



COMMUNICATION RESOURCES KIT

created through
a partnership
with



Revised June 2011



NOTICE

Reporting Your School District's Financial Accountability Rating

Every school district in Texas is required to prepare an annual financial management report that includes the following:

- A. The district's financial management performance rating provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) based on its comparison with indicators established by the Commissioner of Education for the state's new Financial Accountability System.
- B. The district's financial management performance under each indicator for the current and previous years' financial accountability ratings;
- C. Additional information required by the Commissioner of Education.

Notice: Starting with the 2007 calendar year, the financial management report that will be issued at the Schools FIRST hearing must contain certain required disclosures, in accordance with Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 109, Budgeting, Accounting, and Auditing Subchapter AA, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Financial Accountability Rating System.

Under Chapter 109, the Commissioner requires certain disclosures, as follows:

1. "a copy of the **superintendent's current employment contract**. The school district may publish the superintendent's employment contract on the school district's Internet site in lieu of publication in the annual financial management report;
2. a summary schedule for the fiscal year (12-month period) of **total reimbursements received by the superintendent and each board member**, including transactions resulting from use of the school district's credit card(s) to cover expenses incurred by the superintendent and each board member. The summary schedule shall separately report reimbursements for meals, lodging, transportation, motor fuel, and other items (the summary schedule of total reimbursements is not to include reimbursements for supplies and materials that were purchased for the operation of the school district);
3. a summary schedule for the fiscal year of the dollar amount of **compensation and/or fees received by the superintendent from another school district or**



NOTICE

any other outside entity in exchange for professional consulting and/or other personal services. The schedule shall separately report the amount received from each entity;

4. a summary schedule for the fiscal year of **the total dollar amount by the executive officers and board members of gifts that had an economic value of \$250 or more** in the aggregate in the fiscal year. This reporting requirement only applies to gifts received by the school district's executive officers and board members (and their immediate family as described by Government Code, Chapter 573, Subchapter B, as a person related to another person within the first degree by consanguinity or affinity) from an outside entity that received payments from the school district in the prior fiscal year, and gifts from competing vendors that were not awarded contracts in the prior fiscal year. This reporting requirement **does not apply** to reimbursement of travel-related expenses by an outside entity when the purpose of the travel is to investigate or explore matters directly related to the duties of an executive officer or board member, or matters related to attendance at

education-related conferences and seminars whose primary purpose is to provide continuing education (**this exclusion does not apply to trips for entertainment related purposes or pleasure trips**).

- This reporting requirement excludes an individual gift or a series of gifts from a single outside entity that had an aggregate economic value of less than \$250 per executive officer or board member; and
5. a summary schedule for the fiscal year of the **dollar amount by board member for the aggregate amount of business transactions with the school district**. This reporting requirement is not to duplicate the items disclosed in the summary schedule of reimbursements received by board members;....”
6. a summary schedule of the data submitted to the Texas Education Agency for the financial solvency provisions of Texas Education Code, §39.0822.
7. additional information that the district’s board of trustees deems useful.

Refer to the Commissioner’s Rules Concerning the Financial Accountability Rating System (Chapter 109, Subchapter AA) for more information.



NOTICE

Templates for reporting the new disclosures are provided in the pages preceding the glossary in this communication resources kit.

Publicizing Your District's Financial Report and Rating

Within two months of receiving the final financial accountability rating (including a final rating of Suspended-Data Quality), school districts are required to distribute the financial management report to attendees at a public hearing for School FIRST. The board of trustees is to have the public hearing at a district facility.

than 30 days or less than 14 days prior to the public hearing.

(If there is not a newspaper published in the county in which the district's central administration office is located, then the notice is to be published in the county located closest to the county seat of the county in which the district office is located).

District staff should have copies of the report ready to hand out to attendees at the public hearing and to anyone that requests a copy after the hearing.

Sample Notice:

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
TO DISCUSS YOUR DISTRICT
NAME'S**

State Financial Accountability Rating

**Your District Name will hold
a public meeting
at TIME, DATE, YEAR,
in the ROOM, BUILDING,
ADDRESS, CITY.**

**The purpose of this meeting
is to discuss Your District Name's rating
on the state's financial
accountability system.**

Notice of the hearing, including date, time and location, must be provided to a newspaper of general circulation in the district **once a week for two weeks prior to holding the public meeting.** The first notice may not be placed more



SAMPLE AGENDA

Your SCHOOL DISTRICT
City, Texas

Public Hearing on Schools FIRST, financial accountability rating system

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Your School District will hold a Schools FIRST public hearing on the DATE at TIME, in the LOCATION of Your School District, ADDRESS, City, Texas, for the purpose of:

- A. Call to Order
- B. Pledge of Allegiance
- C. Overview of Schools FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas)
- D. Your School District's rating
- E. Public Comments on the Report
- F. Adjournment

On this DATE at TIME, a copy of this notice was posted on the bulletin board of the main entrance foyer at Your School District, a place accessible to the public at all times, and on the bulletin board of the Administration Building Reception Area, ADDRESS, City, Texas, and distributed to local media representatives as requested.

Superintendent, Your School District



A PR OPPORTUNITY

The release of school district financial accountability ratings under the new Schools FIRST financial accountability rating system is a public relations opportunity for your district. After all, the media and public will receive the information anyway, so why not make the most of this news?

This is the ninth year of Schools FIRST (Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas), a financial accountability system for Texas school districts developed by the Texas Education Agency in response to Senate Bill 875 of the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999. The primary goal of Schools FIRST is to achieve quality performance in the management of school districts' financial resources, a goal made more significant due to the complexity of accounting associated with Texas' school finance system.

The Schools FIRST accountability rating system assigns one of four financial accountability ratings to Texas school districts, with the highest being "Superior Achievement," followed by "Above-Standard Achievement," "Standard Achievement" and "Substandard

If your district achieves a high rating for its financial accountability, you should take every opportunity to let your taxpayers know that you are doing a great job with their tax dollars.

Achievement." Districts with serious data quality problems may receive the additional rating of "Suspended – Data Quality." Districts that receive the "Substandard Achievement" or "Suspended – Data Quality" ratings under Schools FIRST must file a corrective action plan with the Texas Education Agency.

If your district achieves a high rating for its financial accountability, you should take every opportunity to let your taxpayers know that you are doing a great job with their tax dollars. If your rating isn't quite so high, then control the story by stating your results, and emphasizing that this Schools FIRST rating will help guide your efforts to do the best possible job for your community! Good or bad, get out in front of the story by being prepared.

Following are two sample news releases, one for those districts earning a high rating, and another for those that have improvements to make. We hope that they will serve as a starting point as you develop your plan for telling your community that you do as well caring for their money as your do their children.

Schools FIRST ratings:
Superior Achievement
Above-Standard Achievement
Standard Achievement
Substandard Achievement

Additional rating:
Suspended – Data Quality



SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE 1

_____, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information,
contact: _____
() ____-____

ISD Earns State’s Highest Fiscal Accountability Rating

_____ Independent School District officials announced that the district received a rating of “Superior Achievement” under Texas’ Schools FIRST financial accountability rating system. The Superior Achievement rating is the state’s highest, demonstrating the quality of _____ ISD’s financial management and reporting system.

This is the ninth year of Schools FIRST (Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas), a financial accountability system for Texas school districts developed by the Texas Education Agency in response to Senate Bill 875 of the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999. The primary goal of Schools FIRST is to achieve quality performance in the management of school districts’ financial resources, a goal made more significant due to the complexity of accounting associated with Texas’ school finance system.

“We are very pleased with _____ ISD’s Schools FIRST rating,” said _____ ISD Superintendent _____, “as it shows that our district is making the most of our taxpayers’ dollars. This rating shows that _____’s schools are accountable not only for student learning, but also for achieving these results cost-effectively and efficiently.”

The Schools FIRST accountability rating system assigns one of four financial accountability ratings to Texas school districts, with the highest being “Superior Achievement,” followed by “Above-Standard Achievement,” “Standard Achievement” and “Substandard Achievement.” Districts with serious data quality problems may receive the additional rating of “Suspended – Data Quality.” Districts that receive the “Substandard Achievement” or “Suspended – Data Quality” ratings under Schools FIRST must file a corrective action plan with the Texas Education Agency.

***** Localize for Your District *****



SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE 2

_____, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information,
contact: _____
() ____-____

_____ *ISD Announces Fiscal Accountability Rating*

_____ Independent School District officials announced that the district received a rating of “_____” under Texas’ Schools FIRST financial accountability rating system. The rating system measures the quality of a school district’s financial management and reporting.

This is the ninth year of Schools FIRST (Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas), a financial accountability system for Texas school districts developed by the Texas Education Agency in response to Senate Bill 875 of the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999. The primary goal of Schools FIRST is to achieve quality performance in the management of school districts’ financial resources, a goal made more significant due to the complexity of accounting associated with Texas’ school finance system.

“The Schools FIRST accountability rating ensures that Texas school districts are accountable not only for student learning, but also for achieving these results cost-effectively and efficiently,” said _____ ISD Superintendent _____. “The information provided by the Schools FIRST system will guide us in our continued efforts to maximize each taxpayer dollar.”

The Schools FIRST accountability rating system assigns one of four financial accountability ratings to Texas school districts, with the highest being “Superior Achievement,” followed by “Above-Standard Achievement,” “Standard Achievement” and “Substandard Achievement.” Districts with serious data quality problems may receive the additional rating of “Suspended – Data Quality.” District that receive the “Substandard Achievement” or “Suspended – Data Quality” ratings under Schools FIRST must file a corrective action plan with the Texas Education Agency.

***** Localize for Your District *****



How Ratings are Assessed

Rating Worksheet

With the passage of House Bill 3, 81st Legislative Session, the 65% instructional expenditure ratio requirement was repealed. This resulted in the deletion of prior indicators 13 and 14 related to the 65% instructional expenditure ratio requirement for the ratings issued by the Texas Education Agency in the summer of 2010. This also resulted in the deletion of provisions for posting the check register on the school district's Internet site, under the 2010 amendment of Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 109, Subchapter AA, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Financial Accountability Rating System.

The questions a school district must address in completing the worksheet used to assess its financial management system can be confusing to non-accountants. The following is a layman's explanation of what the questions mean—and what your district's answers can mean to its rating.

1. Was total Fund Balance less Reserved Fund Balance greater than Zero in the General Fund?

School districts must legally have a fund balance to ensure adequate funding for operations. This indicator is designed to ensure that your district has a positive amount of fund balance cash (savings) that is not designated or "reserved" for a specific purpose. In other words, "Does your district have funds set aside for a rainy day?"

2. Was the Total Unrestricted Net Asset Balance (Net of Accretion of Interest for Capital Appreciation Bonds) in the Governmental Activities Column in the Statement of Net Assets Greater than Zero? (If the District's Five-Year Percent Change in Students was a 10% Increase or More then Answer Yes)

This indicator simply asks, "Did the district's total assets exceed the total amount of liabilities (according to the very first financial statement in the annual audit report)?" Fortunately this indicator recognizes that high-growth districts incur large amounts of debt to fund construction, and that total debt may exceed the total amount of assets under certain scenarios.

3. Were there NO disclosures in the Annual Financial Report and/or other sources of information concerning default on bonded indebtedness obligations?

This indicator seeks to make certain that your district has paid your bills/obligations on bonds issued to pay for school construction, etc.

4. Was the Annual Financial Report filed within one month after the November 27 or January 28 deadline depending upon the district's Fiscal Year end date (June 30 or August 31)?

A simple indicator. Was your Annual Financial Report filed by the deadline?



How Ratings are Assessed

5. Was there an Unqualified Opinion in the Annual Financial Report?

A “qualification” on your financial report means that you need to correct some of your reporting or financial controls. A district’s goal, therefore, is to receive an “unqualified opinion” on its Annual Financial Report. This is a simple “Yes” or “No” indicator.

6. Did the Annual Financial Report NOT disclose any instance(s) of material weakness in internal controls?

A clean audit of your Annual Financial Report would state that your district has no material weaknesses in internal controls. Any internal weaknesses create a risk of your District not being able to properly account for its use of public funds, and should be immediately addressed.

7. Did the district’s academic rating exceed academically unacceptable?

This indicator simply asks whether the district’s accreditation status is in good standing.

8. Was the three year average percent of total tax collections (including delinquent) greater than 98 percent?

This indicator measures your district’s success in collecting the taxes owed to

you by your community’s businesses and homeowners, placing a 98 percent minimum collections standard. You must collect based upon a three-year average more than 98% of your taxes, including any delinquent taxes owed from past years. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

9. Did the comparison of PEIMS data to like information in the Annual Financial Report result in an aggregate variance of less than 3 percent of expenditures per fund type (Data Quality Measure)?

This indicator measures the quality of data reported to PEIMS and in your Annual Financial Report to make certain that the data reported in each case “matches up.” If the difference in numbers reported in any fund type is 3 percent or more, your district “fails” this measure.

10. Were Debt-Related Expenditures (net of IFA and/or EDA allotment) less than \$350 per student? (If the district’s five-year percent change in students was a 7 percent increase or more, or if property taxes collected per penny of tax effort were more than \$200,000, then the district receives 5 points.)

This indicator shows the Legislature’s intent for school districts to spend money on education, rather than fancy buildings, by limiting the amount of money district’s can spend on debt to \$350 per student. Fortunately, the



How Ratings are Assessed

Legislature did allow for fast-growth schools to exceed this cap. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

11. Was there NO disclosure in the Annual Audit Report of Material Noncompliance?

NO disclosure means the Annual Audit Report includes no disclosure indicating that the school district failed to comply with laws, rules and regulations for a government entity.

12. Did the district have full accreditation status in relation to financial management practices? (e.g. no conservator or monitor assigned)

Did TEA take over control of your district due to financial issues such as fraud or having a negative fund balance? If not, you pass this indicator.

13. Was the aggregate of Budgeted Expenditures and Other Uses LESS THAN the aggregate of Total Revenues, Other Resources and Fund Balance in General Fund?

Did you overspend your budget? Your district will receive a negative rating on this measure if your total expenditures and other uses for the fiscal year exceeded your total funds available.

14. If the district's Aggregate Fund Balance in the General Fund and

Capital Projects Fund was LESS THAN zero, were construction projects adequately financed? (Were construction projects adequately financed or adjusted by change orders or other legal means to avoid creating or adding to the fund balance deficit situation?)

Did you over-spend on school buildings or other capital projects? This indicator measures your district's ability to construct facilities without damaging your Fund Balance.

15. Was the ratio of Cash and Investments to Deferred Revenues (excluding amount equal to net Delinquent Taxes Receivable) in the General Fund greater than or equal to 1:1? (If Deferred Revenues are less than Net Delinquent Taxes Receivable, then the district receives 5 points)

This indicator measures whether or not your district has sufficient cash and investments to balance Fund Balance monies such as TEA overpayments (deferred revenues). In other words, your District should have fund balance monies of its own that are at least equal to those dollars that are there due to overpayments from TEA, and you should not be spending "next year's" monies this year. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

16. Was the Administrative Cost Ratio less than the historic standard in State Law?



How Ratings are Assessed

This indicator measures the percentage of their budget that Texas school districts spent on administration. Did you exceed the cap in School FIRST for districts of your size?

17. Was the Ratio of Students to Teachers within the ranges shown below according to district size?

This indicator measures your pupil-teacher ratio to ensure that it is within TEA recommended ranges for district's of your student population range. For example, districts with a student population between 500 and 999 should have no more than 22 students per teacher and no fewer than 10 students per teacher. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

Indicator 17 District Size – No. of Students	Ranges for Ratios	
	Low	High
<500	7	22
500 – 999	10	22
1,000 – 4,999	11.5	22
5,000 – 9,999	13	22
=> 10,000	13.5	22

18. Was the Ratio of Students to Total Staff within the ranges shown below according to district size?

This indicator measures your pupil-staff ratio to ensure that it is within TEA-recommended ranges for district's of your student population range. For example, districts with a student

population between 500 and 1,000 should have no more than 14 students per staff member and no fewer than 5.8 students per district employee. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

Indicator 18 District Size – No. of Students	Ranges for Ratios	
	Low	High
<500	5	14
500 – 999	5.8	14
1,000 – 4,999	6.3	14
5,000 – 9,999	6.8	14
=> 10,000	7.0	14

19. Was the Total Fund Balance in the General Fund more than 50 percent and less than 150 percent of Optimum according to the Fund Balance and Cash Flow Calculation Worksheet in the Annual Financial Report?

Your district's audit provides an optimum General Fund "Fund Balance" for your district. Your district should have no less than one-half and no more than one and one-half times this amount in your Fund Balance, counting both reserved and unreserved fund balances. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

20. Was the decrease in Undesignated Unreserved Fund Balance less than 20 percent over two Fiscal Years? (If 1.5 times Optimum Fund balance is less than total Fund Balance in General Fund or if Total Revenues the General exceeded Operating Expenditures in



How Ratings are Assessed

Fund, then the district receives 5 points)

Are you “feeding off of your Fund Balance” to pay for salaries or other district operating expenses? This indicator notes rapid decreases in your undesignated Fund Balance (those dollars not designated as a “land fund” or “construction fund”) or emergency fund. A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.

21. Was the Aggregate Total of Cash and Investments in the General Fund more than \$0?

Does your district have cash in the bank, and/or investments?

22. Were Investment Earnings in all funds (excluding Debt Service Fund and Capital Projects Fund) more than \$20 per student?

Are you using your cash or reserve fund (Fund Balance) monies wisely? A district earns up to five points under this indicator based upon its relative performance.



Disclosures

Reporting requirements for the financial management report for Schools FIRST public hearing are found in **Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 109, Budgeting, Accounting, and Auditing, Subchapter AA, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Financial Accountability Rating System**. This rule describes requirements for the five (5) disclosures explained below that are to be presented as appendices in the Schools FIRST financial management report.

1. Superintendent's Employment Contract

The school district is to provide a copy of the superintendent's employment contract that is effective on the date of the Schools FIRST hearing in calendar year 2011. In lieu of publication in the Schools FIRST financial management report, the school district may chose to publish the superintendent's employment contract on the school district's Internet site. **If published on the Internet**, the contract is to remain accessible for twelve months.



Disclosures

2. Reimbursements Received by the Superintendent and Board Members for Fiscal Year 2010

For the Twelve-month Period Ended August 31, 2010								
Description of Reimbursements	Superintendent	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5	Board Member 6	Board Member 7
Meals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Lodging								
Transportation								
Motor Fuel								
Other								
Total	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Note – The spirit of the rule is to capture all “reimbursements” for fiscal year 2010, regardless of the manner of payment, including direct pay, credit card, cash, and purchase order. Reimbursements to be reported per category include:

Meals – Meals consumed off of the school district’s premises, and in-district meals at area restaurants (excludes catered meals for board meetings).

Lodging - Hotel charges.

Transportation - Airfare, car rental (can include fuel on rental), taxis, mileage reimbursements, leased cars, parking and tolls.

Motor fuel – Gasoline.

Other - Registration fees, telephone/cell phone, internet service, fax machine, and other reimbursements (or on-behalf of) to the superintendent and board member not defined above.



Disclosures

3. Outside Compensation and/or Fees Received by the Superintendent for Professional Consulting and/or Other Personal Services in Fiscal Year 2010

For the Twelve-Month Period Ended August 31, 2010	
Name(s) of Entity(ies)	
	\$
Total	\$

Note – Compensation does not include business revenues from the superintendent’s livestock or agricultural-based activities on a ranch or farm. Report gross amount received (do not deduct business expenses from gross revenues). Revenues generated from a family business that have no relationship to school district business are not to be disclosed.



Disclosures

4. Gifts Received by the Executive Officer(s) and Board Members (and First Degree Relatives, if any) in Fiscal Year 2010

For the Twelve-Month Period Ended August 31, 2010								
	Superintendent	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5	Board Member 6	Board Member 7
Summary Amounts	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Note – An executive officer is defined as the superintendent, unless the board of trustees or the district administration names additional staff under this classification. Gifts received by first degree relatives, if any, will be reported under the applicable school official.



Disclosures

5. Business Transactions Between School District and Board Members for Fiscal Year 2010

For the Twelve-Month Period Ended August 31, 2010	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5	Board Member 6	Board Member 7
Summary Amounts	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Note - The summary amounts reported under this disclosure are not to duplicate the items reported in the summary schedule of reimbursements received by board members.



Disclosures

6. A summary schedule of the data submitted to the Texas Education Agency for the financial solvency provisions of Texas Education Code, §39.0822.



Glossary

Accounting: A standard school fiscal accounting system must be adopted and installed by the board of trustees of each school district. The accounting system must conform to generally accepted accounting principles. This accounting system must also meet at least the minimum requirements prescribed by the state board of education, subject to review and comment by the state auditor.

Ad Valorem Property Tax: Literally the term means "according to value." Ad valorem taxes are based on a fixed proportion of the value of the property with respect to which the tax is assessed. They require an appraisal of the taxable subject matter's worth. General property taxes are almost invariably of this type. Ad valorem property taxes are based on ownership of the property, and are payable regardless of whether the property is used or not and whether it generates income for the owner (although these factors may affect the assessed value).

Adopted Tax Rate: The tax rate set by the school district to meet its legally adopted budget for a specific calendar year.

All Funds: A school district's accounting system is organized and operated on a fund basis where each fund is a separate fiscal entity in the school district much the same as various corporate subsidiaries are fiscally separate in private enterprise. All Funds refers to the combined total of all the funds listed below:

- The General Fund
- Special Revenue Funds (Federal Programs, Federally Funded Shared Services, State Programs, Shared State/Local Services, Local Programs)
- Debt Service Funds
- Capital Projects Funds
- Enterprise Funds for the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program

Assessed Valuation: A valuation set upon real estate or other property by a government as a basis for levying taxes.

Auditing: Accounting documents and records must be audited annually by an independent

auditor. Texas Education Agency (TEA) is charged with review of the independent audit of the local education agencies.

Beginning Fund Balance: The General Fund balance on the first day of a new school year. For most school districts this is equivalent to the fund balance at the end of the previous school year.

Budget: The projected financial data for the current school year. Budget data are collected for the general fund, food service fund, and debt service fund.

Budgeting: Not later than August 20 of each year, the superintendent (or designee) must prepare a budget for the school district if the fiscal year begins on September 1. (For those districts with fiscal years beginning July 1, this date would be June 20.) The legal requirements for funds to be budgeted are included in the Budgeting module of the TEA Resource Guide. The budget must be adopted before expenditures can be made, and this adoption must be prior to the setting of the tax rate for the budget year. The budget must be itemized in detail according to classification and purpose of expenditure, and must be prepared according to the rules and regulations established by the state board of education. The adopted budget, as necessarily amended, shall be filed with TEA through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) as of the date prescribed by TEA.

Capital Outlay: This term is used as both a Function and an Object. Expenditures for land, buildings, and equipment are covered under Object 6600. The amount spent on acquisitions, construction, or major renovation of school district facilities are reported under Function 80.

Capital Project Funds: Fund type used to account for financial resources to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital facilities (other than those financed by proprietary funds and trust funds.)

Cash: The term, as used in connection with cash flows reporting, includes not only currency on hand, but also demand deposits with banks or other financial institutions. Cash also includes



Glossary

deposits in other kinds of accounts or cash management pools that have the general characteristics of demand deposit accounts in that the governmental enterprise may deposit additional cash at any time and also effectively may withdraw cash at any time without prior notice or penalty.

Chapter 41: A key "equity" chapter in the Texas Education Code (TEC) is Chapter 41. This chapter is devoted to wealth equalization through the mechanism of recapture, the recovery of financial resources from districts defined by the state as high property wealth. Resources are recovered for the purpose of sharing them with low-wealth districts. Districts that are subject to the provisions of Chapter 41 must make a choice among several options in order to reduce their property wealth and share financial resources.

Comptroller Certified Property Value: The district's total taxable property value as certified by the Comptroller's Property Tax Division (Comptroller Valuation).

Debt Service Fund: Governmental fund type used to account for the accumulation of resources for, and the payment of, general long-term debt principal and interest.

Debt Services: Two function areas (70 and 71) and one Object (6500) are identified using this terminology "debt services." Function 70 is a major functional area that is used for expenditures that are used for the payment of debt principal and interest including Function 71. Expenditures that are for the retirement of recurring bond, capital lease principal, and other debt, related debt service fees, and for all debt interest fall under Function 71. Object 6500 covers all expenditures for debt service.

Deferred Revenue: Resource inflows that do not yet meet the criteria for revenue recognition. Unearned amounts are always reported as deferred revenue. In governmental funds, earned amounts also are reported as deferred revenue until they are available to liquidate liabilities of the current period.

Designated Fund Balance: The designated fund balance represents tentative plans for the future use of financial resources. Designations require Board action to earmark fund balance for bona fide purposes that will be fulfilled within a reasonable period of time.

Effective Tax Rate: Provides the unit with approximately the same amount of revenue it had the year before on properties taxes in both years. A comparison of the effective tax rate to the taxing unit's proposed tax rate shows if there will be a tax increase.

Ending Fund Balance: The amount of unencumbered surplus fund balance reported by the district at the end of the specified school year. For most school districts this will be equivalent to the fund balance at the beginning of the next school year.

Excess (Deficiency): Represents receivables due (excess) or owed (deficiency) at the end of the school year. This amount is recorded as Asset Object 1200.

Existing Debt Allotment (EDA): Is the amount of state funds to be allocated to the district for assistance with existing debt.

Federal Revenues: Revenues paid either directly to the district or indirectly through a local or state government entity for Federally-subsidized programs including the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and School Health and Related Services Program. This amount is recorded as Revenue Object 5900.

Fiscal Year: A period of 12 consecutive months legislatively selected as a basis for annual financial reporting, planning, and budgeting. The fiscal year may run September 1 through August 31 or July 1 through June 30.

Foundation School Program (FSP) Status: The Foundation School Program (FSP) is the shared financial arrangement between the state and the school district, where property taxes are blended with revenues from the state to cover the cost of basic and mandated programs. The nature of this arrangement falls in one of the following status categories: Regular, Special



Glossary

Statutory, State Administered, Education Service Center, or Open Enrollment Charter School District.

FTE: Full-Time Equivalent measures the extent to which one individual or student occupies a full-time position or provides instruction, e.g., a person who works four hours a day or a student that attends a half of a day represents a .5 FTE.

Function: Function codes identify the expenditures of an operational area or a group of related activities. For example, in order to provide the appropriate atmosphere for learning, school districts transport students to school, teach students, feed students and provide health services. Each of these activities is a function. The major functional areas are:

- Instruction and Instructional-Related Services
- Instructional and School Leadership
- Support Services - Student
- Administrative Support Services
- Support Services; Non-Student Based
- Ancillary Services
- Debt Service
- Capital Outlay
- 90 Intergovernmental Charges

Fund Balance: The difference between assets and liabilities reported in a governmental fund.

General Administration: The amount spent on managing or governing the school district as an overall entity. Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 41.

General Fund: This fund finances the fundamental operations of the district in partnership with the community. All revenues and expenditures not accounted for by other funds are included. This is a budgeted fund and any fund balances are considered resources available for current operations.

I&S Tax Rate: The tax rate calculated to provide the revenues needed to cover Interest and Sinking (I&S) (also referred to as Debt Service). I&S includes the interest and principal on bonds and other debt secured by property tax revenues.

Incremental Costs: The amount spent by a school district with excess wealth per WADA on the purchase of attendance credits either from the state or from other school district(s). Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 92.

Instruction: The amount spent on direct classroom instruction and other activities that deliver, enhance or direct the delivery of learning situations to students regardless of location or medium. Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 11.

Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA): (State Aid) Provides assistance to school districts in making debt service payments on qualifying bonds and lease-purchase agreements. Proceeds must be used for the construction or renovation of an instructional facility.

Intergovernmental Charges: "Intergovernmental" is a classification used when one governmental unit transfers resources to another. In particular, when a Revenue Sharing District purchases WADA or where one school district pays another school district to educate transfer students. Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 90.

Investments in Capital Assets, Net of Related Debt: One of three components of net assets that must be reported in both government-wide and proprietary fund financial statements. Related debt, for this purpose, includes the outstanding balances of any bonds, mortgages, notes, or other borrowings that are attributable to the acquisition, construction, or improvement of capital assets of the government.

Local & Intermediate Revenues: All revenues from local taxes and other local and intermediate revenues. For specifics, see the definitions for Local Tax and Other Local & Intermediate Revenues. This amount is recorded under Object 5700.

Local Tax: This is all revenues from local real and personal property taxes, including



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recaptured funds from 1) Contracted Instructional Services Between Public Schools (Function 91) and 2) Incremental Costs associated with Chapter 41 of the Texas Education Code (Function 92).

M&O Tax Rate: The tax rate calculated to provide the revenues needed to cover Maintenance & Operations (M&O). M&O includes such things as salaries, utilities, and day-to-day operations.

Object: An object is the highest level of accounting classification used to identify either the transaction posted or the source to which the associated monies are related. Each object is assigned a code that identifies in which of the following eight major object groupings it belongs:

- 1000 Assets
- 2000 Liabilities
- 3000 Fund Balances
- 5000 Revenue
- 6000 Expenditures/Expenses
- 7000 Other Resources/NonOperating Revenue/Residual Equity Transfers In
- 8000 Other Uses/NonOperating Revenue/Residual Equity Transfers Out

Operating Expenditures: A wide variety of expenditures necessary to a district's operations fall into this category with the largest portion going to payroll and related employee benefits and the purchase of goods and services.

Operating Expenditures/Student: Total Operating Expenditures divided by the total number of enrolled students.

Operating Revenues and Expenses: Term used in connection with the proprietary fund statement of revenues, expenses, and changes in net assets. The term is not defined as such in the authoritative accounting and financial reporting standards, although financial statement preparers are advised to consider the definition of operating activities for cash flows reporting in establishing their own definition.

Other Local & Intermediate Revenues: All local and intermediate revenues NOT from local real and personal property taxes including:

- Revenues Realized as a Result of Services Rendered to Other School Districts
- Tuition and Fees
- Rental payments, interest, investment income
- Sale of food and revenues from athletic and extra/co-curricular activities
- Revenues from counties, municipalities, utility districts, etc.

Other Operating Costs: Expenditures necessary for the operation of the school district that are NOT covered by Payroll Costs, Professional and Contracted Services, Supplies and Materials, Debt Services, and Capital Outlay fall into this category and include travel, Insurance and bonding costs, election costs, and depreciation. This amount is recorded as Expenditure/Expense Object 6400.

Other Resources: This amount is credited to total actual other resources or non-operating revenues received or residual equity transfers in. This amount is recorded under Object 7020.

Payments for Shared Services

Arrangements: Payments made either from a member district to a fiscal agent or payments from a fiscal agent to a member district as part of a Shared Services Arrangement (SSA). The most common types of SSAs relate to special education services, adult education services, and activities funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 93.

Payroll: Payroll costs include the gross salaries or wages and benefit costs for services or tasks performed by employees at the general direction of the school district. This amount is recorded as Expenditure/Expense Object 6100. *(NOTE: Payroll amounts do not include salaries for contract workers, e.g., for food service and maintenance. Therefore, this figure will vary significantly between districts and campuses that use contract workers and those that do not.)*

PEIMS: A state-wide data management system for public education information



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in the State of Texas. One of the basic goals of PEIMS, as adopted by the State Board of Education in 1986, is to improve education practices of local school districts. PEIMS is a major improvement over previous information sources gathered from aggregated data available on paper reports. School districts submit their data via standardized computer files. These are defined in a yearly publication, the PEIMS Data Standards.

Plant Maintenance & Operations: The amount spent on the maintenance and operation of the physical plant and grounds and for warehousing and receiving services. Expenditures associated with this functional area are reported under Function 51.

Property /Refined ADA: The district's Comptroller Certified Property Value divided by its total Refined ADA.

Property/WADA: The district's Comptroller Certified Property Value divided by its total WADA.

Qualified Opinion: Term used in connection with financial auditing. A modification of the independent auditor's report on the fair presentation of the financial statements indicating that there exists one or more specific exceptions to the auditor's general assertion that the financial statements are fairly presented.

Refined ADA: Refined Average Daily Attendance (also called RADA) is based on the number of days of instruction in the school year. The aggregate eligible days attendance is divided by the number of days of instruction to compute the refined average daily attendance.

Reserve Fund Balance: This is that portion of fund equity which is not available for appropriation or has been legally separated for a specific purpose.

Revenues: Any increase in a school district's financial resources from property taxes, foundation fund entitlements, user charges,

grants, and other sources. Revenues fall into the three broad sources of revenues: Local & Intermediate; State; and Federal.

Robin Hood Funds: See Wealth Equalization Transfer.

Rollback Tax Rate: Provides governments other than school districts with approximately the same amount of tax revenue it spent the previous year for day-to-day operations plus an extra 8 percent cushion, and sufficient funds to pay its debts in the coming year. For school districts, the M&O portion of the rollback tax rate allows school districts to add four cents (\$.04) to the lesser of the prior tax year compressed operating tax rate or the effective M&O rate to generate operating funds. School districts will get to add to the compressed operating rate any additional cents approved by voters at a 2006 or subsequent rollback election, not 8 percent. The rollback rate is the highest rate that the taxing unit may adopt before voters can petition for an election to roll back the adopted rate to the rollback rate. For school districts, no petition is required; it's an automatic election if the adopted rate exceeds the rollback rate.

School Year: The twelve months beginning September 1 of one year and ending August 31 of the following year or beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Districts now have two options.

Special Revenue Fund: A governmental fund type used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources (other than for major capital projects) that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes.

State Revenues: Revenues realized from the Texas Education Agency, other state agencies, shared services arrangements, or allocated on the basis of state laws relating to the Foundation School Program Act. This amount is recorded as Revenue Object 5800.

Undesignated Fund Balance: This is that portion of fund equity that is currently available to finance expenditures not already approved by the Board of Trustees.



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Undesignated Unreserved Fund Balances:

Available expendable financial resources in a governmental fund that are not the object of tentative management plans (i.e., designations). One primary criterion of rating agencies for school bonds is the relative amount of undesignated unreserved fund balance. Bond rating agencies view undesignated unreserved fund balances as a reflection of the financial strength of school districts and show concern when district fund balances decrease.

Unqualified Opinion: An opinion rendered without reservation by the independent auditor that financial statements are fairly presented.

Unrestricted Net Asset Balance: The term net asset refers to the amount of total assets less total liabilities. Unrestricted net asset balance refers to the portion of total net assets that is neither invested in capital assets nor restricted.

WADA: A Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) is used to measure the extent students are participating in special programs. The concept of WADA in effect converts all of a school district's students with their different weights to a calculated number of regular students required to raise the same amount of revenue. The greater the number of students eligible for special entitlements, the greater a school district's WADA will be.

Wealth Equalization Transfer: The amount budgeted by districts for the cost of reducing their property wealth to the required equalized wealth level (Function 91). Sometimes referred to as Robin Hood Funds.

DISCLAIMER

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