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Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce calls for tougher school standards

12:00 AM CDT on Friday, October 3, 2008

By **TERRENCE STUTZ** / The Dallas Morning News
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AUSTIN – A coalition of business and research groups announced Thursday that it will push for more emphasis on career and college readiness in public schools, including tougher performance standards for schools.

The Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce – headed by the Texas Association of Business and Governor's Business Council – said it is time for the Legislature and education officials to address the inadequate skills of so many high school graduates.

"Today, 65 percent of new jobs created in the U.S. require some college or equivalent skills," said Jim Windham, chairman of the Texas Institute for Education Reform. "However, research shows that the vast majority of Texas students – more than 80 percent in some cases – fail to meet college readiness benchmarks."

Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business, said the Legislature moved in the right direction last year by creating a series of end-of-course tests for students in lieu of the current graduation exam that many educators think is too easy.

"Now it's time to take the next step by aligning our curricula, standards and assessment with the goal to ensure students are gaining the knowledge they need to be career- or college-ready upon graduation," he said.

The coalition said several steps should be taken, including:

- Districts and schools that don't meet accountability standards or experience a decline in their ratings must improve or face serious consequences.
- Curriculum standards must be raised immediately to reflect the knowledge and skills students need to be ready for college. Minimum passing rates on state tests as well as performance standards should be raised over the next three years.
- School performance ratings should be based on the percentage of students who are on track for college or career readiness, or who are making progress and will be on track for college readiness in three years.

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Coalition to lobby state Legislature on bolstering education standards

Author(s): Brandi Grissom / Austin Bureau **Date:** October 3, 2008

Section: News

AUSTIN -- A coalition of business groups and research organizations on Thursday said they planned to urge lawmakers next year to improve education standards to ensure that students are ready for college and work after graduation. "Career- or college-ready is the standard we are pushing for," said Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association for Business and spokesman for the **Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce**.

Hammond said the coalition would encourage lawmakers to reform school accountability standards to measure whether students are improving each year on the path to college or the workplace.

Too many students, Hammond said, drop out of Texas schools. And many of those who graduate need remedial classes in college and aren't prepared to meet employers' demands.

The coalition also will urge legislators to improve career and technology education programs and to give incentive pay to teachers whose students show improvement from one year to the next.

Carlos Martinez, director of community and governmental relations at El Paso Independent School District, said officials there have been working with the business community to meet local work-force needs.

Measures the coalition recommended, he said, would improve the district's ability to ensure that graduates are prepared for higher education or to start a career.

But, he said, the state must pay for measures such as teacher incentives.

"These recommendations that they're making are great," Martinez said. "Now, it's up to the Legislature to follow up."

Richard Dayoub, president of the Greater El Paso Chamber of

Commerce, said the recommendations are a good start but not the entire solution to problems in Texas' education system.

The business and education communities, he said, must first agree on what standards students should meet, and then schools must have the resources to achieve those goals.

"To get there, we need to look at a multitude of varying solutions that are adaptable to various communities and cultures that exist there," he said.

Brandi Grissom may be reached at bgrissom@elpasotimes.com; 512-479-6606.

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Here are today's education clips along with clips from yesterday's press conference in Midland highlighting TCCW.

Andrew and Bill were also interviewed by the Midland Reporter-Telegram and we expect a story from them soon.

KMID – ABC - Channel 2 - Midland/Odessa

Education Coalition

Reported by: Stephanie Sobic

October 28, 2008

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KCRS – AM 550 – Midland/Odessa

New coalition calls for higher high school standards

October 28, 2008

http://www.newstalkkcrs.com/content_page.php?pid=local_news

Dallas Morning News

Dallas schools to rehire 57 teachers

By KENT FISCHER

October 29, 2008

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/102908dnmetdisdrehire.3975cba.html>

Austin American Statesman

Schools will face stiffer rules on graduation rates

Standards attempt to extend No Child Left Behind law to high school grades and will apply to minorities and students with disabilities

By Laura Heinauer

October 29, 2008

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Editorial: AP classes and beyond

October 29, 2008

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KMID – ABC - Channel 2 - Midland/Odessa

Education Coalition

Reported by: Stephanie Sobic

October 28, 2008

http://permianbasin360.com/media_player.php?media_id=59851

Some studies suggest that a vast majority of high school students in Texas, graduate unprepared for college or a job. A state-wide group hopes to change that. The Texas Coalition for a Competitive workforce met in Midland this morning. The group launched new ideas to the Permian Basin about educating students for the next step after high school. These new ideas will, hopefully, get kids college and career ready. "To ensure that all students when they graduate school are prepared to go to a 4 year college, a career in technology education, advanced military training or another post secondary pursuit," says Andrew Erben with the Coalition. This coalition is made up of several groups. Just to name a few; the Texas Association of Business, the Texas Institute for Education Reform and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

KCRS – AM 550 – Midland/Odessa

New coalition calls for higher high school standards

October 28, 2008

http://www.newstalkkcrs.com/content_page.php?pid=local_news

The Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce wants improved accountability to show high school graduates are ready for college or careers.

Several associations for business and education interests have formed a coalition. They want to present the next session of the state legislature with reforms to make students better prepared for college or career training. Texas Association of Business president Bill Hammond says 65 percent of new jobs require college or equivalent skills. However, he says as many as 80 percent of Texas high school students fail to meet readiness benchmarks.

A spokesman for the Texas Institute for Education Reform, Andy Erben, says businesses could help schools provide career training.

The coalition wants to revise curriculum standards to better reflect the skills students need to be ready for college or careers.

Dallas Morning News

Dallas schools to rehire 57 teachers

By KENT FISCHER

October 29, 2008

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/102908dnmetdisdrehire.3975cba.html>

Two weeks after laying off hundreds of teachers, the Dallas Independent School District said Tuesday that it is rehiring 57 of them, filling vacancies created when more educators than expected retired or voluntarily resigned this month.

The move came days after the district posted about 60 vacancies for teaching jobs on its Web site. Advocates for teachers and several district trustees were incredulous that just-fired teachers had not been immediately rehired into those jobs.

District spokesman Jon Dahlander did not know late Tuesday who the rehired teachers are or in which schools they will work. He did say, however, that the teachers were not rehired into their previous jobs, although they were matched to their new positions according to state certification requirements. He added that principals were authorized to start the rehiring Monday.

"These are positions where we are understaffed," he said. The district "is trying its best to notify [laid off] teachers about the openings."

Mr. Dahlander said the positions became available, in large part, because the district gave workers the option of taking a voluntary severance package to help reduce the number of layoffs, which occurred Oct. 16. But more teachers than expected took the offer, which had an Oct. 20 deadline.

Since late September, the Dallas Independent School District has laid off about 630 employees – 415 of them teachers and principals – to reduce a budget deficit that was expected to reach \$84 million this fiscal year.

Hundreds of vacant support and administrative positions have also been eliminated.

About 320 employees took the voluntarily resignation offer of two months' pay and benefits. Many of those acceptances came in after the Oct. 16 layoffs, which created the unexpected vacancies, Mr. Dahlander said.

Teacher representative Dale Kaiser said the rehiring were "great news."

"They might not have the same job they had, but they are back in the district and will continue working with children," he said. "This is what we asked for ... a recall procedure. We should be taking care of our own" before opening up vacancies to outsiders.

Austin American Statesman

Schools will face stiffer rules on graduation rates

Standards attempt to extend No Child Left Behind law to high school grades and will apply to minorities and students with disabilities

By Laura Heinauer

October 29, 2008

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Life > Education

Coalition: Revamp state accountability system, set college readiness standard

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Texas Institute for Education Reform President Andrew Erben and Chief Executive Officer of the Texas Association of Business Bill Hammond met media in the Midland Chamber of Com

**By Ruth Campbell
Midland Reporter-Telegram**

Published: Tuesday, October 28, 2008 9:11 PM CDT

Five trade associations plan to lobby lawmakers in the upcoming legislative session to set a career or college readiness standard for high school graduates with an eye toward better preparing students for life.

The 10-month-old Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce, which includes the Texas Association of Business, Texas Institute for Education Reform, Texas Public Policy Foundation, Governor's Business Council and Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, also wants a wholesale revamping of the state accountability system.

Texas Institute for Education Reform President Andrew Erben and Chief Executive Officer of the Texas Association of Business Bill Hammond met media in the Midland Chamber of Commerce boardroom Tuesday to talk about their proposal.

The group came together with a common concern that the "quality and quantity" of students coming out of high school needs to improve. It wants to use a score of 2300 on the current TAKS test or community college entrance requirements as the standard.

"Unless we do a better job than we are today, the economy of Texas will suffer in the future," Hammond said.

The coalition's focus is revamping the school accountability system, measuring each child every year to see if they're "on track," Hammond said.

Another key component, Erben said, is rigorous, relevant career and technology education. "There are a lot of students who do not want to go on to four-year institution," he said.

"Ideally," Erben said, "career and technology courses in our view should offer dual credit (so students can get high school and college credit at once) ... or lead directly to an industry certification, state license or certificate."

And while the state requirement is that students take four years of math and science to graduate, Erben said it should have some flexibility to allow an applied math, science and technology courses to allow students interested high-tech or trades to get some practical experience "while getting the knowledge they need in each of those core subjects."

"We have seen anecdotal evidence from many employers, but we have also seen 19 percent of students graduate from high school who are college ready in the four core courses," including English, math, science and social studies, according to data from the ACT, Erben said.

About 65 percent of future jobs will require post secondary education. "We want our children to be able to compete in this world in the future," Hammond said.

Today's accountability system is "failing the people of Texas, particularly employers and students because it's not giving a true indication of where we are," Hammond added.

Ruth Campbell can be reached at ruth@mrt.com.

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Education Initiatives Uniting Members

11/13/08

Education initiatives are uniting members of a group of business organizations from across the state.

Leaders of the "Texas Coalition For a Competitive Workforce" want lawmakers to adopt a specific slate of reforms during their next session.

Bill Hammond says employers are the ultimate school accountability measures.

"The future economic viability of Texas is at stake. We all want a strong vibrant economy that attracts capital, brings good jobs with good wages and good benefits to Texas. But we're going to have to have an educated workforce in order to do that," says Hammond.

Hammond says all students should be on a path towards college or career readiness.

The group supports yearly evaluations rather than periodic TAKS testing to ensure all students meet appropriate grade level competency standards.



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