

TAGT Legislative Update

April 30, 2009/May 5, 2009

LEGISLATIVE NEWS: On April 29, both the **House and Senate unanimously passed their own versions of the school accountability bill**. While they are similar in many regards, from TAGT's viewpoint, House Bill 3 (HB 3) is preferred to Senate Bill 3 (SB 3), due to its inclusion of language regarding accountability for gifted education.

Rep. Scott Hochberg was able to insert the language of HB 1692, minus the financial incentive, into **HB 3**, a major piece of legislation that reworks the **accountability and testing system** in Texas. TAGT believes that accountability for gifted education should be part and parcel of educational accountability in general.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Unless one chamber accepts the other's bill, it is most likely that the bills will go to a **conference committee**, which will attempt to craft a single bill that will be acceptable to both the House and the Senate. The conference committee is made up of five senators and five representatives, each of whom is appointed by the respective leaders of the House and Senate.

While the committee members are not yet known, it is almost certain that **Sen. Florence Shapiro**, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and **Rep. Rob Eissler**, Chair of the House Public Education Committee, will be appointed. Both have been supportive of gifted education in the past, and we are very cautiously optimistic that this language will remain in the final bill.

MORE NEWS: TAGT has been told that Rep. Hochberg is trying to include the financial incentive from HB 1692 into **HB 3646**, a public school finance bill. This incentive would encourage the use of quality curriculum for gifted services.

TAGT is most appreciative of the efforts by Rep. Hochberg in supporting gifted education this session. While there are still many hurdles to either HB 3/SB 3 or HB 3646 becoming law, it appears that there is a growing awareness of and support for gifted education. We will keep you informed as to these bills' progress through the Legislature.

HB 3586 received a hearing on Wednesday evening, April 29, by the House Higher Education Committee. This bill, sponsored by **Rep. Pete Gallego**, 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. TAGT provided written testimony in support of the bill.

MAY 5 UPDATE: **HB 3586** was voted favorably out of the House Higher Education Committee on May 4; it may be heard on the House floor in the days ahead. Thus far, the incentive money from HB 1692 for the Texas Performance Standards has not surfaced in the **Committee Substitute for HB 3646**. Rep. Hochberg may try to add it via an amendment or on the Senate version if it passes the House.