



# TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION

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The Texas Youth Commission (TYC) greatly appreciates the time, expertise, and dedication Dr. Michael Krezmien provided to the agency, resulting in his comprehensive evaluation of TYC educational programming. Academic achievement and workforce preparation play significant roles in the program services TYC provides for its youth. One of my top priorities for TYC has always been to make enhancement of the TYC education system a centerpiece of reform, as outlined in the Vision and Framework priorities.

TYC administration had already initiated a review of the educational system and identified changes necessary to overhaul the educational system's practices, procedures, and affected policies. The three major categories identified are as follows:

## **Create Continuity in Educational Services throughout TYC**

A common basic course offering menu and uniform curriculum must be implemented throughout the TYC system. Movement of youth to the most appropriate setting will continue in TYC with the goal of eventually returning them to their communities. Youth should be able to retain credit for their completed assignments and classroom progress as they move within the TYC system and eventually back to their home school districts. Curriculum uniformity also allows TYC youth equal access to academic and vocational opportunities.

## **Enable Sound Classroom Management Practices and Encourage Engagement of Youth**

Youth committed to TYC have often faced failure in the public education system. They have different learning styles and attitudes about school. It is the responsibility of the education department and all staff at each facility to support the advancement of a youth's academic progress by providing sound behavior management in the classroom in addition to heightened attention and focus on individual youth needs. The classroom must be a place that engages and energizes youth so that they become excited about their potential.

## **Achieve Compliance with State and National Standards**

The passage of Senate Bill 103 will result in an aggregate younger youth population in TYC. Additionally, youth will have shorter lengths of stay meaning more of them will return to their home school districts to earn their high school diplomas. This makes it imperative that the TYC education system function in concert with public education standards and systems. TYC course credits must be applicable and transferable to public schools. Additionally, the agency must also help youth prepare for significant events that will occur upon their return to public school, such as standardized testing.

Here are some specific educational system changes that have already occurred:

- Directive given to principals instructing them that students' fall semester schedules will not change because of housing unit movement.

- Directive given to principals instructing them that students, beginning next semester, will be scheduled for P.E. only when they need credits.
- TYC worked with the Dana Center from the University of Texas to provide training regarding instructional leadership and dynamics around change processes.
- TYC worked with the Dana Center to train principals in the classroom walkthrough evaluation processes for program improvement purposes.
- TYC has provided extensive training with diagnosticians regarding Response to Intervention (RTI), Individual Education Plans (IEPs), cross-battery assessments, transitions, and legal issues.
- TYC has begun the rollout of the positive behavior supports program sponsored by Region XIII Education Service Center.
- Discussions began in June with TEA to monitor special education programs. Formal TEA monitoring will start in September. Central office staff have already started monitoring.

Some additional education system improvements underway at TYC include:

- The implementation of additional and improved tools at TYC's orientation centers to better assess the educational achievement levels and needs of each youth.
- The elimination of assigning youth class schedules based on youth movement or security needs. Class assignments will address the needs of individual youth.
- Changing agency policy to make campus school principals responsible, accountable, and engaged as an active participant in all decisions that affect school.
- Conducting a national search for an educational superintendent to lead the Education Department.

While we do agree with many of the specific items in Dr. Kreitzman's report, which in fact support the agency's current education system reform efforts, there are some areas we believe are doing better than may appear. We will provide all recommendations to the appropriate parties. I do not want to leave the impression that the education system is void of any successes. There are some programs that are extremely impressive and should not be ignored. Our career and technology programs, for example, are currently experiencing tremendous achievement and progress. The number of youth receiving industry certifications has more than doubled during the 2007-2008 school year compared to last year. We have dedicated educational staff members who care deeply for the children in our care.

We share the same goals and expectations for high standards with Dr. Krezmien and the Independent Ombudsman. Their assistance and attention to our educational system is a welcomed addition to our reform effort.

Sincerely,



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Conservator