Texas Dropout Prevention Action Plan

Developed as a result of the America’s Promise Alliance Dropout Prevention Summit held in Austin, Texas in November of 2008

Prepared by:
The TEA Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force
Ensuring Accountability for Dropouts

Providing Programs for At-Risk Students

VISION
Every student will graduate with the skills necessary for 21st century workforce and postsecondary success.

Integrating Best Practices

Strengthening The Foundation

Promoting Parent, Family and Community Resources

Collaborating

Coordinating

Dropout Prevention Task Force

Pre-Kindergarten  Elementary School  Middle School  High School  Postsecondary & Workforce Success
The solution to the Texas dropout problem does not reside in a single area of the agency, but necessarily involves the work of each department in partnership with schools, business and community organizations. The Task Force was created in 2008 to facilitate collaborative efforts to tackle problems and develop solutions inside the agency and with our community partners.

Email the Task Force at everystudentagraduate@tea.state.tx.us

*Adopted from the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council Strategic Plan, 2008.*
I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State’s Dropout and College-Readiness Challenges

I.1 What are your state’s current graduation and dropout rates? (Please cite source and methodology)

- In 2003 the Texas Legislature required that dropout rates be computed according to the National Center for Education Statistics dropout definition beginning in the 2005-2006 school year. The national dropout definition will be fully incorporated in the completion rate for the class of 2009.

- TEA calculates longitudinal completion rates that combine the completion and longitudinal dropout rate so that they add to 100 percent.

- The longitudinal completion rates have three components: graduates, students who continued their high school education in the fall following their anticipated graduation date, and GED recipients.

- The final component is the longitudinal dropout rate. Dropouts are counted according to the dropout definition in place the year they drop out.

- The longitudinal rates for the class of 2007 tracked students who began Grade 9 for the first time in 2003-2004. Out of 290,662 students in the cohort, 86.7 percent either graduated by 2007 or continued the following year. An additional 2.0 percent received a GED, and 11.4% dropped out.

- The Annual Dropout Rate is 2.7% Out of the 2,023,570 students who attended grades 7-12 in Texas public schools during the 2006-07 school year, 2.7 percent were reported to have dropped out.

- Source: www.tea.state.tx.us
1.2 What does both national and local data indicate about your state’s graduation and college-going rates over the last few years? Have the rates been improving or getting worse?

• Texas adopted the national dropout definition in 2005-2006. As a result of new definition in 2005-2006, annual dropout rates for 2004-2005 and prior school years are not comparable to rates for 2005-2006 and beyond.

Current Dropout Statistics:
• In grades 7-12 during the 2006-2007 school year, 2.7% of the students dropped out. This is an increase of .1 percentage points from the 2005-2006 rate.
• The number of dropouts in Grades 7-12 rose to 55,306 which represents a 6.7 percent increase over the 51,841 who dropped out in the 2005-2006 school year.
• The dropout rate for grades 9-12 in 2006-2007 was 3.9%, an increase of .2 percentage points from the 2005-2006 figure.
• The longitudinal rate for grades 7-12 was 11.6% in 2006-2007.
• The longitudinal rate for grades 9-12 was 11.4% in 2006-2007.

College-Going Statistics:
• Overall, college enrollment numbers have increased each year since 2003.
• The largest college enrollment increase by far has been in public 2 year universities with a 9.56% increase in enrollment from 2003-2007.
1.3 Please describe what efforts have or will be taken to better understand the issues from key perspectives, such as parents and young people themselves. What is known, and what do you still seek to learn?

- TEA is taking multiple approaches to better understand the issues from key perspectives, such as parents and young people. The agency is currently collaborating on a youth and parent survey with a non-profit organization working in the local Austin Schools.

- Members of a newly formed Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force represent all areas of the agency in the intra-agency task force process. Members are conducting an analysis of the dropout prevention literature and research to increase learning and understand multiple perspectives.

- The Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force is engaged in an internal Asset Mapping process to identify resources and opportunities for collaboration within TEA. This may be expanded to include community stakeholders at a later date.

- The Collaborative Dropout Prevention Taskforce will form Action Teams to focus on building knowledge, skills and developing solutions within specific issue areas.

- TEA program staff will develop surveys for youth and parents that will be implemented over the next year to gather additional information from teachers, parents and students in the process of implementing dropout prevention grants and measuring success.

- Other knowledge will be gained as the Task Force proceeds with its work.

- This Action Plan will continue to be updated as needed.
II. Rallying Your State of Community: Getting Buy-In to Address the Crisis

II. 1. What key data and message points have you developed? What is the impact of the dropout crisis on your economy and state?

• The Texas Dropout Prevention Summit on November 10, 2008 was a rallying point for the dropout issue in Texas.
• The tag line for the conference on TEA messaging was “Every Student A Graduate” and is now used by the Dropout Prevention Task Force in messaging.
• The Task Force developed a Texas Strategies for Dropout Prevention and Asset Map for the legislature and the general public which underscores the importance of collaboration in addressing the dropout problem in the state.
• Dropout Prevention is a priority for policymakers in Texas. TEA is implementing several comprehensive programs and initiatives with combined funding in excess of $100 million to reduce the dropout rate among Texas students.

Economic Impact:

• There is a personal, state and economic impact when a student drops out.
• A student who drops out will earn less according to the most recent US Census Bureau 2005 Texas Survey of Households 25 and older: average earnings are $16,302 for no high school diploma, $25,513 and $44,302 for a Bachelor’s Degree.
• A high school dropout is more likely to need government assistance, be unemployed and is eight times more likely to become incarcerated according to the US Census Bureau.
• The dropouts in the Texas Class of 2007 will cost the state tax payer an estimated $377 million each and every year, according to the National Center for Policy Analysis.
II. 2. Who is your state’s chief spokesman for dropout prevention?

- The chief spokesman for dropout prevention in Texas is the state Commissioner of Education, Robert Scott.
- Several key legislators and policy makers are also passionate leaders for dropout prevention in the State of Texas.

**Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force:**

- Since the Summit, the Texas Education Agency has created an Intra-Agency Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force.
- The agency recognizes that the solution to the dropout problem does not reside in any one area of the agency but necessarily involves the work of each department internally.
- The Collaborative Dropout Prevention Taskforce will conduct analysis, coordinate internally and produce several deliverables. The deliverables include: mapping agency assets, creating a visual public information document, collaborating on developing intra-agency practices, developing a FAQ for the community, building a website presence, creating Action Teams to work on strategies, communicating agency solutions in a coordinated manner and leveraging TEA resources to ensure maximum impact on the dropout issue.
- The long term vision for the Task Force is to create an Interagency Task Force on Dropout Prevention including state agency and private business, non-profit stakeholders. This component may follow completion of the Intra-Agency deliverables.
II. 3. *What is your state’s vision statement for your young people, related to their successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work? What is your quantifiable long-term goal for your dropout and college-readiness challenges?*

Our vision statement for our young people is:
*Every Texas student will graduate with the skills necessary for 21st century workforce and postsecondary success.*

Our long term goals* between 2009 – 2011 are to:

• reduce the longitudinal dropout rate annually by 1%;

• Increase the longitudinal grade 9-12 graduate rate by 0.8%;

• Reduce the 9th grade retention rates by 0.5%; and

• Increase the exit level state assessment (TAKS) by 5%.

**Strategy:** To strengthen the Texas vision, The Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force has created four “Action Teams” to work on enhancing Texas dropout prevention efforts. The strategic focus areas are: Early and Effective Intervention Strategies; Policies, Rules and Regulations; School Climate, Culture and Structure; and Communication.

*These goals are adopted from the Texas High School Council Strategic Plan, 2008.*
III. Identifying Solutions: Considering and Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Dropout Challenge in 4 Core Categories:

III.1. Transform the Schools

This is a high priority for Texas for the next 6-12 months. There is a new Task Force Committee that will focus on school climate and culture.

Statewide, efforts have been underway since 2003 to coordinate both public and private funding to transform underperforming schools. The Texas High School Project (THSP) supports a variety of reforms aimed at systemic and sustainable high school improvement and preventing dropouts. Programs are in place to redesign low-performing high schools and to support innovative new schools.

Examples of the THSP restructuring and redesign activities include:

– Expand early college high schools (ECHS) to allow students least likely to attend college an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and 60 college credit hours (29 ECHS);
– Creating Texas Science Technology Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Academies that act as demonstration sites for innovative and applied learning in math and science (38 T-STEM Academies);
– Redesigning underperforming high schools by implementing school wide initiatives following a rigor, relevance and relationships framework (93 redesigned high schools).

Other Efforts to transform schools include:

– Creating flexible programs at schools to recover students who have already dropped out of school to allow them to earn a diploma or get into and succeed in college;
– Piloting a collaborative dropout reduction program which involves multiple community-based organizations and agencies working together to help students to succeed in school.
III.2 **Support Young People**

Supporting students is a high priority in Texas. TEA will continue to strengthen student support strategies and interventions over the next 6 – 12 months. One of the Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force Committees will be working on strengthening early and effective intervention strategies.

**Examples of statewide programs to support young people include:**

– The Texas GEAR UP project supports low income and minority students and ensures those students are academically prepared for college;
– Communities In Schools – Provides case management and school-wide prevention for students in K-12;
– 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school programs;
– Optional Flexible School Day allows schools to offer flexible hours for students;
– Optional Extended Year Program is an extended day, week or summer accelerated program to assist struggling students who would otherwise be retained;
– AMACHI Mentoring provides mentoring to students with incarcerated parents;
– Life skills, parenting education programs for pregnant and parenting teens;
– Pre-Kindergarten Early Start Grants to create high quality pre-kindergarten programs to ensure students start school ready;
– Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student Success Initiative provides intensive program of instruction for English Language Learners.
– Student Success Initiative, provides schools with additional funding for programs instructing students in grades K-8 who have not met passing standards on state assessments.
III.3. **Develop Effective Policies – Texas Background**

- In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* described the condition of education in the United States as unsatisfactory (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). A year later, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 72, which mandated sweeping reforms in the state’s public education system. The bill, among other changes, increased graduation requirements, established a minimum competency testing program with an exit-level test for graduation, prohibited social promotion, limited the number of permissible absences, and linked participation in extracurricular activities to academic standards with a “no pass/no play” policy. The legislation authorized the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to implement a system for collecting data on student dropouts and to begin developing a program to reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to no more than 5% and ordered a study of the state’s dropout problem on the economy. As the research was being conducted, change was underway. Statewide public reporting of student performance and progress began in 1985-1986.

- Since 1987 districts have submitted student to TEA through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The first TEA report on public school dropouts presented data on students who dropped out during the 1987-1988 school year. Using student level data, the report presented actual, not estimated, annual dropout counts and rates for Grades 7-12 by county district and campus. It also included 5 year projections of cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates for the state.

- In 1990 the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) was established to rate districts and campus performance. By 1993 districts and campuses were rated with dropout rates becoming one of the primary indicators of performance.

- In 1996 TEA investigated using a high school completion rate as an alternative or supplement to an annual dropout rate. This measure, as a complement to the dropout rate, would provide an indicator of student and school success rather than failure. Four year completion rates for the classes of 1996 and 1997 were published and by 1998 the agency had sufficient years of PEIMS data to follow the progress of the members of a seventh-grade class through high school to determine their final statuses. Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rates for the class of 1998 were included in the AEIS report a year later.
III.3. Develop Effective Policies – Texas Background

- In Texas a report is published annually titled Secondary School Completion and Dropouts. This report includes state summaries of the annual dropout rate, longitudinal secondary school completion rates, and state attrition rates. In addition, the report provides historical information about dropout policy in Texas and the evolution of the dropout definition used for accountability purposes. Common methods of measuring student progress through school are discussed, along with advantages and disadvantages associated with each measure. Extensive background information on TEA data collection, processing and reporting is presented and national requirements for dropout data are described.

- The annual report on dropout rates and policies is available in PDF format on the agency website at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/).

- Texas currently uses the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition. Under this definition, a dropout is a student who is enrolled in public school in Grades 7-12, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not graduate, receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die. The 2006-2007 report was the second version to use this definition.
III.3. Develop Effective Policies

• The Collaborative Dropout Task Force is tasked with analyzing policies and statutes. An Action Team was formed in February 2009 to work on this strategic focus area.

• Recently an external evaluator for TEA completed a study of best practices for dropout prevention in Texas. The Task Force is analyzing the research and identifying the impact of policies on best practices in dropout prevention programs.

• TEA staff is working to integrate best practice research, including research from the *2008 IES Practice Guide for Dropout Prevention* and *Grad Nation*, into policy, practice and program guidelines as appropriate.

• The Best Practice Clearinghouse at TEA catalogues programs with effective policies and researched-based model programs. School districts use the Clearinghouse to review and replicate successful programs or policies.
III.4. **Employ Data Systems**

- The Texas Education Agency has a high quality statewide data system, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) that has been in place since 1987 to track student level, longitudinal data.

- The agency also has strong data systems for finance, grant management and special programs.

- The agency recently undertook a study of its data management system and a long term goal was developed to enhance its reporting and analysis capabilities using current technology.

- Several statewide programs such as Communities In Schools and 21st Century Community Learning Centers also employ case management databases for reporting program and student outcomes.
IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources, and Tracking Progress over Time.

IV.1 What group or committee will coordinate and sustain the work outlined in this action plan? What leaders does it have from various sectors – business, education, nonprofit, government, faith, etc.? Who else is needed? Who convenes the group, how often, and what sub-groups or committees does the effort need?

- The Texas Action Plan will be coordinated by the TEA Collaborative Dropout Prevention Taskforce on the state level. Texas held its America’s Promise Summit in November 2008 and the Task Force was created in December 2008 to increase interagency coordination and to develop resources for dropout related efforts in TEA.

- The Associate Commissioner for State Initiatives, Barbara Knaggs, oversees the Taskforce. It is co-chaired by two division directors: Jan Lindsey, Director of the Division of College ad Career Readiness and Nellie Reyes, Director of Programs for At-Risk Youth. A complete membership roster will be attached. The roster includes a high level appointed member from each division in TEA that has an impact or involvement in the dropout issue in TEA.

- A number of national and state philanthropic organizations are collaborating with TEA in its dropout prevention efforts, including Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the Communities Foundation of Texas. Partners convene on a regular basis.

- State Farm Insurance provided resources to TEA for dropout prevention mini-grants as a result of the America’s Promise Summit.

- The next step for the Task Force is envisioned to be organizing an Interagency Committee inclusive of members from business, nonprofits and state level organizations.
IV.2. What financial, human, and other resources are needed in order to begin acting on this plan? What resources are currently available, what will potentially need to be blended, and what new resources will need to be sought to do this work? Who might help secure additional resources to fill the gaps, and/or what funders (or others) may be approached? Are you setting a resource goal along with the outcome goal?

- TEA examines opportunities to coordinate resources and to fill gaps on an ongoing basis.
- The agency shares the America’s Promise goal to work with national, state and local partners to accomplish aligned dropout prevention goals.
- The Collaborative Dropout Prevention Task Force will continue to discuss specific resource needs and to set goals in the future as its work progresses.
- Texas would definitely be interested in collaborative efforts and resource opportunities for special projects related to dropout prevention.
IV.3. How will your state evaluate its dropout prevention efforts to ensure it is making a difference? What is the plan to monitor and track the progress being made on its developed goals? How will you maintain visibility around the dropout prevention issue by reporting to the public on the progress being made?

1. TEA has a statewide accountability system and publishes reports for the state, regions, districts and campuses.

2. The Task Force will set goals and evaluate the dropout data annually to determine progress on goals.

3. The Task Force will evaluate the impact of deliverables completed.

4. Texas has multiple performance measures for each individual dropout prevention program including dropout and completion rates for each school district to measure progress.

5. Staff prepare reports regarding performance related to dropout prevention programs.

6. The Program Evaluation Unit at TEA conducts evaluations of state-funded programs.

7. The TEA Task Force for Dropout Prevention plans to coordinate with state level partners to enhance its impact on the dropout issue.

Together, all of these activities will keep the dropout issue visible in Texas.
V. Staying Connected to the America’s Promise Alliance: Identifying Long-term Interests, Priorities, and Points of Alignment

V.1. Across its work, the Alliance has committed to paying special attention to certain strategic priorities. Together, we are always looking for states and communities that share similar interests and that may provide effective models for policy and practice, investment opportunities and other points of alignment.

Please describe if your action plan has strategies specific to:

a. Focusing on the middle school years, especially providing service-learning and career exploration opportunities in and out of school.
   Yes. Texas has a focus on middle school years. Many local schools and grantees conduct career exploration and service learning both in and out of school as integrated program components addressing college and career readiness skills, for example. This is a shared point of alignment and interest.

b. Improving young people’s access to quality health care, including promotion of SCHIP and Medicaid public health insurance programs.
   TEA has a focus on improving health, nutrition, fitness and overall student wellness through several special programs and partnerships.
Continued

c. Creating community hubs where coordinated wraparound supports are available to young people and their families.
Some Texas grantees, such as Texas GEAR UP, Communities In Schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot provide hubs for services and community supports. Many schools are interested in developing services such as family resource centers when resources are available.

d. Engaging parents and caregivers to increase graduation and college readiness rates.
Yes, a number of programs involve a parent engagement component, including the Investment Capital Fund which is a state-funded program designed to engage parents. We would be very interested in information and alignment on parent involvement in education, college readiness. Increasing parent and caregiver involvement is a critical need for our dropout prevention efforts.

e. Supporting young people in foster care so they graduate from high school prepared for college, work and life.
TEA works with other state level organizations regarding the needs for foster care youth. Coordination is done locally with community Child Welfare Boards. When the Dropout Task Force initiates Phase II, the committee will reach out to the Department of Human Services regarding the needs of youth in foster care.

f. Developing young people’s financial literacy.
Yes, TEA is interested in developing financial literacy and the agency has a financial literacy pilot program. Financial literacy objectives are integrated into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).
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V.2. How can the America’s Promise Alliance best support your state or community with the implementation of this dropout prevention plan? The Alliance is interested in hearing how we can best assist you in your dropout prevention efforts, including resources we can provide, relationships we can facilitate, and any other needs your community may have.

- Continue to communicate with Summit states on an ongoing basis;
- Maintain an Alliance email list for information, connections and resources;
- Provide links to best practices, resources and tools for dropout prevention;
- Provide policy updates especially from the nonprofit and business sectors;
- Share grant opportunities that might be appropriate for Texas communities;
- Keep Summit state partners informed of local America’s Promise Summits and facilitate state engagement with local communities where appropriate;
- Maintain a community discussion forum on the Alliance website for states to share information;
- Advise states on professional development opportunities; and
- Continue to provide advocacy for dropout prevention, youth, education, college and career readiness initiatives on the national level.
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