



NEWS

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Districts and campuses recognized for exceptional use of High School Allotment funds

AUSTIN - Commissioner of Education Robert Scott today recognized two school districts and eight high school campuses that offer exceptional high school completion and college readiness programs implemented with High School Allotment funds.

The High School Allotment (Allotment), a \$320 million annual fund created by the Texas Legislature in 2006 provides every Texas school district with \$275 per student in grades 9-12 to improve high school graduation and college readiness rates.

In May 2007, a High School Allotment Advisory Group, comprised of 14 experts and stakeholders representing Texas' secondary school education system, was appointed by the commissioner to recommend criteria and procedures for identifying exceptional uses of the allotment funds.

Recognition was given for the implementation of exceptional programs or strategies in the following areas:

- Preparing students for college readiness;
- Increasing graduation rates;
- Improving curriculum alignment or preparing students for successful transition from middle school to high school or from high school to college; and
- Implementing innovative high school completion and success programs or strategies.

School districts were invited to self-nominate their programs for exceptional use of the allotment funds. Of those 22 districts and campuses requesting consideration for recognition, the following nominees representing large, medium and small campuses and districts were selected as examples of exceptional use of the allotment.

Goodrich High School in the Goodrich Independent School District and Friendswood High School in Friendswood ISD received recognition for the implementation of innovative high school completion and success programs and strategies.

Idea College Preparatory High School, an open enrollment charter school in Donna, Texas, Gatesville High School in Gatesville ISD and East Central High School in San Antonio's East Central ISD were recognized for strategies used in preparing students for college success.

San Antonio's Northside ISD and Whitney High School in Whitney ISD were recognized for their efforts to increase graduation rates.

Patton Springs ISD, New Deal High School in New Deal ISD and Comanche High School in Comanche ISD were recognized in the areas of improving curriculum alignment and preparing students for successful transitions from high school to college.

Implementing innovative high school completion and success programs or strategies

Friendswood High School implemented an innovative, systematic approach to ensure students' successful completion of high school. Using the High School Allotment funds, the school created a Student Success Program (SSP) that provides intervention services to any freshmen experiencing difficulty passing an English, mathematics, science or social studies class and to any at-risk high school student regardless of grade classification experiencing difficulty in a math or science course. Intervention services include math, reading and science instructional specialists to provide intensive instruction; specialized math and science labs; an online computer assisted program and an academic library class. Early signs of success are evident in the gains made in Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores in all subject areas targeted except one, with significant gains seen among African American and Hispanic students in math.

Goodrich High School, located in a small rural community undergoing economic change, decided to use its allotment to encourage its students to attend college. Goodrich High School funded a variety of strategies using its allotment funds including providing students opportunities to visit surrounding colleges and universities; offering parents and students training on how to complete financial aid documents as well as providing access to computers for them to submit online required college application paperwork. In addition, each classroom adopted a university and a monthly "alumni day" was introduced during which teachers and staff members wear college paraphernalia. As a result of these efforts, a majority of the school's graduating seniors are enrolling in college or other postsecondary training.

Preparing Students for College Readiness

Idea College Preparatory (ICP) High School has employed its allotment to prepare its predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged student population for success in postsecondary education. ICP adopted the International Baccalaureate (IB) model that builds a culture of academic excellence and respect. All students from grades 9-12 were enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course and are expected to take the national AP test. Teachers received intense training and are accessible after school hours to assist students with the ambitious IB curriculum. In 2007, TAKS scores improved in all content areas from 2006. All students completing the IB Diploma Program will graduate high school with 32 hours of college credit.

Gatesville High School also is being recognized for its efforts to increase the number of students taking advanced academic courses. Allotment funds have been used to employ additional AP teachers and purchase equipment to improve AP instruction. Online AP courses were purchased and AP exam fees were paid using allotment funds.

In order to increase the number of students enrolled in Pre-AP, AP and dual credit courses, **East Central High School** used the allotment to partially fund the salaries of teachers hired to teach advanced courses. These courses, begun under the Early College High School project, were expanded and offered to all students. Students representing economically disadvantaged and minority populations have been specifically targeted for increased enrollment in advanced courses. Early measures indicate that standardized test scores have improved and the number of students taking college preparatory and/or advanced courses has increased.

Increasing graduation rates

Northside ISD in San Antonio received recognition for exceptional use of its allotment for a strategy that designates a “graduation coach” at every high school within the district to work one-on-one with ninth-grade students who are at risk of failing English, mathematics, science or social studies courses. Guided study halls staffed by support coaches were implemented to assist at-risk students retrieve credits and prepare for exams. In addition, Northside ISD entered into a partnership with San Antonio College to establish a program for students who were in the process of dropping out. The program assists students with completing high school with a diploma and some college credits.

Whitney High School was able to decrease the number of students at risk of dropping out from high school by providing students who had consistently failed in the traditional classroom with the opportunity to complete courses in the Credit Recovery Program. As a result, a majority of the high school seniors enrolled in the program were able to graduate. Due to its success, Whitney High School now plans to extend the program to homebound students.

Improving curriculum alignment or preparing students for successful transitions

At **New Deal High School**, faculty teams representing the four core content areas meet on a routine basis to review and discuss student performance data and classroom performance. Teachers shared classroom successes and challenges, and identified curricular strengths and weaknesses in order to make curricular improvements. This approach funded by the allotment has enabled New Deal High School to develop a plan of action to close achievement gaps. During content area meetings, data are reviewed to help teachers make decisions on instructional interventions. The effectiveness of curricular alignment has resulted in increased TAKS passing rates and increased overall TAKS scale scores.

Comanche High School is taking steps to better prepare its students for successful transition from high school to college. High School Allotment funds have been used to pay high school seniors’ tuition and books for College Algebra and dual credit College English. Funds also have been used to implement the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program for high school students who may be the first in their family to attend college. The AVID director, teachers, tutors and counselor provide students with the skills necessary to be successful in academically rigorous courses. As a result of these allotment activities, Comanche has realized a significant increase in student enrollment in advanced courses.

High School Allotment funds have allowed **Patton Springs ISD**, a small rural district, to pay tuition each semester for high school seniors who might otherwise not be able to take college courses while attending high school. In addition, allotment funds have provided the opportunity for the district to pay salary expenses for local teachers who provide instruction for dual credit courses. This has enabled a majority of Patton ISD seniors to graduate from high school with some college credit.

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