



July 17, 2009

Dear Key Communicator:

As you probably know, the 81st Texas Legislature passed HB 3, the new state accountability bill, that changed graduation requirements for students in Texas public schools. The bill was adopted by the legislature when the session ended on June 1, and late last week we received a clarification from TEA that states in lieu of a phase-in, the new graduation requirements go into effect for all students enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year. In our district, this will impact students in grades 7-12.

In short, the change eliminates the required health, technology applications, and a semester of physical education (only two semesters required instead of three). The communication applications credit is still required at this point, but it will be considered by the State Board of Education. The July notice by TEA that the rules changed immediately occurred after all, or most, of our teachers have been hired. We cannot accommodate the required schedule changes and staffing/master schedule issues that would be necessary to provide our students an opportunity to create a new schedule for the 2009-10 school year. In order to accommodate all schedule changes, we would have to terminate teachers, find certified teachers for the appropriate courses, and re-create our master schedule. That is not a possibility.

We have a plan to phase-in these new graduation requirements. HB 3 allows local school districts to establish local graduation requirements beyond those of the state. We will require juniors and seniors who are enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year to graduate under the "old" graduation requirements. In other words, juniors and seniors will still need the health, technology applications, and three semesters of physical education to graduate in our district.

For students enrolled in grades 7-10 who are already scheduled during the 2009-2010 school year for these courses that will no longer be required, we will expect them to take the course as their elective. We do not have the capacity to change all of their schedules to a different course, one of their choice, at this late date. We are very aware of the GPA/class rank implications, and will work throughout the school year to develop a plan for making it equitable for all students who are currently in high school. That will not be an issue for those students who are in middle school during the 2009-10 school year.

Students in grades 8, 9 and 10 who are attending summer school and are enrolled in one of the courses affected by the changes in HB 3 received a letter on Tuesday, July 14, explaining the option to drop the summer school course and receive a full refund.

I regret the confusion that has been created by the late implementation of HB 3 and the reduction in services that are necessitated by the inequity of the school finance bill.

Next week you will receive another Key Communicator letter regarding budget reductions in our Transportation Department.

Sincerely,  
David Anthony