

Measuring Teacher Success in Texas
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Texas Governor's Business Council (GBC)--100 Texas business leaders who provide advice on education, transportation, and economic development--released a plan to "bolster teacher effectiveness" in its report on "Excellence in the Classroom."

If implemented, the council's recommendations will better outfit schools "with the best tools to increase teacher effectiveness and foster true excellence in the classroom," said lead author Sandy Kress.

"Teachers matter," Kress wrote. If a student has an effective teacher as opposed to an average teacher for five consecutive years, studies show the increased learning would close the gap between low- and middle-income students.

More Precise Standards Needed

According to the Governor's Business Council (GBC), current Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards do not provide teachers with effective tools to teach kids.

TEKS should be better defined, more measurable, skill and knowledge-based and more specific to each grade level to give "teachers clear direction on exactly what specific skills and knowledge and in what progression students should be taught," the report said.

TEKS should be revised and implemented within two years, and then be systematically taught, increase in difficulty and complexity from one grade level to the next and should be able to be completed in a nine month school year.

The TEKS need revision because "the present standards emphasize the process more than the right answer;" said Donna Garner, a retired public school teacher and education consultant in Waco.

"They are project-based, emphasizing group-think instead of independent learning, encourage students to express their feelings, beliefs, and opinions more than expecting them to learn deep content knowledge." Current TEKS can not be completed in a years time, Garner added.

Because English, Language Arts and Reading "forms the foundation for students' success in all other courses," it must be rewritten first, said Garner, "only then should other subject area standard revisions begin, followed by revision of assessment tools."

The re-write of the assessment test, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) should align with the revised TEKS with both revisions be completed within three years said the GBC.

Texas should widely distribute specifically outlined TEKS to both teachers and parents to explain what students should know academically at each grade level to "make sure students have mastery of knowledge and skills," the report asserted.

"The Council is on the right track to recommend that TEKS, adopted in 1997, be revised so that they are academic, knowledge-based, measurable, explicit, and grade-level-specific," Garner said.

Link Teacher Training, Experience to Student Achievement

The report calls for a revision of Texas' Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database so the teacher of each core subject is listed in each student record so that teacher's training and experience could be linked to student achievement.

The report also suggests listing a teacher's college name, major, all in-service and professional development and institution names also be recorded in PEIMS so that the effectiveness and impact of teacher preparation institutions on teacher performance and effectiveness can be tracked.

"Measuring and improving teacher effectiveness absolutely require better and more timely data," said Kress.

Teacher Evaluations Challenging at Best

In an effort to help teachers improve student learning, better teacher evaluation mechanisms are needed. "Helping teachers succeed requires a far better means of evaluating teachers," Kress said. "Teacher evaluations must be based on student achievement, be more objective, and more thorough."

Current teacher evaluation practices are inadequate and insufficient because they rely more on teacher efforts than on results and effectiveness according to the report, so evaluations must now be based "primarily on academic growth rates their students achieve over time."

Since teachers do not have total control over student achievement, and several teachers contribute to a student's learning, a portion of the evaluation must include principal and peer review according to GBC. The report added that teachers as well as principals must be offered more research-based professional development, and both must be held accountable for low student performance.

Holly Eaton, spokesperson for Texas Classroom Teachers Association, believes teachers don't need more consequences to testing and said "Student performance is already a small, but appropriate component of the current appraisal system," and current law already requires that "new teachers undergo a two to three year probationary period during which schools have the opportunity to scrutinize them heavily and easily remove them if necessary."

"We have analyzed the best research and best practices in the area of improving teacher effectiveness," and evaluation of teachers based on student achievement is needed said Kress, "to determine teacher effectiveness, to reward teachers who are effective, to help teachers who are not, and to remove those who cannot improve after much effort and help."

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Excellence in the Classroom," issued by the Governor's Business Council in December 2006, is available through *PolicyBot*TM, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document [#20592](#).

"Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Learning Standards for Texas Children: A Summary for Parents" is also available through *PolicyBot*TM. Search for document [#20593](#).

Research on Teacher Quality can be found in the Handbook of the Economics of Education, Vol 2 Chapter 18 at <http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/HESEDU2018.pdf>

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