



NEWS

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TEXAS CONSORTIUM ON SCHOOL RESEARCH LAUNCHES WITH A FOCUS ON COLLEGE READINESS

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Leaders from 19 Texas School Districts plus additional Educational Organizations gathered in Houston on October 1st for the formation and launch of the **Texas Consortium on School Research**. The event was sponsored by the **Regional Educational Laboratory – Southwest (REL Southwest at Edvance Research)** and was held adjacent to the annual Texas Association of School Administrators and Texas Association of School Boards (TASA/TASB) fall conference. Dr. Johnny Veselka, TASA Executive Director, welcomed participants to Houston.

The Texas Consortium was modeled on the successful work of the ***Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR)*** which is collaborating on the Texas Consortium with REL Southwest, along with ***The University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center (ERC)***.

The goal of the Texas Consortium is to allow members from districts across the state to collaborate in building research capacity to address critical issues to support improvement efforts. The Texas Consortium will also allow participants to create a “**community of practice**” through shared knowledge and practices.

This inaugural meeting focused on the issue of **College Readiness**. Meeting minimum high school graduation requirements is no longer enough, according to state leaders. All students must be prepared to succeed in college and persist through graduation. This is especially important for students who have traditionally low rates of high school graduation and college success, especially with the rate of minority student graduation in Texas at less than 50%.

The gathered educators and researchers heard innovative and compelling work from recognized national and state organizations that was presented by experts including:

- Christopher Mazzeo, Ph.D., Associate Director of Policy and Outreach and Vanessa Coca, MPP, Research Analyst at the ***Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR)***
- Sandy Kress, ***Chair, Commission for a College Ready Texas (CCRT) (2007-2008)***
- Dan O'Brien, Ph.D., Director and Jim Parsons, Assistant Director of the ***Texas Schools Project at the University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center (ERC)***
- Kathleen Barfield, M.B.A., ***Executive Director, Statewide Tools for Teaching Excellence (STTE) Chief Information Officer, REL Southwest at Edvance Research*** (*STTE is an initiative of the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation*)
- Eric Rolfhus, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, ***REL Southwest at Edvance Research***

Dr. Dean Nafziger, Laboratory Director of REL Southwest at Edvance Research expressed enthusiasm for the establishment of the Texas Consortium, stating “School districts across the nation are seeking to understand how factors that impact student achievement can be positively affected to significantly improve student outcomes. The Texas Consortium can assist districts in utilizing evidence-based indicators to develop action plans that result in measurable improvements”.

Representation at the Texas Consortium included 19 geographically and demographically diverse school districts in the state that demonstrated impactful approaches to school improvement including Aldine ISD, Austin ISD, Beaumont ISD, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Conroe ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, Cypress-Fairbanks, Dallas ISD, El Paso ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Galena Park ISD, Houston ISD, Humble ISD, Klein ISD, Lubbock ISD, Northside ISD, Plano ISD and YES Prep Public Schools.

In addition, representatives from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Texas Education Agency, Texas Association of School Administrators and The Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education participated in the event.

A second meeting of the Texas Consortium is planned for late January 2010 in Austin, Texas. Districts requesting more information on the Texas Consortium may contact Dr. Lural Logan-Fain at lloganfain@edvanceresearch.com.

REL Southwest at Edvance Research is one of ten educational laboratories in the Regional Educational Laboratory Network (REL Network), under the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. REL Southwest serves the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas and works for the benefit of over 7 million students and 500,000 teachers in approximately 14,500 schools in grades pre-kindergarten through college in this five-state region. The REL Network encompasses ten geographical regions that span the nation with its primary mission being to serve the educational needs of designated regions. The REL Network uses applied research, development, dissemination, and training and technical assistance to bring the latest and best research and proven practices into school improvement efforts. <http://edlabs.ed.gov/RELSouthwest>

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