

## **HB 2824 Will Provide Education R&D for Texas, Pending Governor's Signature**

On May 21, the Senate unanimously passed **HB 2824**, the bill related to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium, with no discussion and no amendments, by a vote of 31-0. Earlier, HB 2824 was passed unanimously by the House on a vote of 129-0 and has successfully made its way through the legislative process without a single vote in opposition. The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

This bill grants flexibility to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium to serve as a Research & Development arm for public education that will 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, as passed, includes the following provisions:

- **R&D Innovation:** A research study will 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 will evaluate the impact of digital learning, the use of multiple assessments, and the reliance on local control.
- **In-depth teaching:** Participant campuses will 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 will be administered in math, reading and science. At the secondary level, EOCs will be administered at the 10th grade in English, math and science, or nationally norm-referenced college preparatory assessments will be administered.

HB 2824 provides the necessary space for the Consortium districts to focus on in-depth teaching and high priority, or "readiness," standards. 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.

The Consortium intends to partner 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 develop assessments that focus on skills and competencies needed for post-secondary success. Through its work, the Consortium will 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 is 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 will continue to fund its own work and will solicit funds and in-kind support from other sources to complete this work.

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 provides 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 can fill that role.

The passage of HB 2824 will enable the districts in the Consortium to develop recommendations that can be considered in future legislative sessions to transform our current high-stakes testing and accountability system to one that is student-centered.

**Background:**

The Legislature in 2011, with SB 1557, established the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium to inform policymakers on improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems. Essentially, the Consortium is designed to serve an R&D function as education moves into the digital age.

The Commissioner of Education invited 23 school districts to participate in the Consortium in September 2012 and, in December 2012, the Consortium provided a report that identified statutory changes that would allow the Consortium districts the ability to innovate. HB 2824 incorporates many of these recommendations.