



Coalition news & updates

Hello All,

I have greatly enjoyed catching up with some of you over Zoom. I hope I can catch a couple more of you before the graduation parades and virtual celebrations start to take place. **Please let me know when you have a few moments to chat so we can continue to develop our legislative priorities.**

In the newsletter below there is information about our first webinar, co-hosted with Coalition for Education funding. **Chairman Huberty has graciously accepted the invitation** to participate and answer questions; please register below if you can join. Stay tuned for several more events planned over the next few months.

There are some comment deadlines that are fast approaching (more details are below) **including review of the accountability manual**. I would love everyone's feedback either via email, text, phone, or the poll below to determine if we submit comments. I recommend that we do, but of course will follow your direction.

Best,
Julia

A Conversation with Chairman Huberty - May 21st



BCEC along with the Coalition for Education Funding is co-hosting a webinar on May 21st!

Join Dr. Elizabeth Fagen for this **virtual visit with Rep. Dan Huberty**. Rep. Huberty is the Chairman of the Texas House Public Education Committee. Dr. Fagen is the Superintendent of Humble ISD.

The event will be **Live on Zoom** and **you will be sent the passcode** after you have registered.

[Register for this online event here...](#)

[Also find his recent editorial here.](#)

Interim Hearings

While the Democratic and Republican Caucuses have made attempts to move to virtual interim hearings, during a recent meeting with The Texas Lyceum Senator Watson confirmed that the move to virtual meetings would have to be approved by a Concurrent Resolution during a legislative session.



However, given Governor Abbott's recent actions to waive statutory rules (such as alcohol to-go [no complaints from me]), he could decide to waive this requirement as well.

Either way, we may not have interim hearings for quite some time.

New Proposed Commissioner Rules

TEA released the proposed new version of the [2020 Accountability Manual](#). **Comments are open until June 1st and a virtual hearing will be held on May 22nd (next Friday)**. While most of the manual is fairly straight forward and expected, there are a couple of sections I'd like to draw your attention to and would love your feedback on:

- Chapter 7 "Other Accountability System Processes" - Includes a new rule for "Magnet Campuses and Programs" on page 92. Scores for these students will now stay with the campus where the student receives instruction rather than the campus of origin. Many of you have magnet programs and this may affect your scores in the future, so please let me know if you'd like this to be included in our comments.
- Chapter 9 "Responsibilities and Consequences" - Includes the statement, "While no ratings were issued in 2020, an overall or domain rating of D or F in 2019 and an overall or domain rating of D or F in 2021 will be considered to be consecutive." While not unexpected, this does give us an opportunity to give comments on the prospect of consecutive ratings starting next school year and request that either consecutive ratings be paused or ratings start over during next school year.
- Chapter 9 "Responsibilities and Consequences" - Links D and F campuses in similar intervention categories even though statute treats D and F separately. While the verbiage is fairly general on what intervention is allowed, I would recommend we ask for intervention language for D and F campuses to be more aligned with statutory language
- Chapter 10 "Local Accountability Systems" - Removes the independent review panel made up of Superintendents from the LAS approval process. While statute does allow for the review panel to be disbanded by the commissioner, it can only happen AFTER ten districts have received approval. To date, only two districts have received approval. I would highly recommend the coalition and/or our members submit comments about this edit.

If we receive feedback from several of you to submit comments, I will draft our letter and submit it for review next week.

Please respond to poll below:

Do you think the Coalition should submit comments on the accountability manual?

Yes, we believe the coalition should comments

Select

No, but we will be submitted comments as a district

Select

No these rules are not concerning

Select

In addition to the Accountability Manual, [additional rules for the Teacher Incentive Allotment and T-TESS Designations](#) were released this Friday (May 14th) morning.

TIA: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, districts who submitted applications early this year will be allowed to submit teacher observation data or student test scores for this school year, "mid-year" student test scores, or teacher observation data and student test scores from the 2018-2019 school year.

T-TESS: Updated designation standards for T-TESS were released and include a student score growth metric.

Comments and open until June 15th.

Additional Days School Year



There have been several announcements regarding school calendars. Here are a couple of items worth noting from them:

- **Additional school year money is automatic** and does not need to go through an application process as long as you have reached required minutes and 180 days. Planning grants released earlier this year were separate and were for planning only.
- "Year-Long" designations can happen via board vote and also don't require TEA approval. [Statute for the year-long designation originated in 1995 and is fairly vague in direction.](#)

For the most up-to-date FAQs on school calendars go [here](#). (under School Calendar Resources)

UP Partnership - Equitable Recovery Pledge

UP Partnership recently released the "Equitable Recovery Pledge" signed unanimously by all of their board members, which include five BCEC members.

The Pledge asks each signer to:

- Create space at their institution to hear from students, families and community leaders and share those findings with other system leaders through UP Partnership.
- Educate others at their institution about the inequitable effects of COVID-19 and secure their buy-in to make demonstrable changes that reduce inequities at their institution.
- Share resources, ideas, and insights with other Bexar County leaders and organizations who are actively working towards an equitable recovery.
- Promote the Equitable Recovery Pledge with other education, community, and business leaders across Bexar County.

In addition to an important call for community input, it connects participants to a strong network of higher education institutions, business, and local officials to aid in COVID-19 recovery efforts.

I highly recommend to sign it if you have not already. You can sign it [here](#).



House Bill 3 Sustainability - UPDATED

As we continue to get close to summer and remain uncertain about federal stimulus in the works, I'll keep this section of the newsletter and will continue to update.

As Governor Abbott begins the reopening of Texas and the federal government considers CARES 2, we may see the economy begin to recover in the Fall as consumers feel more comfortable venturing out into the world with social distancing measures in place. We still don't have guidance or hints from TEA on what elements of the budget they are eyeing for possible cuts or how much they will have to cut. Cuts will be largely dependent on whether or not we have a resurgence of cases over the summer.

While we don't know how large the economic fallout will be, many elected officials are still adamant about protecting elements of our budget, like education, since a well-funded education system is more important than ever.

What we know so far:

- (UPDATE): On the last superintendent call Commissioner Morath stated that he would be releasing **CARES Act funding information next Tuesday, May 19th**.
- (UPDATE) Speaker Pelosi released the Heroes Act earlier this week, which Senator McConnell swiftly shot down. Congress is expected to pass the bill next week and pass it to the Senate for consideration.
- Comptroller Glenn Hegar was recently interviewed by the Transportation Advocacy Group and gave some measured updates on where Texas is economically. I recommend reading the [Houston Chronicle's Summary](#).
- (Review) House Bill 3 was funded through several mechanisms: reallocation of existing allotments (Cost of education index, high school allotment, small/mid-size allotment change), surplus revenue from state sales tax, diversion from oil/gas revenue, and revenue from certain online sales.
- Two out of the four funding sources for HB 3 are currently dramatically reduced already (oil/gas and sales tax), Hegar has said the **\$3 billion of expected surplus is already gone**. However the recently signed **CARES Act** infuses additional revenue to businesses and industries directly affected by the economic shut down (not directly to oil/gas, but to transportation and travel industries) along with infusing significant dollars to state medicaid programs. Only time will tell if there measures are enough to cover the loss of revenue, but this is one of the fastest stimulus response in our history to attempt to correct the downtown.
- Prior to the state shut down, the House Democratic Caucus formed the Special Committee of Closing Outdated Tax Loopholes & Exemptions largely to ensure HB 3 could continue with sustainable funding. Though possible tax reform will not be a panacea for budget shortfalls in the coming session, there are options for additional revenue for the state to consider. For example, based on the [comptrollers latest estimates](#) (2018) the state tax exemptions for the state total around \$47.5 billion.
- While the property tax growth cap was a big "win" for elected officials, it is largely the biggest cost of HB 3 in the coming years. Any statutory changes would need to wait until next session, but since Hegar is relatively confident that the state is covered for this fiscal year, a statutory adjustment to property tax increases may serve as an additional lever for relief for the next biennium.
- Hegar is asking all agencies to review their budgets now for possible cuts. During the last recession Hegar stated that agencies were asked to cut their spending by 10% and estimates the same percentage might be necessary this time around. However, [as stated above](#), many believe public education entitlements will be off-limits. Hegar is expected to present possible options to state lawmakers in the coming weeks.

What to watch for in the coming months:

- **Length of the pandemic:** The health of next year's economy is largely determined by country being through the virus and associated protective measures by June, giving the country time to rebound in the fall. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke [recently stated](#) the pandemic was, "much closer to a major snowstorm or a natural disaster than it is to a classic 1930s-style depression."
- **Additional stimulus from the federal government:** National advocacy organizations estimated the need to cover education budget shortfalls would be around \$75 billion, which is significantly more than the \$13.5 billion in the most recent stimulus package.
- **Movement by Governor Abbott to redirect Rainy Day funding this year:** If Governor Abbott and the LBB decide to move some of this money to cover hard costs related to the pandemic, it could help cover some of the gaps the federal money will not cover. If the pandemic continues into the summer we could see this move become more likely.

What you can do:

- Resources for documentation from TEA can be found [here](#). A free webinar from TASBO on COVID-19 Accounting can be found [here](#).
- Document EVERYTHING, any spending, any additional hours; anything and everything you can do to document decisions and spending you made during this time will be critical to telling the story to the legislature later.
- TASB has release a lot of [resources](#) for district to document spending during this time.
- Schedule some time with us, when you can, so we can start to craft our advocacy platform moving forward. We need to know your biggest pain points, deepest concerns moving forward,

and support that has helped you through this crisis. We are available at all hours and are happy to talk with anyone from your team if they have time.

What we are reading

[Higher Education Leaders Cautious About Reopening Strategies](#)

[Evictions and Debt Collections can Continue this Month](#)

[CDC Reopening Decision Tree](#)

[DeVos: My Grants aren't like Race to the Top](#)



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