

College, Career and Military Readiness bonus

As part of its “HB 3 in 30” series, the Texas Education Agency recently released a video focusing on provisions in HB3 related to College, Career and Military Readiness, or CCMR. The legislation incorporates three of the Texas Commission on Public School Finance’s recommendations related to CCMR: outcomes-based funding, funding reimbursements for certain assessments, and including the completion of the FAFSA or TAFSA form in high school graduation requirements. HB3 also requires TEA to conduct a study on alternative career readiness measures for small and rural districts by January of 2021, which will focus on CTE and work-based learning.

TSTA opposes outcomes-based funding because we believe resources need to be spent on students who still need help. But TEA argues that by incentivizing districts to earn additional funds based on outcomes related to CCMR, HB3 will further the state’s goal for higher education, frequently referred to as “60x30.” This goal calls for at least 60 percent of all Texas adults aged 25 to 34 to achieve a postsecondary degree or workforce credential by 2030.

CCMR Outcomes Bonus:

Districts will receive a CCMR bonus in the amount of:

- \$3,000 for each annual CCM-Ready graduate who reaches a certain threshold and is non-economically disadvantaged;
- \$5,000 for each annual CCM-Ready graduate who reaches a certain threshold and is economically disadvantaged; and
- \$2,000 for each annual CCM-Ready graduate enrolled in special education, without a threshold requirement.

Rules have yet to be adopted to formalize the fixed-threshold requirement, but here is what we know so far:

- TEA has indicated that the standards for meeting the CCMR bonus requirements will be more rigorous than the academic accountability system and include demonstrated outcomes post-graduation. For College readiness, outcomes will include data given directly from testing vendors as well as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the National Student Clearinghouse.
- The number of years a student takes to graduate will not be considered.
- The agency has stated that the bonus should reward only those who perform above and beyond Texas’ baseline assumption that students are prepared for the future.
- Thresholds will be defined by rule in spring of 2020. In HB3, legislators directed the education commissioner to use graduate data from the 2016-17 school year to determine the fixed district thresholds that must be met to generate bonuses.

Spending Requirements:

Fifth-five percent of the funding generated from the CCMR Outcomes Bonus must be spent on improving CCMR for students in grades 8-12. Acceptable uses of funds include:

Preparation, professional development and training for counselors on FAFSA, college entrance requirements, career awareness, college awareness and work-based learning.

Support for establishing or maintaining College and Career Readiness School Models (for example, P-Tech).

Support for teacher and student preparation on ACT and/or SAT, dual credit, advanced placement or international baccalaureate.

Funding for a college and career advisor.

Purchase of technology platforms that assist students in gaining access to college, career and military preparation.

Reimbursement:

As part of the foundation school program, funding is now allocated for students to take college entrance exams and/or to earn an industry-based certification. Districts may be reimbursed once per high school student for the SAT/ACT/ TSIA and once per high school student for any one of the industry-based certifications in A-F accountability *if the student passes the exam*.

SAT/ACT/TSIA reimbursement requirements:

- Exam must be taken in the spring of junior year or anytime during senior year in order to qualify for reimbursement.
- If student takes more than one exam, reimbursement will be for the highest cost exam.
- Funding does not include any additional portions of an exam, such as writing, or late fees.

Industry-based certifications reimbursement requirements:

- Student must have passed the exam.
- Districts will be given the funding first and then must develop a system for reimbursing the students with the funds if the student passes the exam.

If a student takes the SAT, ACT, or TSIA and earns an industry-based certification, the district may receive two reimbursements - one for each.

TEA will allocate funding beginning in September of 2019-20 with settle-up in April of 2021, meaning payments will be “front loaded”.

FAFSA:

HB 3 includes a requirement that every student must complete a FAFSA or TAFSA to graduate, or otherwise opt-out starting in the 2021-22 school year. Additionally, it requires the commissioner to convene a FAFSA advisory board focused on policy and implementation. TEA will be releasing more information in November on the topic, and we will continue to monitor.

For more information, a deep-dive on the topic can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5atu7qFeOw&feature=youtu.be>