

**Resolution of the Board of Directors Supporting Improved Public School
Accountability Measures in Texas Schools**

The business community in Texas has an enormous stake in the success of our public schools. A well-educated work force is absolutely essential to remaining competitive in a global economy.

We are supportive of efforts to ensure that college readiness, academic rigor and relevance are the primary underpinnings of an accountability system. We are also supportive of returning promotion decisions to the schools, but the system must hold districts and schools accountable for socially promoting unprepared students.

The Greater Houston Partnership supports the two education accountability Bills, S. B. 3 and H. B. 3, which passed in the Senate and House. We recommend the following principals be addressed in the Conference Committee:

- **Uniform Definition:** Need for a clearer definition of post secondary readiness to align with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's definition of college readiness, which is "The knowledge and skills expected of students to perform successfully in the workplace and in entry-level courses offered at institutions of higher education."
- **Growth Models:** Include specific requirements for the structure and implementation of a growth-to-standard student achievement model.
- **Career Technical Education Alignment:** Ensure CTE courses are aligned with state, national and international licensure or industry certification.
- **Proportionality:** System is complex and does not adequately address the "weak link" or "one cell" issue. A district's rating should not be based on the performance of a single campus. Simplifying the number of measurement areas may provide greater focus and produce better results.
- **Drop-out Tracking:** Institute a fair and accurate system documenting the number of drop-out students.

We recognize the two Bills are not congruent in the following areas and hope the Conference Committee will consider the following principles in the final Bill:

- **Establish A Single Post-Secondary Readiness Standard:** The Partnership prefers a system that provides students with a solid background in core subjects while allowing them the flexibility to pursue electives including career and technology education programs.

- **Accountability Ratings:** The Partnership prefers a system that promotes student achievement by tying distinctions to meeting careers and college-readiness goals.
- **Passing Standards:** We believe it is not only imperative for students to take the required classes but also pass not less than 2 or 3 end-of-course exams consistent with Senate Bill 3. In our view, lower passing standards are not acceptable and undermine accountability.
- **Student Accelerated Instruction:** Students not meeting performance markers on annual end-of-course exams should be required to take and pass annual remediation courses. This requirement cannot be met without a fiscal note and a structured program and process. We urge legislators to take immediate action to ensure an effective accelerated instruction program is implemented.
- **Recognition of Cost of Implementation:** Implementation of a system designed to meet the goals of either/both bills will require the Legislature's commitment of additional funding and a stable school finance system for school districts.

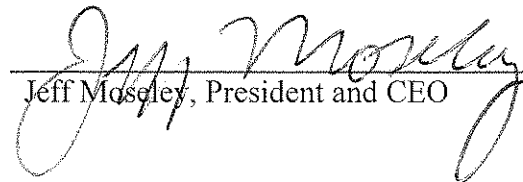
We recommend the legislature focus first on preparing more children for career and college readiness, including the specific actions which will improve student achievement to ensure long-term student success and reduce student drop-out rates. The Partnership supports adequate funding to ensure the goals of the accountability system are achieved, including funding for structured accelerated instruction programs which hold students and schools accountable for results.



Daniel G. Bellow, Chairman



Patrick Oxford, Secretary



Jeff Mosley, President and CEO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 6, 2009

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lori Vettters, Chairman, Education and Workforce Policy Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Support of Improved Public School Accountability Measures in Texas Schools

RECOMMENDATION:

The business community in Texas has an enormous stake in the success of our public schools. A well-educated work force is absolutely essential to remaining competitive in a global economy.

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BACKGROUND:

The Greater Houston Partnership commends Chairs Shapiro and Eissler, The Select Committee on Public School Accountability, and the Senate and House Education Committees for their leadership and work, and for the inclusion of the following principles in both versions of the Bills:

- **College Readiness Standards:** Establishes a meaningful "college readiness" standard in Math, English and Writing which students must demonstrate to be exempt from remedial coursework when enrolling in high performance training programs, community college and university.
- **Performance Markers:** Establishes Math and English performance markers (grades 3, 5, 8) to measure college/career readiness standards earlier in the education process.
- **Curriculum:** Defines a meaningful default high school course of study, which requires four years of Math, Science, English and Social Studies courses as well as two years of foreign languages.

- **School Closure Procedures:** Defines campus closure processes for districts that allow persistently low academic performance.
- **CTE Inclusion:** Supports the inclusion of appropriate, relevant and vigorous CTE courses in High School.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

The Greater Houston Partnership has consistently supported improvements in accountability of education systems. We reference prior segments of the accountability language used in several resolutions spanning the last decade:

- Strengthen the accountability system by continuing to raise standards and expectations, better align curriculum with college and job-readiness requirements, use one standard for measuring high school completion and for tracking students who leave schools, and establish a quality full-day pre-school program that is based upon sound research and best practices.
- Support the implementation of the student success checkpoints provided by the 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 11th grade tests and reward student success by establishing a sound system of incentives for improvement in low performing schools, a compensation system in which teachers receive significant financial benefits for improving the educational performance of at-risk students, and reward consistently high performing schools.
- Establish clear consequences for failing schools by setting forth specific and strong steps for state intervention to turn around failing schools, including, if necessary and after persistent failure, a state takeover of the management of schools, while allowing those schools to remain neighborhood schools and retain local student populations.
- Provide principals with more freedom and flexibility to manage schools effectively and allow for the development and retention of an effective teacher corps by removing barriers to getting quality teachers in local schools, give school leaders more authority to run their schools, tying increased educator compensation to skill, responsibility, and performance, and remove outdated restrictions on school operations.
- Implement a statewide financial accountability system that will bring additional transparency to public education finance, require the establishment of financial standards reaching to the district and campus levels that are commensurate with academic standards, and enable meaningful financial oversight.

KNOWN OPPOSITION:

None at this time.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Communicate this position to members of the area legislative delegation, appropriate legislative leaders, Houston-area and statewide business groups and interested parties. Include the position as final analysis of S. B. 3/ H. B. 3 Bills are heard and acted on.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Local districts may have to absorb additional costs associated with unfunded mandates.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

N/A

COOPERATION WITH ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS:

N/A