

North Texas Regional Consortium

Participating School Districts

Allen ■ Coppell ■ Frisco ■ Highland Park ■ Lewisville ■ McKinney ■ Plano ■ Northwest ■ Richardson

February 6, 2012

Members of the Texas Legislature:

Standardized, high stakes testing is strangling our public schools and undermining any chance that educators have to transform a traditional system of schooling into an educational opportunity that prepares our students to be competitive on a global stage.

We are writing as members of the North Texas Regional Consortium (NTRC), a group of high performing districts that includes Allen, Coppell, Frisco, Highland Park, Lewisville, McKinney, Plano, Northwest, and Richardson, to weigh in on the debate regarding Commissioner Robert Scott's comments at the TASA Midwinter Conference about the over emphasis on high stakes testing, and the subsequent response by the Texas Association of Business. We join Commissioner Scott in his continuing support of high standards and local accountability.

We completely agree with Bill Hammond when he writes, "If we do not deliver a quality education system that prepares our students for college and careers, Texas' ability to attract new business, improve our economy and maintain our competitiveness will surely falter. Our very prosperity as a state, its business and its people stands in the balance." However, we completely disagree with the idea that the way to success for all students is through more standardized tests. In fact, we believe that more tests where students memorize and fill out bubble answer sheets in order to graduate will continue to keep us from being able to reach the very goals upon which all Texans agree.

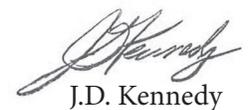
The real work of delivering a quality education begins by changing what goes on in our classrooms every day. As the leading educators in our districts, we believe in the tenets of *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas* (copy attached), and we are working through the Texas Association of School Administrators' (TASA) newly formed Visioning Network (TVN) to transform our districts. Our Vision is that all students be engaged in relevant learning activities that provide for student choice and embrace the concept that they can be more than consumers of knowledge. Only by creating classrooms where innovation, creativity, problem solving skills, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking are celebrated will we actually make progress toward the very skills desired by the TAB. Relentless test preparation and boring memorization of facts in order to enhance performance on the test is stealing the love of learning from our students and assuring that we fall short of our goals.

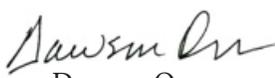
We are not against accountability. In fact, our students have performed well on every test the state has developed. The system of the past will not prepare our students to lead in the future, and neither will the standardized tests that so dominate instructional time. They block our ability to make progress toward a "world-class education system" of Student-Centered Schools, Future-Ready Students.

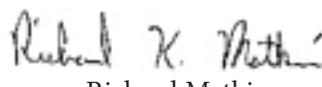
Sincerely,


Jeff Turner
Coppell ISD

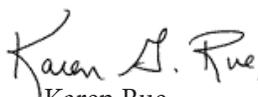

Ken Helvey
Allen ISD

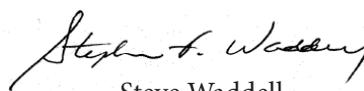

J.D. Kennedy
McKinney ISD

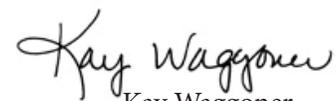

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