Public Hearing Held to Announce Student, District Financial, and ESC Accountability

As required each year by the Texas Education Code, Region One ESC hosted its public hearing to announce the academic and financial performance of Region One ESC area school districts and charter schools during the regularly called Board of Directors meeting. In attendance at the meeting were school district superintendents, personnel, and charter school representatives. Region One ESC Board Chairperson, Dr. Manuel Gomez, Jr., presided over the meeting welcoming all in attendance and congratulating school superintendents and charter school leaders for a successful year. The public hearing also kicked off a celebratory year for Region One as regional education service centers statewide celebrate 50 years of serving Texas public schools.

In recognition of the 50 years of service, Dr. Cornelio Gonzalez, Region One ESC Executive Director shared information with those in attendance chronicling the history of education service centers. He noted that the statewide framework for regional education service centers was patterned after an already-existing cooperative of school districts, The Valley Association for Superior Education (VASE), which was initiated by educators in what is now Region One. On hand to celebrate were former Region One Executive Directors, Jack Damron and Dr. Sylvia R. Hatton, and Richard R. Cantu, former ESC Board Member. Also in attendance was Ms. Valerie Ramirez, daughter in law of Edinburg native Mr. Alfonso Ramirez who was instrumental in writing the successful operational grant that provided the initial funding to create VASE.

Reporting on the region’s overall performance, Dr. Eduardo Cancino, Deputy Director for Instructional Support Services, provided an overview of the state performance system. Dr. Cancino explained that Texas’ accountability system uses multiple indexes to provide an overview of student academic performance, academic growth, and a student’s readiness for college and careers.
Districts, campuses and charters could receive one of three ratings under the accountability system: Met Standard or Improvement Required, explained Dr. Cancino. Charter School districts that are evaluated by and Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) provisions are also eligible for a “Met Alternative Standard” rating, according the Texas Education Agency. In order to earn a rating of Met Standard or Met Alternative Standard, a campus or district must meet the target on either Index 1 or Index 2 plus meet the targets on Index 3 and Index 4. For the 2015-2016 school year, the number of districts achieving a rating of Met Standard or Met Alternative Standard stayed relatively stable to the previous years.

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of Met Standard are also eligible for distinction designations based on achievement on performance indicators compared to a group of 40 campuses of similar type, size and student demographics. Dr. Cancino explained the Distinction designations will be publicly released by September 16 by the Texas Education Agency.

Almost 100% of Region One School districts achieved a Met Standard Rating (98%) compared to a 94% Met Standard rating statewide. In comparing the percent of districts achieving a Met Standard Rating with similar education service centers, the Region One area with 98% out-performed the areas of Region 4 (Houston), Region 20 (San Antonio), Region 13 (Austin), and Region 10 (Richardson). In a comparison of all school districts and regional education service center areas statewide, again Region One scored at the top. (See graphs to right)

Dr. Cancino explained that moving forward, the state will transition to a new accountability system in 2017-2018 adopting a new set of indicators for A-F district and campus ratings. The A-F ratings preview results will be released in January 2017. Dr. Cancino stressed that it is important for schools and their communities to understand that the A-F ratings will not be an aggregate score, rather districts will be receiving a letter grade for domains 1-4 individually.

In the area of financial accountability, Frances Guzman, Region One ESC Deputy Director, Business, Operations, and Finance Support reported on the preliminary regional results of FIRST, the state’s financial accountability system. Guzman explained the FIRST system creates transparency and is designed to encourage Texas public schools to better manage their financial resources to provide maximum allocation possible for direct instructional purposes. The 2015-2016 ratings, based on the prior year’s data, is made up of fifteen different indicators which comprise groupings to include 5 critical indicators, 7 solvency indicators, and 3 indicators which look at financial competency. Districts earn points for each of these indicators, with the exception of the critical areas which are either a pass/fail for the district, making it possible for a district to earn a perfect score of 100.

Guzman reported there were 10 school districts to earn a perfect score: Edinburg CISD, La Joya ISD, Laredo ISD, Los Fresnos CISD, McAllen ISD, Monte Alto ISD, PSJA ISD, Point Isabel ISD, Raymondville ISD, and South Texas ISD. Charter School districts, held to the same accountability standard, had 3 districts earning perfect scores including Gateway Academy Charter, Mid-Valley Academy, and Vanguard Academy. To gauge financial integrity, a district can earn a Superior, Above Standard, Meets Standard, or Substandard Achievement. This year, 35 of the 37 school districts received a Superior rating. Two districts received an Above Average rating. All 6 of Region One’s charter school districts received a Superior rating.

Guzman cautioned that scoring for the 2016-2017 year will be more stringent possibly affecting a district’s rating from one year to the next.

An overview of the Survey of Region One ESC Evaluation of Services was presented by Dr. Marco Antonio Lara, Deputy Director for Administrative Leadership, Community, & School Support. The statewide survey, conducted by the Texas Education Agency and administered by the University of Texas Organizational Excellence Group, analyzed the satisfaction of Superintendents and Charter School Directors with the regional education service centers. The survey measured satisfaction in three main areas: support of regular education programs, support of programs for special populations, and with other ESC services.
Survey participants rated each area on a 1-5 scale (5=very satisfied to 1=very dissatisfied).

Dr. Daniel Trevino, Chairperson of the Regional Advisory Council of Superintendents, provided an overview of the Region One ESC Client Satisfaction Survey distributed to all users of Region One ESC services. Overall, Dr. Trevino reported that school districts and their superintendents were pleased with the level of service and support provided to them by their education service center.

Under his Executive Report, Dr. Gonzalez reported on the following items:

In his Personnel Matters Report, Dr. Gonzalez reported on the following Additions: Gabby Cuevas, Office of Human Resources, Specialist/Cooperative/Staffing; Belinda Gorena, Office of School Improvement, Accountability & Compliance, Administrator; Diana Perez, Office of Information Systems and Technology, Specialist/PEIMS/Data Analytics; Nancy Sanchez, Office of Information Technology, Specialist/Business Analyst; Kelly VanHee, Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, Administrator; Felida Villarreal, Office of Human Resources, Specialist/SubHub.

Dr. Gonzalez also reported on the following Resignations: Lisa Blevins, Office of Early Learning/Speech Language Pathologist; Maribel Rodriguez, Office of Adult Education/Supervisor; Mary Trevino-Cortez, Office of Information Technology/IT Project Manager; Wally Trevino, Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment/Technology Integration Specialist.

Upcoming Events

Dr. Gonzalez announced the following upcoming events:

- **September 20, 2016**
  ESC Board of Directors Meeting

- **September 23-25, 2016**
  TASA/TASB Annual Convention

- **October 18, 2016**
  ESC Board of Directors Meeting

- **November 4-6, 2016**
  TAESC Conference

- **November 29, 2016**
  ESC Board of Directors Meeting

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- Approved Interlocal Agreement between Region One ESC and Region 8/The Interlocal Purchasing System Program,

- Approved Region One ESC Delegate and Alternate Appointments to TASB 2016 Delegate Assembly,

- Approved Revision to the 2016-2017 Support Personnel Salary Schedule,