

## TAGT Legislative Update

April 27, 2009

TAGT is working hard at the Texas Legislature to bring back **accountability for gifted education**. The bill that would accomplish this is **House Bill 1692**, co-authored by Rep. Scott Hochberg of Houston and Rep. Rafael Anchia of Dallas. HB 1692 would bring back accountability and would also offer a financial incentive for those school districts that ran exemplary programs.

The bill had a hearing on March 31 in front of the House Public Education Committee and was supported not only by testimony from TAGT, but by registered support from many other groups, including:

- Texas Association of School Administrators
- Texas Association of School Boards
- Texas Association of Community Schools
- Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association
- Association of Texas Professional Educators
- Texas Classroom Teachers Association
- Texas Classroom Teachers Association
- Texas Federation of Teachers

Unfortunately a large fiscal note was attached to the bill, which slowed its progress. The prediction by the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) was that 50% of the school districts in the state would be eligible for the financial incentives in the bill, to a cost of \$40 million dollars over two years. TAGT estimates that no more than 5% of the districts would be eligible that quickly, and that a truer cost would be closer to 5-10% of that amount, or even less, as the rules for accountability would have to be created by the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency.

This past week brought good news—Rep. Hochberg was able to insert the language of HB 1692, minus the financial incentive, into **House Bill 3**. HB 3 is a major piece of legislation that reworks the entire **accountability and testing system** in Texas. While there is not unanimous support for this bill because of its huge scope, TAGT believes that accountability for gifted education should be part and parcel of educational accountability in general. TAGT has been informed that Rep. Hochberg is working with the LBB to ensure that the fiscal note is reasonable, and if successful, plans to offer an amendment to HB 3 that would add the financial incentive back into the bill.

TAGT is appreciative of the efforts by Rep. Hochberg in supporting this long overdue piece of legislation. While there are still many hurdles to this bill becoming law, we hope that the support for HB 1692 signals a growing awareness of and support for gifted education. We will keep you informed as to the bill's progress through the Legislature.

**Other items of interest:**

**SB 90** has passed both the Senate and the House, and is headed to the Governor’s desk. Designed for children whose parents are in the military, this bill requires school districts to initially honor educational placements made by the previous school district, including placement in gifted programs.

**SB 1549** has passed the Senate and gone to the House for a hearing. The bill rescinds the legislation passed two years ago that required the development of a **uniform grade point average**. This bill leaves the decision of whether to develop a standard method of calculating grade point average to the commissioner of TEA, but does not require it.

The **funding of Texas public schools** is back in the news. Two identical bills, **SB 982**, authored by Sen. Leticia Van de Putte of San Antonio, and **HB 1555**, authored by Rep. Diane Patrick of Arlington, received a great deal of support from most all education groups in recent committee hearings. According to the testimony, these bills would create much greater equity than the current funding mechanism, and increase the state contribution to education, and lift restrictions that limit school funding to that of several years ago.

Finally, we just received word that **HB 3586** will receive a hearing on Wednesday, April 29, by the House Higher Education Committee. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Pete Gallego of Alpine, would establish the **Texas Academy of Fine Arts, Culture, and Sciences** at Sul Ross State University. This would be a statewide magnet high school, similar to Texas Academy of Math and Science (TAMS) at the University of North Texas, and the Texas Academy for Leadership in the Humanities (TALH) at Lamar University. If you would like to support this bill, please contact the members of the committee, listed below:

**Texas House Committee on Higher Education      81<sup>st</sup> Legislature: 2009**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Member</b>	
<b>Chair:</b>	Rep. Dan Branch (Dallas)	<a href="mailto:dan.branch@house.state.tx.us">dan.branch@house.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	Rep. Joaquin Castro (San Antonio)	<a href="mailto:joaquin.castro@house.state.tx.us">joaquin.castro@house.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Members:</b>	Rep. Roberto Alonzo (Dallas)	<a href="mailto:roberto.alonzo@house.state.tx.us">roberto.alonzo@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Leo Berman (Tyler)	<a href="mailto:leo.berman@house.state.tx.us">leo.berman@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Ellen Cohen (Houston)	<a href="mailto:ellen.cohen@house.state.tx.us">ellen.cohen@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Donna Howard (Austin)	<a href="mailto:donna.howard@house.state.tx.us">donna.howard@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Brian McCall (Plano)	<a href="mailto:brian.mccall@house.state.tx.us">brian.mccall@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Diane Patrick (Arlington)	<a href="mailto:diane.patrick@house.state.tx.us">diane.patrick@house.state.tx.us</a>
	Rep. Patrick Rose (Dripping Springs)	<a href="mailto:patrick.rose@house.state.tx.us">patrick.rose@house.state.tx.us</a>

The mailing address for all House members is: Texas House of Representatives  
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