

R1800.6
Ac 46
89/5

Government Publications
Texas State Documents

JUL 20 1989

ACHIEVE!



An Update on Student Retention Issues

This newsletter, published periodically, will provide information on various aspects of the student dropout problem, legislative issues relating to the crisis, prevention programs that the League has encountered, and ways to encourage student retention..

This issue of *ACHIEVE* focuses on two major education proposals before the 71st Legislature: the Governor's Educational Excellence Program for Texas and the Lieutenant Governor's Anti-Crime Plan. Both proposals have elements that are designed to address the dropout problem in Texas.

THE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The Educational Excellence Program for Texas proposed by Governor Clements has five key policy priorities:

- Improving student performance and attendance;
- Increasing parental and community involvement;
- Encouraging campus improvement and innovation;
- Enhancing dropout, drug, and alcohol prevention programs; and
- The implementation or effectiveness of the improvement plans.

The plan uses a variety of incentive options to accomplish these goals. A large part of the Educational Excellence Program is the Texas Education Excellence Award System (TEXAS), which is based "on gains in performance, a strengthened accreditation system, and state

programs that support educational performance and effectiveness."

At least \$30 million annually would be available for funding TEXAS and the estimated annual cost for the entire Educational Excellence Program would be approximately \$39 million. TEXAS, to be administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), offers a "carrot" approach by providing cash incentives to school districts and campuses in either of two main categories: academic excellence or exemplary student intervention programs. Under the category of academic excellence, the governor would grant two awards, the **Scholastic Gains Award** and the **Campus Improvement Award**, to campuses and districts for improvement in student performance and progress toward school goals. Elementary and secondary schools would be judged in categories that group schools according to similarities such as number of students, district wealth, and number of disadvantaged students. These awards could be used only for academic enhancement purposes -- not athletics or salary supplements.

Student Intervention Program Awards would be given to programs directed toward at-risk students in areas such as dropout prevention and recovery, drug and alcohol prevention, parental involvement, and community involvement. A committee would establish criteria for judging the

A PUBLICATION OF THE
TEXAS RESEARCH LEAGUE
WORKING FOR BETTER GOVERNMENT THROUGH RESEARCH

1117 Red River ★ P.O. Box 12456 ★ Austin, Texas 78711 ★ 512-472-3127

May 1989

awards.

In another incentive program, students who take high school courses in physics or calculus would receive either a tuition credit of \$75 to a state institution of higher education or a privately donated cash award of \$50. If schools do not currently offer these courses, they could provide them through "distance learning," which uses telecommunication to teach students.

Governor Clements' plan also calls for an **Accreditation and Quality Assurance Program** that offers a performance-based focus on accreditation. This program introduces differentiated accreditation review frequency, strengthens technical assistance to school districts, and involves the community and parents in the quality of their schools.

A new system of rating the districts in terms of quality is recommended using the following ratings: exemplary, recognized accredited, warned, and unaccredited. Under current law TEA must visit each school district every three years, but TEA resources only permit them to make visits every five years. The new plan calls for selective review

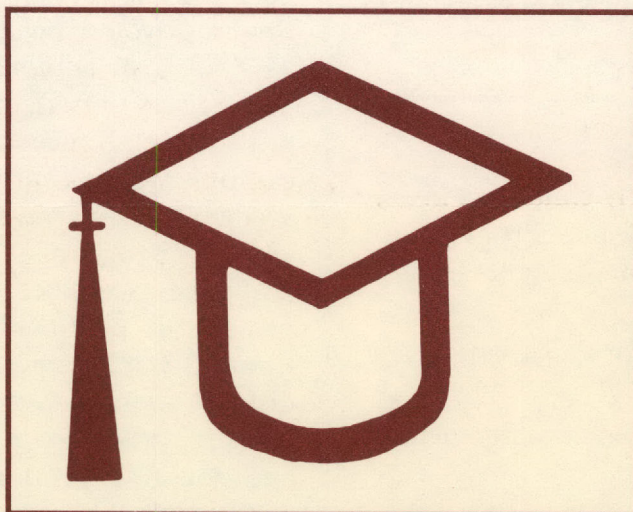
frequency with varying maximum intervals between reviews. Exemplary school districts would have a maximum interval of eight years, recognized school districts would have a five year interval, accredited districts' period would be three years, and warned school districts would be visited every year and would be given substantial technical assistance. Random reviews of districts would occur to maintain quality control.

The plan would also give districts that are high-performing the needed flexibility to try programs that are innovative and promote excellence. Campuses and districts also would be required to

show emphasis on dropout prevention and recovery, drug abuse prevention, student achievement, energy management in school buildings, and parental and community involvement. Because of the importance of data resources for a performance-based accreditation system, further development of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) is crucial.

Additionally, the Educational Excellence Program would give state support for education performance and effectiveness. Examples include support for principal professional development and establishment of a center for educational economic policy research. In the category of principal professional development, principals would be eligible to participate in substantive training

programs. Grants would be provided to partially fund institutions or organizations providing this training. Principals from districts with limited resources would be eligible for scholarships to help with tuition costs. The Center For Educational Economic Policy Research would be composed of a consortium of universities and would examine school



system efficiency and its impact on students in the classroom.

Preventing dropouts is a major emphasis of the Educational Excellence Program for Texas, and a major goal for the future of the state. Programs already discussed such as the Scholastic Gains Award and the Student Intervention Program Award should help in this area. Also, the following programs focus additional attention on dropout prevention:

- Public Awareness Campaign -- entitled "Texas Needs You" -- to show these students that they are important and that they are

essential to Texas' future. The campaign would provide information about job skill requirements and showcase programs that are effective in dropout prevention, drug prevention, and literacy.

- Second Chance Awards -- to lure recent dropouts back to school. Upon high school graduation the award would be either \$500 post secondary tuition credits, privately donated cash awards, or jobs. Eligibility would be limited to students under the age of 19 who have dropped out prior to January 1, 1989.
- Summer school tuition assistance -- to provide tuition assistance for low-income students who fail a course and want to retake the course in the summer.
- Compulsory attendance age -- to increase the age at which a student may withdraw from school from 16 to 17. It would also require students to start school by age six rather than seven as is the current law. This is intended to help with early childhood intervention.
- Average daily attendance (ADA) adjustment -- to alter the financial allowance given to schools based on attendance. This number would be adjusted according to the number of school days remaining after a student drops out. Full funding would be restored for students who return before the end of the school year. This proposal would cause districts to lose ADA money in proportion to their number of dropouts. (Note: This provision has been omitted from the pending legislation on the Educational Excellence Plan. Concern was expressed that it would hit the poor districts the hardest.)
- Early intervention for children of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients -- to identify and assist AFDC mothers and their at-risk children. This voluntary program would be designed to help break the welfare cycle. Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) social

workers would refer these children and their mothers to the early intervention program.

The Educational Excellence Plan is contained in HB 2300, which is pending. The program has been praised by Education Commissioner W.N. Kirby for offering positive incentives for schools to improve education. In addition, according to the TEA, "A survey of Texas teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members revealed a substantial amount of support for some kind of an incentive program that would link rewards to performance."

UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF TEXAS -- THE ANTI-CRIME PLAN OF 1989

Unlocking the Future of Texas -- The Anti-Crime Plan of 1989, proposed by Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby, seeks to decrease the demand for prisons by attacking crime at its roots; that is, addressing the long-term causes of crime. According to the plan, "We have committed billions of dollars to punishment and have done nothing to break the cycle of crime. The Anti-Crime Plan of 1989 intends to break the cycle of criminal behavior."

The cycle of criminal behavior may be related to a lack of education. Startling statistics reveal that "more than 85 percent of Texas prison inmates are high school dropouts. Their average educational achievement level is the seventh grade." Additionally, a larger percentage of the Texas population is in the corrections system than the population of any other state.

The total cost of the plan is estimated at \$163.7 million, with federal funds providing \$60.3 million. The rest would come from general revenue spending of \$103.4 million including \$66.7 million in new state spending. It is estimated that the anti-crime plan will reach one million at-risk students through its dropout and elementary counselors programs. Other programs in this plan will benefit an estimated 314,950 additional persons.

Six of the 12 programs included in the lieutenant governor's proposal deal with issues

relating to at-risk students. (Related bills appear in parentheses.) These are listed below.

- Early childhood intervention -- to provide intervention services such as medical and educational, speech, physical therapy, parenting skills and counseling to children up to age six who are developmentally delayed (rider in general appropriations bill).
- Pre-Kindergarten -- to expand pre-kindergarten to disadvantaged three-year-olds to give them a social and intellectual head start. To be implemented in a half-day pilot program, the program targets three-year-olds who are unable to speak and comprehend English or who come from poor families (SB 246).
- Latchkey Children and Parental Involvement -- to allocate Chapter 2 discretionary funds (federal funds) to provide programs for latchkey children, parent training programs such as Parents as First Teachers, and other programs that address the needs of young children (SCR 51).
- Elementary Counselors -- to establish a pilot program in 10-15 districts with high dropout rates to identify intervention strategies for at-risk elementary students. The program would designate guidance counselors or social workers to identify and coordinate services for the children in need. The TEA and the participating districts would evaluate the success of the pilot program (SB 95).
- Dropout Prevention -- to require school dis-

tricts that do not meet an annual, statewide dropout reduction rate in 1990 to spend a mandated percentage of their current compensatory education allotment on TEA-approved dropout programs. This measure is intended to help reduce the current 33 percent statewide dropout rate to not more than 5 percent by the 1997-1998 school year, the goal set by the State Board of Education (SB 152 Committee Substitute).

- Pregnant Teen and School Age Parents -- to initiate a program of support services such as on-site day care, parenting education, counseling and transportation to pregnant students and teen parents. Because pregnancy and marriage are the most frequently cited reasons that female students drop out of public school, this proposal is necessary for dropout prevention (SB 151).

Other programs detailed in the Anti-Crime Plan of 1989 include a plan to expand Medicaid services, a youth substance abuse treatment program, an increase in services for truants and runaways, additional child protective services, a proposal for family violence centers, and an increase in family planning. The inclusion of such a wide variety of programs in the anti-crime plan illustrates the many causes that lead people to lives of crime. To break the cycle of criminal behavior these causes must be dealt with. According to the lieutenant governor, "Fewer criminals mean fewer crimes. That means fewer victims of crime."

Texas Research League
P.O. Box 12456
Austin, TX 78711
Address correction requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Austin, TX
Permit No. 2104