

**Texas Classroom Teachers Association  
Testimony to the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council  
Regarding the Draft Strategic Plan  
March 10, 2008**

The Texas Classroom Teachers Association has the following input regarding the Draft Strategic Plan posted by the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council on March 7, 2008:

Regarding the Introduction, we note that the Plan quotes from the Senate Research Center's bill analysis of CSHB 2237 <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/80R/analysis/html/HB02237S.htm> which states that "The bill also establishes the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council to develop and manage the implementation of a strategic plan that coordinates public and private high school improvement initiatives."

Use of the bill analysis for the committee substitute for HB 2237 is an error, in that it does not reflect the final, enrolled version of the bill, which does not mention private high school initiatives. Rather, the final, enrolled bill analysis states: "The bill establishes the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council to identify strategic priorities and make recommendations to improve effectiveness, coordination, and alignment of high school completion and college and workforce readiness efforts and requires it to adopt a plan to: (1) specify strategies to identify, support, and expand programs to improve high school completion rates and college and workforce readiness; (2) establish specific goals with which to measure the strategies' success in achieving those aims; (3) identify strategies for aligning and coordinating federal and other funding sources that may be pursued for high school reform, dropout prevention, and preparation of students for college or for work; and (4) identify key objectives for appropriate research and program evaluation. The council also must make recommendations based on the strategic plan to the commissioner of education or the commissioner of higher education for the use of federal and state funds appropriated or received for high school reform, college readiness, and dropout prevention."

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/BillSummary.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=HB2237>

**Accordingly, we recommend striking the language regarding the Senate Research bill analysis for CSHB 2237 and using the proper bill analysis for the enrolled version instead, which is cited above.**

Regarding the **Guiding Principles of the draft Plan, the first bullet** is a statement that "Today's knowledge-based, global economy requires all youth to acquire education or training after high school graduation to be competitive, successful, and earn an adequate income."

First, this is a statement of opinion, not fact, unless it is supported by valid research. We assume that a probable cite to research that the drafters would use is the 2006 study conducted by ACT, entitled College and Workforce Training Readiness. <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf>. However, what's notable about this study is that it states that in defining "workforce readiness", the authors focused on "Job Zone 3", as one of five job zones classified by the Occupational Information Network (O\*Net). The ACT report states they focused on Job Zone 3 because the occupations in this zone are likely to offer a wage sufficient to support a small family, provide the potential for career advancement, and are projected to increase in the future. The report goes on to state: "Zone 3 is the highest O\*Net level that includes jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree, but which likely require some combination of vocational training **and/or on-the-job experience**..." In fact, the O\*Net website describes the training needed for Job Zone 3 jobs as "Employees in these occupations usually need one or two years of training involving both on-the-job experience and informal training with experienced workers." <http://online.onetcenter.org/help/online/zones#zone3>.

However, the authors of the ACT study then make the jump to their conclusion that by selecting Job Zone 3, they are essentially defining workforce readiness as workforce *training* readiness. Somehow the concept of "on-the-job experience" and "informal training" fell out of this definition.

Therefore, the draft Plan's statement that "Today's knowledge-based, global economy requires all youth to acquire education or training after high school graduation to be competitive, successful, and earn an adequate income" falls victim to the same omission of an important piece of description of what is needed to be successful in these jobs, that being "on-the-job experience and informal training." **The draft Plan should make clear that postsecondary readiness means postsecondary education, or on-the-job experience, and on-the-job training, either formal or informal.**

Under the **Development of a Strategic Plan section of the draft Plan**, the statement is made that the Council has chosen to employ the term "postsecondary readiness" to reflect its conviction, based in research, that readiness for college and the workforce requires the same level of rigorous preparation. While it is clear that this statement is supported by some research, the research on this issue is mixed (see [http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeat\\_lessons19991027](http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeat_lessons19991027)) and for integrity's sake, should be noted in connection with this statement.

The draft Plan then contains a definition of Postsecondary success as follows: "Postsecondary success is the range of academic, workforce and social proficiency that high school students should acquire to successfully transition into:

- Skilled employment
- Advanced training in the military
- An associate's degree
- A bachelor's degree; or
- Technical certification"

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The term “skilled employment” needs to be defined, or it’s meaningless. If the intent is to mean, the same as the ACT report, Job Zone 3 or higher jobs, then that should be specified.

Additionally, we would note that the statute governing the High School Council uses the terms "college and workforce readiness" and "preparation of students for postsecondary coursework or employment." (see below) By adopting a narrower definition than that specified by the statute, the Council may not be in compliance with the statute.

Sec. 39.357. STRATEGIC PLAN. (a) The council shall adopt a strategic plan under this subchapter to:

- (1) specify strategies to identify, support, and expand programs to improve high school completion rates and college and workforce readiness;
- (2) establish specific goals with which to measure the success of the strategies identified under Subdivision (1) in improving high school completion rates and college and workforce readiness;
- (3) identify strategies for alignment and coordination of federal and other funding sources that may be pursued for high school reform, dropout prevention, and preparation of students for postsecondary coursework or employment;

Adding support to the concept of including in the definition of postsecondary readiness the successful transition into jobs that require at least on-the-job experience and informal training is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) list of the fastest-growing occupations and the occupations with the largest job growth.

According to the BLS, 8 of the 30 fastest-growing jobs projected for the period 2006-2016 require at most, moderate or short-term on the job training. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ooh.t01.htm>

Additionally, according to the BLS, 21 of the top 30 U.S. jobs with the largest job growth projected for 2006-2016 require at most, short-term, moderate-term, long-term on the job training or work-related experience.

**Table I Rank Order Top 30 United States Occupations with Largest Job Growth 2006-2016**

Rank	Occupation	Employment		Change		May-06	Training
		2006	2016	Number	Percent	Median wage	Source
						Quartile Rank*	
1	Registered Nurses	2,505,000	3,092,000	687,000	23.5	VH*	Associate Degree
2	Retail salespersons	4,477,000	5,034,000	557,000	12.4	VL*	Short-term OJT
3	Customer service reps	2,202,000	2,955,000	452,000	24.8	L*	Moderate-term OJT
4	Combined Food prep & serving wkrs. including fast food	2,503,000	2,955,000	452,000	18.1	VL*	Short-term OJT
5	Office clerks, general	3,200,000	3,604,000	404,000	12.6	L*	Short-term OJT
6	Personal & home care aides	767,000	1,156,000	389,000	50.6	VL*	Short-term OJT
7	Home health aids	787,000	1,171,000	394,000	48.7	VL*	Short-term OJT
8	Postsecondary teachers	1,672,000	2,054,000	382,000	22.9	VH*	Doctoral Degree
9	Janitors & cleaners except maids & housekeepers	2,387,000	2,732,000	345,000	14.5	VL*	Short-term OJT
10	Nursing aides, orderlies, & attendants	1,447,000	1,711,000	264,000	18.2	L*	Postsecondary voc
11	Bookkeeping/Accounting clerks	2,114,000	2,377,000	264,000	12.5	L*	Moderate-term OJT
12	Waiters & Waitresses	2,361,000	2,615,000	255,000	10.8	VL	Short-term OJT
13	Child care workers	1,388,000	1,636,000	248,000	17.8	VL*	Short-term OJT
14	Exec. Secretaries/Adm. Assistants	1,618,000	1,857,000	239,000	14.8	H*	Work Exp. Related
15	Computer software engineers, applications	507,000	733,000	226,000	44.6	VH*	Bachelor's Degree
16	Accountants & auditors	1,274,000	1,500,000	226,000	17.7	VH*	Bachelor's Degree
17	Landscaping/ grounds keeping workers.	1,220,000	1,441,000	221,000	18.1	L*	Short-term OJT
18	Elementary teachers/except special ed.	1,540,000	1,749,000	209,000	13.6	H*	Bachelor's Degree
19	Receptionists/ Information clerks	1,173,000	1,375,000	202,000	17.2	L*	Short-term OJT
20	Truck drivers, heavy & tractor trailer	1,860,000	2,053,000	193,000	10.4	H*	Moderate-term OJT
21	Maids & housekeeping cleaners	1,470,000	1,656,000	186,000	12.7	VL*	Short-term OJT
22	Security guards	1,040,000	1,216,000	175,000	16.9	L*	Short-term OJT
23	Carpenters	1,462,000	1,612,000	150,000	10.3	H*	Long-term OJT
24	Management analysts	678,000	827,000	149,000	21.9	VH*	Bachelor's/more/Exp

25	Medical assistants	417,000	565,000	148,000	34.4	L*	Moderate-term OJT
26	Computer system analysts	504,000	650,000	146,000	29	VH*	Bachelor's Degree
27	Maintenance & repair wkrs. General	1,391,000	1,531,000	140,000	10.1	H*	Moderate-term OJT
28	Network Systems & data com. analysts	262,000	402,000	140,000	10.1	H*	Bachelor's Degree
29	Food preparation workers	902,000	1,040,000	138,000	15.3	VL*	Short-term OJT
30	Teacher assistants	1,312,000	1,499,000	137,000	10.4	VL*	Short-term OJT
		46,440,000	54,798,000	8,118,000	17.5		

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational employment projections to 2016, Monthly Labor Review, November 2007 Pages 97-98  
[www.jobseducationwis.org/290%20United%20States%20Occupations%20with%20Largest%20Job%20Growth%202006-2016.doc](http://www.jobseducationwis.org/290%20United%20States%20Occupations%20with%20Largest%20Job%20Growth%202006-2016.doc)

**The third bullet under Guiding Principles** states that “With the appropriate curricula and instruction, all students are able to overcome the educational disadvantages now associated with race and ethnicity; we must make a concerted effort to eliminate the achievement gap evidence in Texas public schools.”

Again, this statement is an opinion without supporting valid research. At best, many experts agree that educator quality is the number one determinant of student achievement, outside of ***outside of home and family influences*** (Education Commission of the States (2000). *In Pursuit of Quality Teaching: Five Key Strategies for Policymakers*. Denver: CO, Education Commission of the States).

**Accordingly, the third bullet needs to be rewritten to state that "with appropriate curricula, instruction and support, all students can make significant gains despite the educational disadvantages now associated with race and ethnicity."**

**Regarding the** third bullet under Critical Components, “All students should have the opportunity to select from multiple pathways, including alternative delivery systems, to achieve postsecondary success”, we are deeply concerned about the phrase “alternative delivery systems.” Given the interchange between Don McAdams and Commissioner Scott at the March 3, 2008 meeting of the Council about whether "alternative delivery systems" were vouchers, and the Commissioner's explanation that vouchers were for students "inside the system" while "alternative delivery systems" were for students outside the system (i.e. dropouts), therefore justifying the use of public funds for private school dropout recovery programs, **inclusion of this concept in the Strategic Plan is not appropriate and it should be deleted.**

**However, the concept of multiple pathways should be retained and clarified to be multiple pathways to graduation. We also request that examples of these pathways be included, such as a rigorous Career and Technical graduation pathways.**

On page 11 of the draft Plan, under 1.1.1 (Create early college high schools that...), the 5th bullet states: "Demonstrate that teachers selected are highly effective and have demonstrated the ability to work with students at risk of not graduating from high school." We have real concerns about this statement, given that there's a general consensus in this state that we're not at the point where we can accurately and validly assess the effectiveness of educators. Accordingly, we ask that that bullet be rewritten to state: **"Demonstrate that teachers selected have demonstrated the ability to work effectively with students at risk of not graduating from high school."**

Thank you for this opportunity for input.