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Legislators Debate School Finance Proposals

The Legislature — assembled in Austin to devise a plan to meet a court imposed May 1 deadline to alleviate funding inequities among public school districts — remained divided on a "best approach" and appeared headed toward a second 30-day special session as

NewsLine went to press (March 28).

Vocational education funding and the authority of the State Board of Education are among issues debated by legislators since convening in special session on February 27.

The Senate — which managed to agree

on its version of a school finance plan — would restrict the use of state vocational education dollars to grades 9-12 as well as limit the overall growth in state funds available for vocational programs.

The House — which rejected the Senate finance plan as well as several versions of its own — was back at square one as the first session neared completion. Most House finance plans discussed thus far would maintain vocational education's current weight.

Lower Weight. The Senate Finance Plan would lower the overall funding weight for vocational education from the current 1.45 to 1.35 in 1990-91 and to 1.25 by 1992-93. A study of the cost benefits of voc ed compared to math and science classes is also called for in the Senate plan. Academics — such as math and science — are funded at a weight of 1.0 which is the basic allotment amount accorded each student in average daily attendance in a school district.

The basic allotment — under the Senate plan — would be increased from the current \$1,477 level to \$1,910 for 1990-91 and to \$2,100 by 1992-93. The basic allotment would be adjusted up or down to reflect price differentials among school districts. It is the adjusted allotment times the vocational weight that determines the amount of entitlement per full-time student equivalent in vocational education.

Senator Carl Parker, Beaumont, co-author of the finance bill, said that despite the weight reductions, voc ed would still receive more funds due to increases in the basic allotment.

(See Funding on page 2)

Master Plan's Impact on Local Schools Subject of Council Report to SBOE

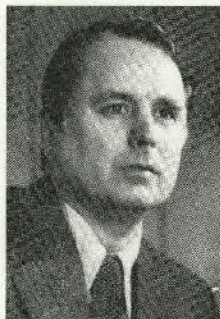
The Texas Council on Vocational Education will submit a report in May to the State Board of Education that measures the impact of the Master Plan for Vocational

Education on local schools, said Joe Pentony, Houston, Chairman of the Council's Evaluation Committee.

Last May, the State Board asked the Council to:

- Assess the extent to which the reforms articulated in the Master Plan are accomplishing their intended purposes; and

- Assess the impact of vocational education restructuring on local education agencies resulting from the implementation of the Master Plan.



Joe Pentony

In January, the Council conducted extensive "fact finding" and "opinion" surveys involving a stratified random sample of school districts, said Lynda Rife, Council staff project coordinator. The opinion survey was also completed

by attendees at Texas Education Agency sponsored workshops in January.

The information gathered from the surveys, coupled with an analysis of data provided by TEA and the results of a February survey of all postsecondary institutions to measure secondary/postsecondary coordination will form the basis for the Council's report and recommendations, said Rife.

Pentony said the Council will review and finalize the report at a May 2 meeting in Austin. A copy of the meeting agenda is available from the Council office. (See related article on page 4.)

Coordinating Board Acts on New Degree Programs

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board — at its January 25-26 meeting in Austin — acted on two agenda items impacting occupational education at the postsecondary level.

Associate Degrees. Approved four Associate of Applied Science degree programs: American Educational Complex at Killeen (Printing Trades Management); South Plains College at Levelland (Fire Technology, Legal Assisting); and Wharton County Junior College at Wharton (Nuclear Technology).

Program Improvement. Approved the main categories to be the focus of program improvement projects that begin July 1 and run through June 30, 1991. The four categories are personnel development, curriculum development and improvement, model programs and demonstration projects, and research. The Coordinating Board will target between \$2.5 and \$3 million for numerous projects under these headings, all of which will contribute to the achievement of the goals outlined in the Master Plan for Vocational Education in Texas.

The next Coordinating Board meeting is slated for April 19-20 in Austin.

In This Issue:

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- ➔ "Super Council" vs. Separate Councils
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SBOE Acts on Vocational Plan, Projects, Rules

The State Board of Education — at its March 9-10 meeting in Austin — considered several vocational education agenda items. Among items acted on or discussed by the Board — which oversees grades K-12 — were:

•**State Plan.** Approved the federal State Plan for Vocational Education for Fiscal Years 1991-92. Federal law requires a State Plan to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education once every two years setting forth assurances, goals, objectives, and activities for the use of federal dollars and matching state and local funds. Texas receives \$65 million annually in federal dollars for vocational education. The plan is due at the Department of Education by May 1.

•**1990-91 Projects.** Tentatively approved \$9.6 million in federal funds for 1990-91 statewide vocational education projects. Over \$4.4 million was authorized for program improvement, followed by \$1.9 million for single parent and homemaker projects, \$1.4 million for adult training and retraining, \$1.1 million for projects to eliminate sex bias and stereotyping, \$800,000 for community-based organizations, and just under \$600,000 to serve incarcerated individuals. The projects — to begin July 1 — support strategies and actions underway to restructure Texas vocational education programs.

The dollar amounts to serve adults and single parents/homemakers are subject to further negotiations at an April 3 Joint Advisory Committee meeting involving representatives from the State Board, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and T/COVE. The Committee annually negotiates the split

of federal funds between the secondary and postsecondary levels. Any changes in the amounts authorized for the secondary level by the State Board would be reviewed at its May meeting.

•**Integrated Delivery System.** Approved on the first of three readings proposed rules for the statewide implementation of an integrated delivery system for vocational-technical education and training — based on 24 planning regions — that is designed to bring a multitude of public and private sector enti-

ties together to identify needs, set priorities, and coordinate efforts and resources to develop a skilled and educated work force to enhance economic development in Texas and to compete in a global economy. The proposed rules — scheduled to take effect September 1 — address such factors as regional boundaries, partnerships, planning committees, labor market information, program and economic development inventories, targeting occupations, and service delivery plans.

Vocational Funding (continued from page 1)

Parker says the weight reductions are designed "to provide a funding level deemed appropriate for vocational education."

One factor not brought out by Parker was the impact of voc ed's share of a school district's overall "indirect costs." Current law requires every dollar generated by the vocational weight to be spent on voc ed until the 1991-92 school year at which time a certain percent of the vocational allotment — to be determined by the State Board — will go toward a district's indirect costs.

If school districts are permitted to take 15% for indirect costs — which is charged to other programs such as special education — then the amount of dollars available for actual instruction would constitute level funding for vocational education beginning in 1991-92. Annual inflation — currently running in the 3-4% range — would result in a decrease of dollars for vocational instruction.

The House appears intent on keeping the overall voc ed weight at 1.45. Whether the House will call for a study of voc ed's benefits versus math and science classes remains to be seen. Rep. Bill Carter, Fort Worth, was successful in getting the call for a study taken out of the House finance plan that was being developed. Carter — citing numerous recent studies including a Texas A&M University report that noted voc ed's significant impact on the economy — said "vocational education has been studied to death." House members overwhelmingly agreed.

•**CVAE Issue.** The Senate proposal to restrict state vocational funds to grades 9-12 is intended to overturn the State Board of Education's decision last summer to reinstate vocational dollars for Coordinated Vocational Academic Education (CVAE) at grades 7-8. CVAE — which serves educationally disadvantaged and "at risk" students — has been criticized by Lt. Governor Hobby

and numerous legislators as lacking quality and for being a "tracking system" for minorities.

The State Board — acting on a T/COVE recommendation — felt the concept behind CVAE was viable and that the program should be improved, rather than abandoned, through proper funding, new instructional elements, and guidelines to be met by local schools in order to receive funds.

The funding restriction — if it makes it to final passage — would also hurt Vocational Education for the Handicapped at grades 7-8, which currently serves 1,700 students statewide. VEH is funded with state vocational dollars.

Senator Chet Brooks, Pasadena, succeeded — in a 16-15 vote during a "Committee of the Whole" meeting of the Senate — to get the restrictive language taken out. However, Senator Carl Parker later had the language reinstated on a vote of 16-15.

•**State Board.** The House is considering proposals that would render the State Board of Education basically advisory in nature, transferring its rulemaking authority to a Governor appointed Commissioner of Education. The Senate backed off similar proposals.

Several legislative leaders have cited the Board's actions and expressed support for vocational education as examples of why the Board's authority should be reduced.

T/COVE — in a February 13 letter to Lt. Governor Bill Hobby and House Speaker Gib Lewis — stated "that the voting public — the stockholders of the education system — must retain the right to determine the levels of authority to be entrusted in the State Board of Education, legislative, and bureaucratic structures. The public — through the democratic process — has demonstrated that an elected State Board of Education and Legislature are not an 'oil and water mixture.'"

Postsecondary Conference Set for Deans/Directors

The Texas Association of Postsecondary Occupational Education Administrators spring conference is planned for April 4-6 in Austin.

The theme for the three-day conference — scheduled for the Embassy Suites-North Hotel — is "New Growth, New Opportunities, and New Training Teams for Texas" said Dorothy McNutt, Association President.

Topics to be addressed include technology transfer, workplace literacy, apprenticeship initiatives, responding to consumer driven services, emerging technologies, and community college involvement in the Job Training Partnership Act.

Congress Targets May for New Vocational Act

Congress — despite numerous delays — remains optimistic that a new federal vocational education law will be on the President's desk by May.

The House passed its version of a bill (H.R. 7) last May that would reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984. The Senate appeared close to action on its vocational bill (S.B. 1109) as *NewsLine* went to press (March 28). S.B. 1109 has been out of committee since November but has taken a back seat to debates on a new Clean Air Act.

The Senate is advocating a \$1.6 billion annual authorized federal funding level for vocational education, which compares to the House version of \$1.3 billion. Texas re-

ceives \$65 million per year of the \$918 million currently appropriated.

Both measures emphasize the integration of academic and vocational skills, the targeting of special populations (e.g., economically disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficient, sex equity), the creation of tech-prep programs linking high schools to colleges, the establishment of performance standards, and the upgrading of teachers. The House and Senate differ on approaches to these priorities which will require a conference committee — comprised of members of both chambers — to reach compromises.

The House and Senate must also compromise on other key issues involving state leadership and coordination, the flow and split

of funds to schools and colleges, guidance activities, a voc ed data system, and the improvement of facilities and equipment.

An impact analysis on seven major differences between the House and Senate bills has been developed by and is available from T/COVE.

U.S. Congress Debating Future of State Councils

The future of the Texas Council on Vocational Education is a question mark as Congress moves toward a new federal vocational education bill that will amend the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984.

The House (H.R. 7) would create a single State Human Investment Council to replace both T/COVE, which operates under the current Perkins Act, and the State Job Training Coordinating Council, which operates under the Job Training Partnership Act.

The human investment council would advise Governors on coordination across multiple federal programs (i.e., voc ed, JTPA, adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and employment security services). The council would also assume individual advisory roles to the boards or commissions that oversee each of the federal programs.

The Senate (S.B. 1109) — as it came out of committee — maintains separate state councils while strengthening coordination across programs at the state and local levels.

H.R. 7 has passed the House. The full Senate was close to action on S.B. 1109 as *NewsLine* went to press. A House/Senate Conference Committee will likely begin meetings during April to resolve differences.

T/COVE Chairman William Zinsmeyer, San Antonio, expresses agreement with the need for coordination across programs, but questions whether the proposed "mouse-trap" is better than what is now in place.

"The details associated with achieving quality in vocational education require a 90-95% commitment of time and effort by T/COVE, with the balance spent on coordination with other programs," said Zinsmeyer. "Programs like JTPA and adult education warrant a similar commitment."

Zinsmeyer believes that "realistically, a super council — comprised of volunteers with limited time at their disposal — would be hard pressed to serve as a 'coordinating body' for multiple programs and as a separate advisory council for each program."

(See T/COVE FUTURE on page 4)

Videotape Captures Banquet Pageantry of Third Annual Vocational Awards

The pageantry of the Third Annual Texas Vocational Education Awards Program Banquet — held February 9 in Austin — has been preserved on videotape.

The opening audio/visual slide presentation introducing each award recipient and a collection of slides taken at the banquet have been transferred to videotape, said Bobby Weathers, Waco, President of the Vocational-Technical Education Development Foundation of Texas, which jointly sponsors the awards program along with T/COVE. A limited number of tapes are available at \$25 each, payable to the Texas Vocational Education Awards Program, 815 Brazos, Suite 500, Austin, 78701.

"The banquet showcases the outstanding efforts of students of all ages who have overcome many obstacles en route to a meaningful education experience," said Bill Carter, a Fort Worth legislator who serves as Vice President of the Foundation. "The thought that came to my mind as I listened to the background on each award recipient was the often quoted phrase, 'the greater the challenge, the sweeter the victory.'" The videotape — 10 minutes in length — is a great public relations tool for use at workshops, civic and school meetings.

The Awards Program recognizes student excellence and exemplary business/education partnerships in the state's high schools and colleges, said William Zinsmeyer, a San Antonio businessman who chairs T/COVE. "This year we honored 6 winners and 18 finalists — selected from

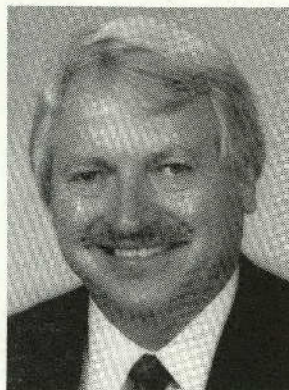
115 nominations — in four award categories."

The 1990 *Outstanding Student* winners were Jennifer Hanners, a senior Home Economics student at Dimmitt High School; and Kay Kennemur, a sophomore Secretarial Science student at Howard College in Big Spring.

The *Outstanding Special Populations Student* winners were Antonio David Lucero, a sophomore Austin Community College Commercial Art student, and Mark Henson, a junior Vocational Adjustment Class student at Klein High School.

The Federal Aviation Administration was the winner of the *Business/Labor Involvement Award* in recognition of its high tech internship partnerships with the Judson and Edgewood School Districts in San Antonio. The winner of the *Outstanding Advisory Committee Award* was the Spring ISD Vocational Advisory Board for its active involvement and leadership provided the district's voc ed programs.

The March 1990 issue of *NewsLine* was devoted entirely to coverage of the awards program and banquet. That issue highlights both the winners and finalists.



Bill Carter
"the greater the challenge"

Voc Ed Public Hearing Planned for May 2 Council Meeting

The Texas Council on Vocational Education will conduct a public hearing as a part of its May 2 meeting in Austin, said William E. Zinsmeyer, San Antonio, T/COVE Chair.

"Some state leaders — most notably Lt. Governor Bill Hobby — have expressed views during the past year that vocational subjects are being emphasized at the expense of academics, and that some vocational courses represent a step backwards in achieving educational quality," said Zinsmeyer. "We are interested in the extent to which the public shares these views."

Numerous changes are underway to modernize and refocus vocational programs as a result of House Bill 72 and the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act — both passed in 1984. "We don't expect the public to be familiar with the contents of these two laws, but we are curious as to the extent to which the public is knowledgeable of, involved in, or is concerned about the types, content, and direction of vocational programs in its home town schools and colleges," said Zinsmeyer.

The Council is meeting at the Radisson Hotel, with a 10:00 a.m. start time. Individuals planning to provide oral testimony are encouraged to contact the Council at (512) 463-5490. Testimony will be limited to five minutes. Written testimony can be submitted at the hearing or to the Council at P. O.

Box 1886, Austin, 78767.

The Council — comprised of 13 Governor appointed members representing business, industry, labor, and education — advises the State Board of Education, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Governor, and Legislature.

T/COVE Future A Question Mark (continued from page 3)

"We have made tremendous progress toward coordination in Texas, particularly with the development of an integrated delivery system based on regional planning that



William Zinsmeyer

begins full implementation this fall," said Zinsmeyer. "The integrated system is a product of numerous agencies and councils working together part-time while still devoting full-time to their respective programs."

Congressman

Steve Bartlett, Dallas, is a likely candidate to represent Texas on the Conference Committee that will resolve this issue. *NewsLine* readers may want to express their views — pro or con — to Bartlett at 1113 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515.

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