

Classrooms are clean, teachers are trained, and learners are looking forward to the start of the school year...a time filled with new beginnings when opportunity, imagination, innovation, and creativity come together for all children in the great State of Texas. In public education, this is a time for transformation that will set the course for the future of every child who walks through our doors.

You don't have to look very far to see the myriad of ways districts across the state are embracing the tenets of the Visioning document and stepping up to meet the challenge of transforming our classrooms and the learning that occurs inside. From creating more collaborative work spaces to a greater use of technology at all grade levels, and from project based learning and "flipped classrooms" to virtual and blended learning - the possibilities are endless and exciting.

Upon completion of our first year of the STAAR accountability system, much work remains to be done if we are to accurately assess our learners. Another area primed for transformation, we must continue to work closely with our legislators to reexamine the accountability system and develop one that truly measures student learning against rigorous standards and prepares them for their global futures.

Now is the perfect time to contact your elected senators and state representatives to establish or renew those relationships in preparation for the upcoming legislative session. This may challenge some of us to step out of our comfort zone, but it is crucial if we are to work collaboratively with our legislators in the common interest of all students. ***There will be no transformation unless there is a grassroots movement for change.*** We know that the standardized testing of today is a far cry from its intended purpose, and recent research indicates high scores on a one-time test ***do not*** determine mastery. It is imperative that your stakeholders know the truth - that high stakes testing:

- does not teach learners how to synthesize content and use critical thinking skills,
- teaches learners to memorize and recite facts for a one-time test, and
- robs teachers and learners of valuable instructional time in the classroom.

As of this deadline, 710 Texas school districts representing over 4 million learners (82% of Texas' student population) have already adopted a high-stakes testing resolution. Visit www.transformtexas.org to learn more. Please make sure your board members, parents, civic organizations, and community groups are informed about this issue and encourage their communication with your legislators. For legislative contact information, visit www.capitol.state.tx.us.

By the time this edition of *Insights* reaches your desk, we will likely know the twenty school districts chosen to participate in the state's High Performing Schools Consortium (HPSC). As leaders, we must ban together in support of those selected – not work against them. There will still be opportunities for each of us to play an integral role in this transformational effort: form a local consortium with districts in your area; look to existing consortiums for assistance in the process; use the Visioning document to help guide/shape your involvement. ***Remember, the end result will improve the system for all of us and, more importantly, the children we serve!***