

State and Local

Skills test for freshmen proposed by committee

SAN MARCOS, Texas (AP) — A College Coordinating Board committee has adopted a proposal to require all freshmen entering Texas public colleges and universities to take a basic skills test after they have enrolled.

The test of reading, writing and mathematics would be used to place students who need extra help in the proper courses.

In no case would it bar college entry to any student who is otherwise qualified, although all students would have to pass the test by the time they have completed 60 hours

or approximately two years, of degree-credit work.

Robert Hardesty, president of the Southwest Texas State University and chairman of the Committee on Testing, said, "Our studies indicate that a full 30 percent of Texas students entering their freshman year of college are deficient in at least one of the basic skills.

"The problem is we have no way of identifying those students or helping them early in their college careers. And yet we know, from the

experience of several other states, that students who receive remedial instruction are three times more likely to be successful in college than those who need such instruction but do not receive it."

The committee first considered a test to be given at the end of the sophomore year, Hardesty said.

"But it soon became obvious to us that the earlier we identified the students with the problems, the more time we would have to help them," he said.

Man pleads guilty to charges of promoting obscene things

BEAUMONT (AP) — A man who operated a video cassette business in a house co-owned by state Sen. Carl Parker has pleaded guilty to charges of promotion of obscene materials and delivery of marijuana.

State District Judge J. Neil Daniel of Abilene on Monday sentenced Daniel Jacob Lee, 59, to 10 years probation and fines totaling \$6,500.

Parker, 51, a Port Arthur Democrat, was indicted by two different grand juries on charges of promotion of prostitution, distribution of obscene materials and perjury, but those charges were later dismissed. A third grand jury failed to indict Parker.

Parker said he bought the Port Arthur house with Lee in 1969 as a real estate investment, and that he sold his interest in it after an April 19, 1984, raid by police and Jefferson County district attorney's investigators.

Police seized more than 400 X-rated videotapes during raids on Happy Times Video, officials said.

Chinese vice premier applauds U.S.-China economic relations

DALLAS (AP) — Economic relations between the United States and China have progressed but are far from reaching potential, China vice premier Yao Yilin said Tuesday.

"The trade and cooperation in the energy field between our two sides has already become a tide which has promoted the development of our present relations," Yao said during a joint speech with Dallas Mayor Starke Taylor.

Yao, who arrived in Dallas Monday with a 20-member entourage of government and trade leaders, is the highest-ranking China government official scheduled to visit the country this year.

In Dallas — the fourth of five cities on the tour — the delegation concentrated on the oil industry, technology and housing and food distribution.

"Texas holds an important position in the development of the U.S. economy," Yao said. "Your experience has aroused great interest."

"I'm happy to know that Texas' advantage in the energy field has already played its role in China's energy development. Some of your oil companies have participated in the

surveying and exploration of China's oil resources.

Mayor Taylor, who urged Yao to use often the city's key he presented, said guidelines for increased economic activity between the two countries are already being developed.

"It is our belief that exchanges of information, of know-how, are paving the way for times ahead," he said.

Taylor cited mutual benefits in business, tourism, science and higher education among others.

Moreover, China "merits the attention of foreign investors," Yao said.

Yao later was to tour the Electronic Data Systems headquarters.

Also visiting the city are Chinese Ambassador Han Xua and the heads of the state planning commission and the Foreign Ministry's Americas department.

After leaving Dallas, Yao was scheduled to visit Seattle.

Tourist bureau prepares for busy summer

By Katherine Cooper
Reporter

The State Department of Tourism won't be taking the summer off. They'll be working hard to boost an already-burgeoning Texas industry that will set all-time records this year.

Tourism is one of the state's top five industries, says Dave Allred, a representative of the State Department of Tourism in Austin.

This year Texas is expecting a record 40 million out-of-state visitors who are expected to spend a record \$16 billion, he says.

The threat of terrorism is keeping many U.S. tourists at home this year and Allred says he hopes the state will grab its share of this year's larger market.

"Also, because of the weakened

position of the U.S. dollar, people from oil rich countries, like England and so forth, are vacationing in the United States because it's a better travel bargain," Allred says.

The Texas Tourist Development Agency was created in 1963, Allred says, and the number of out-of-state visitors has increased every year.

The agency advertises in national magazines but for the most part confines its advertising to publications sent to travel agencies, Allred says.

In many localities chambers of commerce, convention centers and visitors bureaus work to bring visitors to a particular area, Allred says.

"We really work hand-in-glove with the chambers of commerce and the State Department of Safety and Public Transportation's tourist information bureaus," he says.

This summer the tourist information bureau is celebrating its 50th anniversary. The bureaus were started in the summer of 1936 and were first manned by Texas A&M Cadets.

"In the first three months of 1986, 555,000 people stopped at these visitor information centers," he says.

Surveys conducted through these centers show that most visitors come from Oklahoma and Louisiana, Allred says. Cheaper gas prices should contribute to heavier traffic flowing into Texas from neighboring states, he says.

The agency has also been advertising on television.

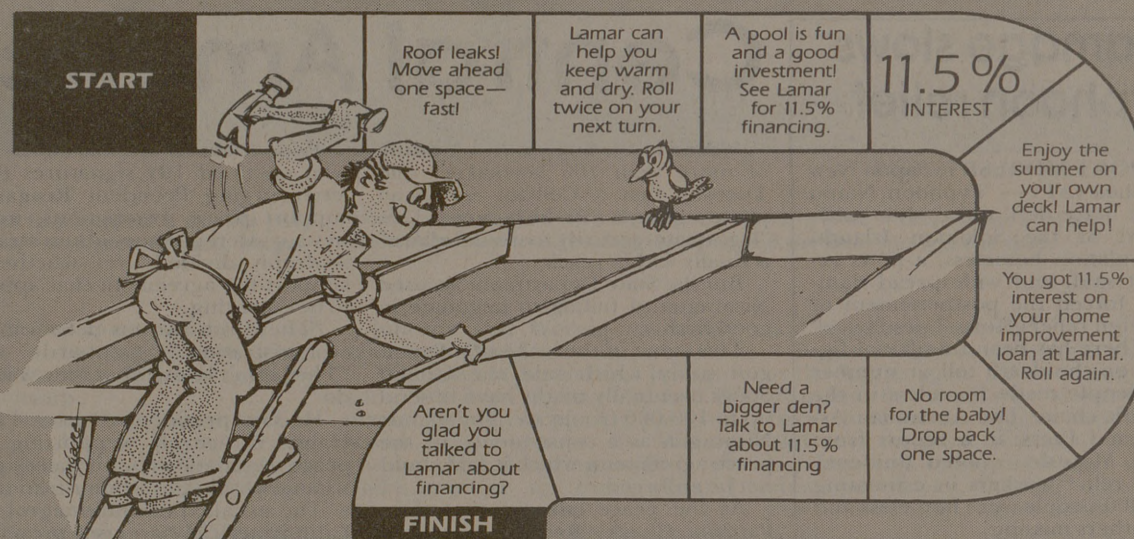
"Through our promotions, tourists are just beginning to realize that Texas has more than flat deserts," Allred says.



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