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Almost 1,200 Texas districts and charters receive full accreditation status

AUSTIN – Almost 1,200 Texas schools districts and charter schools earned full accreditation status from the Texas Education Agency today. This is the second year the agency has assigned an accreditation status to school districts and the first year that charter schools have been reviewed in the accreditation system.

The classification system examines both the financial and academic health of districts and charter schools. It also examines performance in other areas such as data reporting, special program effectiveness, and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. In 2008-2009, the newly adopted indicators for financial performance of charter operators were reported for informational purposes only but did not factor into the assignment of charter accreditation status.

Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said 1,195 out of 1,228 districts and charters earned an Accredited status from TEA.

“We’re proud that the vast majority of our districts and charters are serving their communities well by providing strong academic instruction to students and appropriate financial oversight of taxpayers’ money,” the commissioner said.

Most of these districts and charters achieved an Academically Acceptable or better rating in the state’s school accountability system and a Superior Achievement or Above Standard Achievement in the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST).

Sixteen entities received a status below the Accredited level, and the accreditation status of 17 entities was left pending because of ongoing investigations.

Four school districts and seven charter schools earned an Accredited – Warned status because they either:

- were rated Academically Unacceptable in 2007 and 2008;
- received a Substandard Achievement or Suspended – Data Quality rating in FIRST in 2007 and 2008; or
- had one year of poor ratings in both the state accountability system and School FIRST system.

Three school districts – Marathon, Bynum and Kendleton – and two charter schools – Gabriel Tafolla Charter School in Uvalde and Texas Preparatory School in San Marcos – are now rated Accredited – Probation.

Gabriel Tafolla, Kendleton and Texas Preparatory School all earned this status because they received Academically Unacceptable ratings in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Marathon and Bynum received an Accredited – Probation status because they both earned Substandard Achievement in the financial rating system in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

If any of these five show substandard performance levels when 2009-2010 accreditation statuses are assigned, they will earn a status of Not Accredited – Revoked. A district that is assigned this status will no longer be a Texas public school district. No entity has yet had its accreditation revoked under this system.

“These five districts and charter schools must take decisive and effective action or they will face the consequences provided by law,” Scott said.

TEA has not yet assigned an accreditation status to four school districts and 13 charter schools, due to ongoing investigations that might affect the status assigned. In these instances, the accreditation status is reported as pending.

The status of each district and charter can be found at:

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/accredstatus/>.

The education commissioner has broad authority to impose an array of sanctions against any charter school or district that received an Accredited – Warned or Accredited – Probation status. Along with taking the corrective actions already required under the state accountability system or School FIRST, the district or charter must notify students’ parents and property owners in their area of the lowered accreditation status.

The commissioner will review actions already under way to correct deficiencies before deciding whether to impose additional sanctions. Other sanctions can include assigning a monitor or conservator to assist the district or charter school.

Additional information about the accreditation system is available at:

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/accredstatus/>.