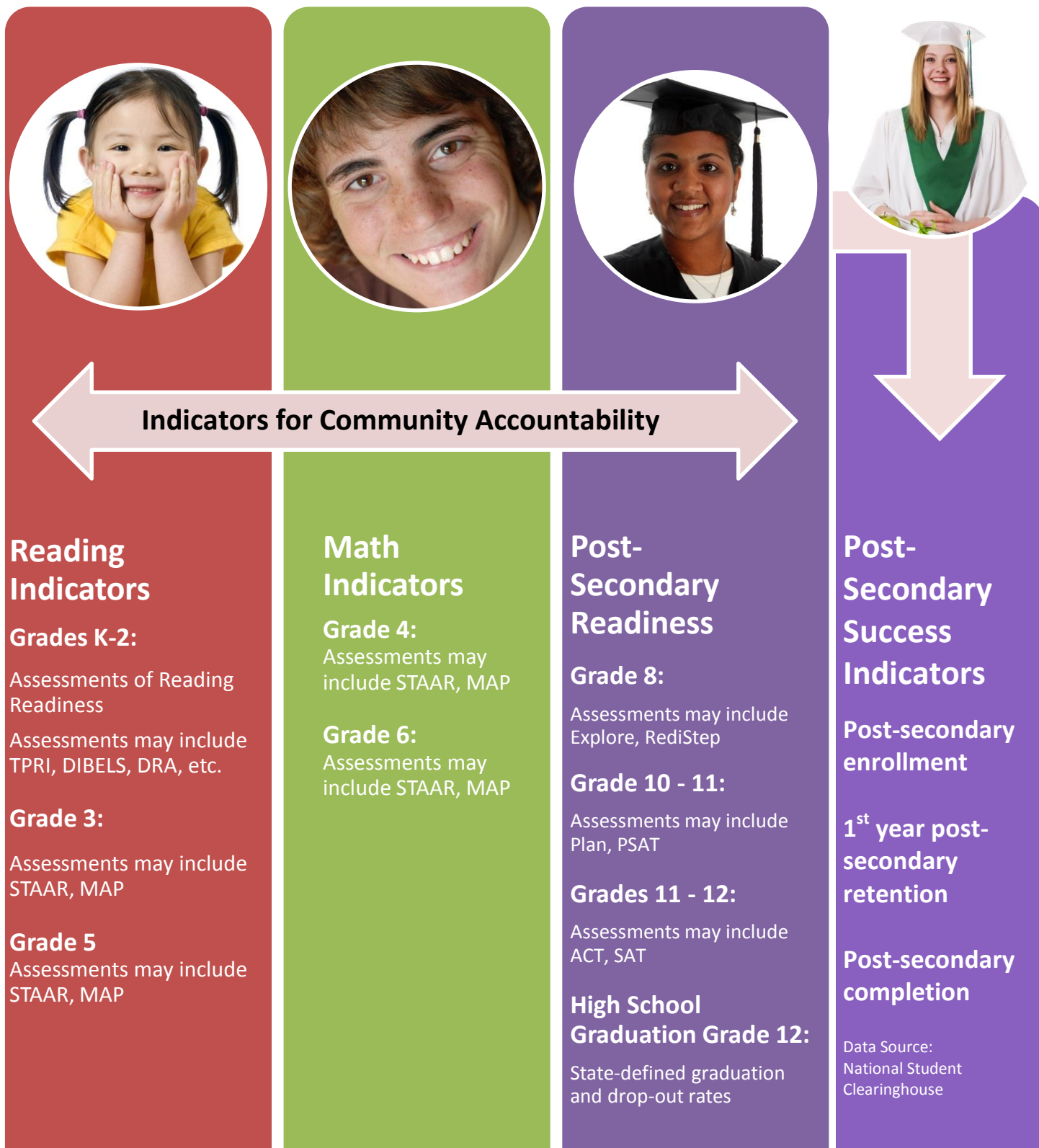
### **Multiple Assessments:**

Unfortunately, our current assessment system lends itself to teaching to high-stakes standardized tests, not fostering the skills needed to be future ready; therefore, it is critical that we transform our public schools. The Consortium will develop a system of assessment *for learning* and assessment *of learning* that incorporates the use of existing valid and reliable measures, and develops new measures and collections of evidence of student learning, including digital portfolios. These assessments will be capable of informing students, parents, teachers and school districts, on an ongoing basis, concerning the extent to which learning is occurring.

### **Accountability:**

The state is accountable to citizens and taxpayers for educational quality, and the state determines, improves and communicates educational quality through a variety of district requirements. Local school districts are accountable to its students, parents and communities for student learning, and districts determine, improve and communicate mastery of high-priority learning standards using a variety of measures of student learning. The Consortium will propose an accountability system reflecting the state's role in educational quality and the local community's role in accountability for student learning. A community-based accountability system (CBAS), including a sampling of indicators as described in the following pages, is an essential component of the transformed PK-12 education system needed for Texas children and families.

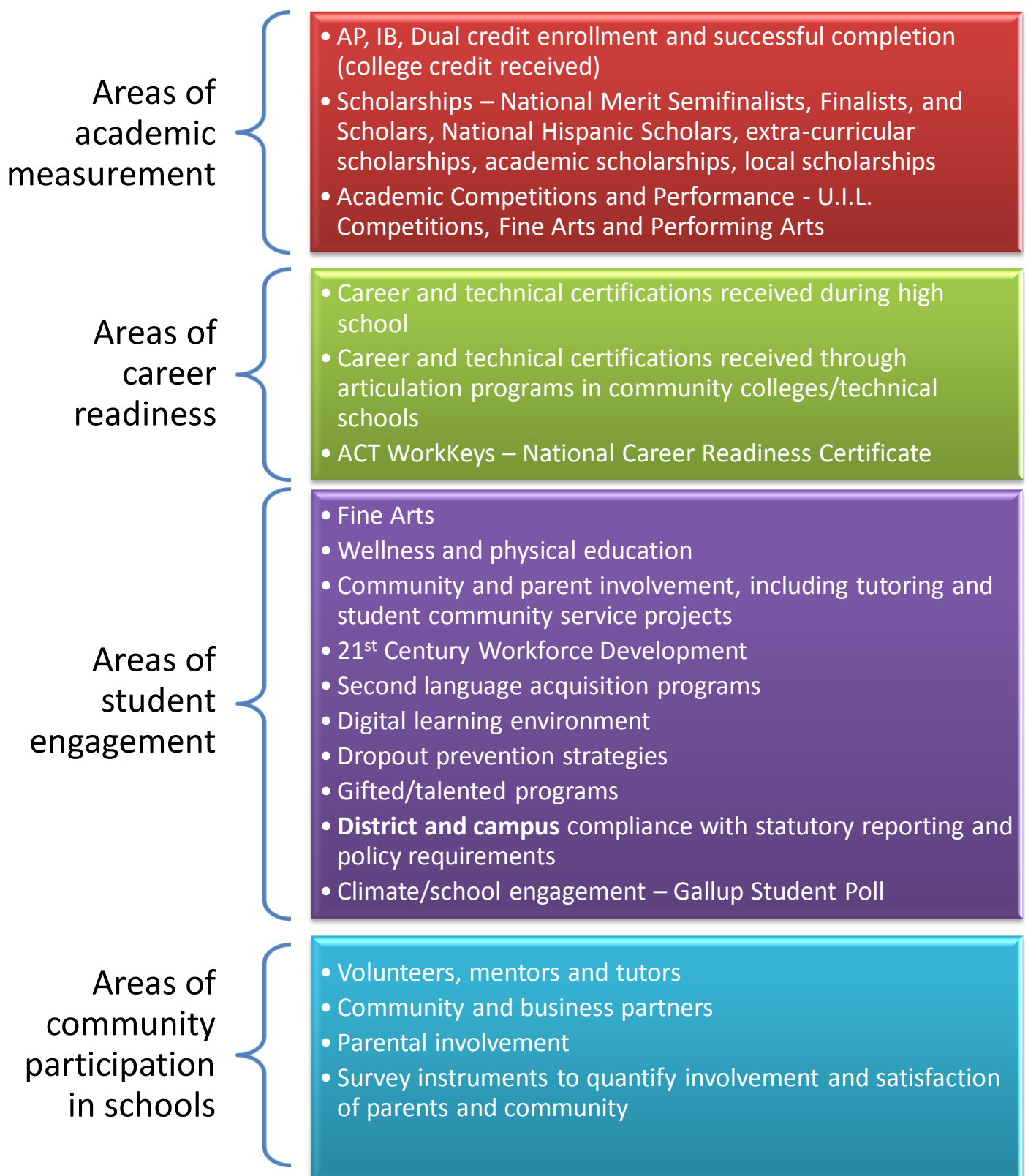
# Community Based Accountability System



**Features of reporting include:**

- Student groups reported will include economically disadvantaged, non-economically disadvantaged, and all students
- Districts may utilize different assessment instruments for some indicators

# District/Community Specific Indicators



## Contact Information

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