

TBEC's Impact on Public Education in Texas

Formed in 1989, TBEC was the first on the scene by several years of all the “education reform organizations” operating currently in Texas. All the others have embraced high standards and accountability as the hallmarks of their reform programs, but only TBEC was there when the accountability system was established in 1993 and the student learning standards were adopted in 1997. Over the years TBEC has been the most consistent business force for many other “reforms” that are now institutionalized and accepted as necessary policy components of public education in our state.

Because even most of the people currently involved in TBEC are not aware of its history, we present here a brief synopsis of that proud record of accomplishment. Reforms for which TBEC has advocated have brought Texas to the forefront of the movement to improve public education in America, and resulted in every group of Texas students scoring regularly at or near the top of all states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

TBEC helped establish the following state education policies consistent with the coalition's long-term strategic plan that have contributed to the improved performance of Texas public schools.

Site -based Decision Making: In 1991, the Legislature required all Texas school districts to give school principals, acting in consultation with an advisory team, authority over educational process.

Accountability: In 1993, the Legislature created the nation's strongest public school accountability system based on an expanded statewide student assessment program. The system rates school districts and campuses annually based on student test results, and outlines interventions and consequences for persistent low performance.

The Recommended High School Program: Also in 1993, the State Board of Education established the Recommended High School Program, modeled after TBEC's Texas Scholars initiative, which outlines rigorous course of study for Texas high school students.

Decentralization: In 1995, the Texas Legislature rewrote the Texas Education Code (TEC), shifting authority from the state to local school districts.

Safe Schools: TBEC was part of a broad coalition of education-related organizations that encouraged the legislature to take dramatic steps to improve the safety of Texas public schools, including giving teachers authority to remove disruptive students from their classroom and requiring school districts to provide alternative learning environments for students who could not function in regular classrooms.

The Texas Reading Initiative: In 1997, the Legislature enacted Governor George W. Bush's reading initiative that provided resources to strengthen reading instruction through teacher in-service training and included a TBEC recommendation that all school districts be required to assess the reading development of kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grade students. The Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), developed to serve that requirement, can be purchased for use by other states.

Student Learning Standards: Also in 1997, the State Board of Education adopted the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), new student learning standards for Texas public schools. TBEC supporters served on some of the subject-area writing teams, reviewed and made suggestions to improve draft documents, and testified publicly for adoption of the proposed standards.

Student Success Initiative: In 1999 the Texas Legislature enacted Governor George W. Bush's initiative to "end social promotion" in Texas public schools. Students must demonstrate at certain checkpoints (3rd grade reading in 2003, 5th grade reading and math in 2005, and 8th grade reading and math in 2008) that they have acquired the foundational skills to succeed at the next grade level.

TEXAS Grant Program: In 1999 the Legislature created a new need-based financial aid program that requires students to complete the Recommended High School Program. The *Teach for Texas Program* established also in 1999 provides financial aid to students in exchange for teaching for a number of years in a shortage area in a Texas public school.

Expanded High School Assessment: Also in 1999, the Legislature implemented a TBEC recommendation that moved the tests students must pass as a high school graduation requirement from the 10th to the 11th grade. This change first affects the graduating class of 2005.

Recommended High School Program: In 2001, the Legislature enacted a requirement that all students entering high school in 2004 must plan to complete the Recommended High School Program. Individual students can opt out of this requirement with the agreement of parents and their counselor.

Texas Mathematics Initiative: This program enacted in 2001 invests substantially in improving mathematics instruction in grades five through eight.

Fiscal Accountability: Also in 2001, the Legislature established the nation's first public school fiscal accountability system that will become fully operational in 2004.

Assessment: In 2003, the Legislature reinstated the 8th grade science test to bring the state into compliance with the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*. The *Governor's Science Initiative* will help strengthen science instruction in Texas public schools.

High School Improvement: TBEC supported legislative actions that allows school districts to use “optional extended year” funds for high school students, targets resources for high school teacher professional development, and requires schools to spend certain resources to provide intensive, personalized instruction to students at-risk of failing the state’s new exit-level tests.

Early Childhood Education: TBEC supported legislation that will consolidate resources from various programs to be able to provide quality pre-school experiences to greater numbers of Texas children.

Charter Schools: In 1995, the new Texas Education Code authorized the State Board of Education and local school boards to establish charter schools. TBEC was an early proponent of the charter school movement in Texas, and made loans to four of the first generation charter schools to help support their start-up activities.

Texas B-On Time Loans: TBEC supported legislation that provided zero-interest loans to cover costs of college tuition, fees and textbooks for students that complete the Recommended High School Program.

Concurrent Enrollment: Legislation enacted in 2003 will increase the number of students who will be able to take courses for dual high school and college credit.

School Finance : In June 2003, the TBEC Board of Directors adopted a statement of Principles of School Finance to guide efforts to reform the state’s public school finance system.

Career and Technical Education: In 2007 TBEC recognized the need to strengthen career and technical education. Working with House Education Committee Chairman, Rep. Rob Eissler, (R-The Woodlands) Rep. Susan King, (R-Abilene) Rep. Lois Kolkhorst, (R-Brenham) and Rep. Rafael Anchia, and (D-Dallas), House Bill 3485 was passed into law and was the genesis for career and technical education bills passed in the 81st session.

TBEC projects have a positive impact on the system at the school district and campus levels.

Texas Scholars: By establishing the Texas Scholars Program in more than 330 school districts, business volunteers have motivated thousands of students to complete the Recommended High School Program. The Scholars Program has influenced state education policy and it is now being re-invented to support the participation and success goals of the Higher Education Coordinating Board’s *Closing the Gaps* plan.

The TBEC Honor Roll : Texas' most coveted academic award is to be recognized as a TBEC Honor Roll School. Each year TBEC recognizes the state's highest achieving elementary, middle, and high schools using the state's most demanding performance indicator; percentage of students passing all tests at the commended level.

The VI P Briefing: TBEC's annual meeting brings together leaders to hear presentations about issues in the state as well as those focused on important developments and topics of interest nationwide.

The TBEC organizational structure is built to bring business leaders and educators together in a continuing dialogue about important education issues in Texas. It includes:

Executive Committee : The 14 member Executive Committee meets 6 times a year and works directly with the Executive Director to carry out organizational decisions on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Board of Directors: Business executives and education leaders representing K-12 and higher education meet twice a year to consider issues, make recommendations for state policy, and take other actions to improve public education in Texas.

Coordinating Committee : TBEC's working body composed of executives from business, leaders of education organizations, and representatives from state agencies and staff for state policy makers develop policy recommendations for consideration by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors and help carry out TBEC projects.

TBEC is effective because it focuses its attention and energies at any given time on emerging opportunities to promote specific pieces of its ambitious reform agenda. TBEC is proud to have contributed over the past twenty years to the improved performance of the Texas public school system. The Coalition's supporters will continue to play an active role in the implementation of new state education policy and programs. At the same time, TBEC supports the efforts of parents, educators, business people and other concerned citizens to improve the schools in their community and to do what is right for all the children of Texas.