



May 6, 2016

Mr. Bryce Templeton  
Texas Education Agency  
William B. Travis Building  
1701 N. Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mr. Templeton:

In 2013 the Texas legislature passed House Bill 5 (HB5). Section 10 of this bill (codified in Texas Education Code § 28.014) mandates public school districts (ISDs) to partner with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to locally develop College Prep Courses for Mathematics and English. In response to this mandate, Region One and RGV FOCUS partnered with local ISD and IHEs to support and facilitate the creation of a single Math course and a single English course to be implemented throughout the Rio Grande Valley's 39 school districts. Faculty from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, South Texas College, Texas Southmost College, and Texas State Technical College worked with school district instructors to design a zero-cost, widely-available curriculum for both disciplines. To date, 26 of the 39 school districts are implementing these courses, and an additional seven have signed a Memorandum of Understanding signifying their intent to implement.

#### **Documentation of Successful Completion**

In order to successfully demonstrate college readiness and receive a waiver, students must receive a grade of 70 or higher in the course and a 70 or higher on the final assessment. The final course grade is captured via the PEIMS code on the high school transcript; however, we have struggled to find a solution to document and transmit the final assessment grade. During year one of implementation, participating school districts created local codes via their student information systems in an attempt to electronically transmit this course and final exam information to the IHEs. However, only the course grade successfully transmitted via TREx.

This is problematic for several reasons. First, IHE Admissions staff must request official and physical copies of students' transcripts, delaying students' Fall enrollment in higher education. Secondly, final assessment scores printed on the high school transcript must be manually entered in the IHE's student information system, leaving room for data entry errors. Thirdly, this process is incredibly time-consuming as there are around 500 students participating in the English College Prep Course and an additional 900 students participating in the Math College Prep Course. Finally, the IHEs in our region signed a Memo of Agreement with IHEs in Region Two to accept each other's courses as evidence of successfully meeting college readiness. This agreement requires that we develop a process for ISDs in Region One to document successful completion on the high school transcript in a way that is easily transmittable to IHEs in Region Two. Please also note, that we expect the number of students participating in the College Prep Courses to continue to grow in the coming years.

#### **Request**

We ask that TEA create a TREx code that allows ISDs and IHEs to capture and transmit a student's final assessment grade in addition to the final course grade. It is particularly important for us to document these items via TREx as all of our local IHEs use and prefer that high school transcripts be transmitted electronically to minimize the potential for human errors. This solution would provide additional



controls over the waivers granted by the IHEs for students successfully meeting the requirements outlined in the MOU and would allow them to benefit from the intent of the legislative mandate.

Signed:  Date: 5/6/2014  
Dr. Alda Benavides, RGV FOCUS Leadership Team Co-Chair

Signed:  Date: 5-10-2014  
Dr. Stella Garcia, RGV FOCUS Leadership Team Co-Chair

Signed:  Date: 5/6/2014  
Dr. Luzelma Canales, RGV FOCUS, Executive Director

**Submitted on behalf of RGV FOCUS Leadership Team**

- Carlos Guzman, Roma ISD, Superintendent
- Dr. Alda Benavides, La Joya ISD, Superintendent
- Dr. Arturo Cavazos, Harlingen CISD, Superintendent
- Dr. Cornelio Gonzalez, Region One Education Service Center, Executive Director
- Dr. Daniel King, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Superintendent
- Dr. Espereanza Zendejas, Brownsville ISD, Superintendent
- Dr. Guy Bailey, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, President
- Dr. Lily Tercero, Texas Southmost College, President
- Dr. Luzelma Canales, RGV FOCUS, Executive Director
- Dr. Shirley Reed, South Texas College, President
- Dr. Wynn Rosser, Greater Texas Foundation, President & Chief Executive Officer
- Eduardo Infante, Lyford CISD, Superintendent
- Francisco Almaraz, Workforce Solutions, Chief Executive Officer
- Gonzalo Salazar, Los Fresnos CISD, Superintendent
- Juanita Valdez-Cox, La Union del Pueblo Entero, Executive Director
- Michael Seifert, Rio Grande Equal Voice Network, Network Weaver
- Pat Hobbs, Workforce Solutions Cameron, Chief Executive Officer
- Traci Wickett, United Way of Southern Cameron County, President & Chief Executive Officer

**About RGV FOCUS**

RGV FOCUS is a collective impact initiative in the Rio Grande Valley—a group of leaders from school districts, higher education institutions, community-based organizations and the workforce partnering to improve student lives from cradle-to-career. RGV FOCUS was launched in 2012 to transform college readiness, access, and success across Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties. The work to date is driven by the following vision: *All RGV learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.*