





The four areas of focus are digital learning, learning standards, assessments and local control.

- digital learning, including the use of electronic textbooks and the Texas Virtual School Network, which provides online coursework to schools throughout the state;
- learning standards specifying the course content students must master;
- assessments used to gauge and report student progress to parents and the public; and
- local control, ways to increase the involvement of parents and communities in important educational decisions.

## Excellence and Innovation

Participation is open to public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools that have received recognition for excellence or innovation from a national, state or regional educational organization, and earned Acceptable, Recognized or Exemplary ratings from TEA for the 2010-11 school year.

Consortium members will be selected to reflect a range of district sizes as well as the state's geographic and ethnic diversity.

"They'll be selected because they're already doing some innovative things, or operating in an exceptional way," Lindsey says. "So they're bringing with them a wealth of experience, operating on the cutting edge, and already making progress on these goals. We'll take advantage of their experience."

"As our schools seek to prepare students for the 21st century, discovering ways to measure how well it is done will be one of the most valuable contributions the consortium can make," she says. "We'll make sure that we're capturing the best ideas out there and taking advantage of what practitioners are learning from cutting edge work they're doing."

According to Lindsey, the consortium members should be selected before the end of August 2012.

"Hopefully, not too much longer after that we'll be able to call them together for their first meeting and start talking through the best and most effective ways to do the work," she says.

In a series of meetings thereafter, consortium representatives will develop recommendations for the Legislature that encompass the best ideas and practices participants have discovered in their own operations. These recommendations, synthesized in an action plan, will be presented to the governor and Legislature by Dec. 1, 2012.

"Once the action plan is submitted, we'll take further guidance from the [2013] Legislature and governor," Lindsey says. "It may involve them saying, 'we like these ideas, so why don't the 20 of you go and start testing them out.' But it's hard to say. This is

something that hasn't been done before, and it's an evolving process."



## A Second Round

SB 1557 also calls for a second report for the 2015 legislative session.

"The second phase will probably be guided by the recommendations the consortium offers, and the guidance we receive," Lindsey says. "At some point, the Legislature may want to adopt portions of these ideas statewide."

For the participating districts, working with the consortium means that they'll have direct input in guiding future Texas educational policy.

"A number of districts have a high level of interest in this," Lindsey says. "They'd like to be a part of creating the next generation of accountability measures. It will definitely affect their futures, and so being at the table and able to help shape policy is a big incentive. We anticipate these districts will be some of the early implementers of these policies." **FN**

*For more information on this program, visit the Texas Education Agency's web page on the [High Performance Schools Consortium](#).*

*To learn more about the finances and educational results of school districts near you, visit the Comptroller's [Financial Allocation for Texas \(FAST\)](#) site.*

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