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.

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.

Members of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium:

Superintendent	District
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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

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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

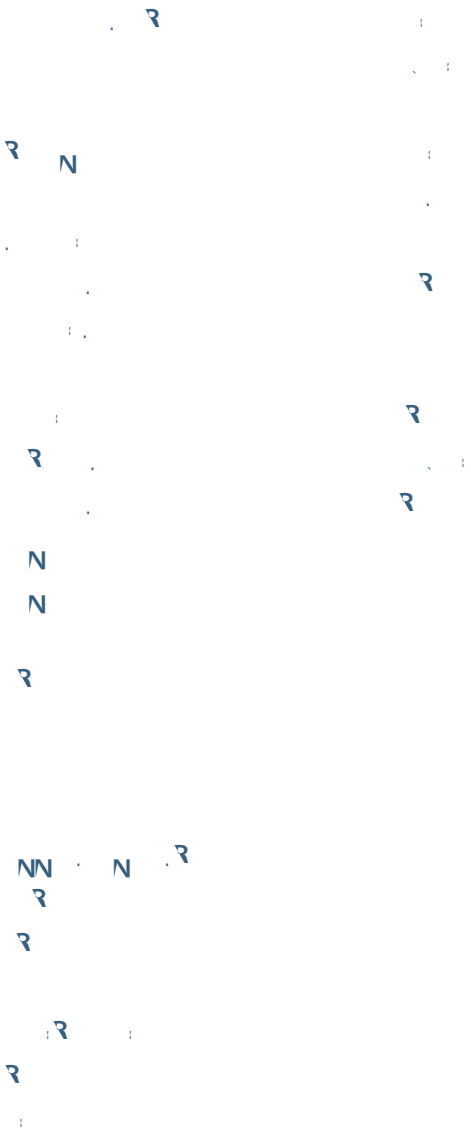
This notable legislation reduced the number of end-of-course exams required for graduation from 15 to 5, created more flexible graduation plans for students, and placed a new focus on community, workforce, and higher education demands through meaningful course offerings. This, coupled with endorsement 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

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

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:



- 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 58 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

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 — TLC^3: Transforming Learning in the Classroom, Campus, and Community
- Willis ISD — Digital Transformation