

Thursday, May 4, 1989

Texas education reforms produce higher SAT's, lower dropout rate

WASHINGTON (AP) — Evidence that educational reform in Texas is working surfaced Wednesday in a federal report card which gives the state higher marks for improved college entrance-exam scores and a decline in the dropout rate.

But, Texas still lagged behind the national average for its Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and the percentage of students who graduate from high school.

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Randy Erben, deputy director of the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations, said the success of the education reforms of the past few years is evident in the report card, but acknowledged more work is ahead. With the second largest number of school districts in the country, the trickle-down effect of educational reform at the state level "is going to take some time," Erben said.

According to the U.S. Education Department, Texas ranked 17th out of 22 states that use the SAT as the dominant college entrance exam in 1988. The average Texas score rose from 875 in 1987 to 879 in 1988, up from 868 in 1982. The national average in 1988 was 904.

Texas also ranked 43rd in the nation in 1987 for its graduation rate, with 65.1 of students graduating from high school, compared with a national average of 71.1 percent. In 1986, Texas had a graduation rate of 64.3 percent, compared with a national average of 71.6 percent.

Texas also showed an improvement in teacher salaries — with an increase to \$25,558 in 1988 from \$24,903 in 1987. Still, the state lagged behind the 1988 national average of \$28,008, for a 27th-place ranking.

Legislation in 1987 requires school districts to have a dropout-prevention program.

A state report indicates that 87,000 students in grades seven through 12 dropped out in the 1987-88 school year, out of a total 3.2 million students in the state's public schools, Joey Lozano, a

spokesman for the state Department of Education, said.

Dropouts, he said, will not have the skills they and their employers will need in the years ahead.

The state Department of Education is also asking the Legislature to appropriate more money for education. "Of course, we cannot expect to rank near the top in academic achievement if we are not prepared to make a significant effort in supporting education," Texas Education Commissioner William Kirby said in Austin.

Legislation is currently before the Legislature that would put an extra \$500 million into property-poor school districts.

"The good news is that the schools are not worse; the bad news is that we are not making progress," Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos said. "That's . . . an alarmingly high figure," Lozano said. "Obviously, we need to do something about it."

Dropouts, he said, will not have the skills they and their employers will need in the years ahead "and it will have an adverse economic impact."

BANA prof wins award for motivating students

By Todd Connelley

REPORTER

An ability to motivate students to achieve excellence earned a Texas A&M professor of business analysis and research the 1989-90 John F. Mee Distinguished Professor Award.

Dr. Warren Rose recently received the national award, the first of its kind, from Beta Gamma Sigma business society. It enables Rose to travel to Eastern New Mexico University to prepare its school of business for inspection by the American Association of Collegiate School of Business.

The AACSB visits various business schools across the country to see if they measure up to certain academic standards. If those standards are properly met, the

schools receive full accreditation by the AACSB.

A&M's school of business achieved this accreditation both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

"I'm going to present a successful blueprint they can follow and stimulate a research environment . . . as we have here at (A&M.)"

— Dr. Warren Rose, business professor

Rose said he considers the opportunity to participate in the process a unique challenge.

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Sister city program pairs B-CS with Soviet Union

By Andrea Warrenburg

STAFF WRITER

The Bryan-College Station Sister City Association is building a small bridge between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The association, part of Sister Cities International, which coordinates sister city efforts worldwide, is attempting to establish personal and community relations with Kazan, the Soviet city paired with Bryan-College Station.

"The purpose of the program is to break down barriers between the United States and the Soviet Union," said Scott Thacher, president of the association and an A&M assistant professor of biochemistry and genetics. "The

premise is that big political problems, such as environment and military control, might be helped through mutual understanding."

Kazan, located about 500 miles

"The purpose of the program is to break down barriers between the United States and the Soviet Union."

— Scott Thacher, association president

east of Moscow on the left bank of the Volga River, has a population of about 1.2 million people. The city is an important industrial and cultural center, but was chosen as

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House OKs prison reform bill, sponsor calls it most expansive in Texas history

AUSTIN (AP) — After lengthy debate and 23 amendments, the House on Wednesday tentatively approved a massive prison reform package the sponsor called the most expansive in Texas history.

"In my opinion it's probably the largest overhaul of the criminal justice system in the state's history," Rep. Allen Hightower, D-Huntsville, said.

House Speaker Gib Lewis said the measure "may be the most significant piece of criminal justice legislation that's been passed in Texas in the last 50 years."

The package, which would create 24,000 additional beds in state prisons and community facilities, will be reviewed in two years under an amendment that was debated at length.

Another vote is required for final passage of the bill, which the Senate is awaiting before considering its prison reform bill. Only two House members voted against the package in a non-record vote.

The bill sets out numerous alternative sentencing

and incarceration programs and authorizes construction of space for 17,300 new prison beds.

Total cost, including \$400 million in bonds to be approved by voters, would be \$600 million, Hightower said.

"If you commit a crime, you are going to be punished, and we're going to have a mechanism to do that."

— Gib Lewis, House Speaker

Hightower wanted a review of the plan in four years, but lawmakers representing counties' interests sought a shorter period.

Reps. Dalton Smith, R-Houston, and Glenn Repp, R-Duncanville, argued that counties

feared the state would continue pushing its prisoners into county jails.

A portion of the bill sets into state law a federal court order requiring Texas prisons to stay under 95 percent capacity.

County judges have said the provision would permanently shift the financial burden of housing excess state prisoners to local taxpayers.

Hightower said the provision only complies with what is already mandated by the court, but said he understood the fear that "somewhere down the road the Legislature won't be responsible and come back and build any more prisons."

He said programs in the bill would ease the counties' problems, but "in all probability, it'll take longer than two years."

In the meantime, he said, "I feel an obligation to protect the state against lawsuits in two years."

When asked later if he thought the package would satisfy counties, Hightower said, "It better. That's the best that we can do. If it doesn't, we'll just have to come back in two years and do something else."

ALL STRESSED UP AND NOWHERE TO GO?

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

Jn. 14:27

We are a group of faculty who are united by their common experience that Jesus Christ provides intellectually and spiritually satisfying answers to life's most important questions. We are available to students and faculty who might like to discuss such questions with us. We are FACULTY FRIENDS.

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