

Business Group Proposes Major Education Overhaul

Says is vital to make Texas graduates able to go on to college or the workforce

By Jim Forsyth

Monday, November 24, 2008

A business group says it will approach the legislature with a series of proposal to make Texas high school graduates more competitive in the workplace, 1200 WOAI news reports today.

"This is vital in the economic development of our state, for our continued growth and prosperity," said Bartell Zachry, Chairman of Zachry Construction Company and a member of the Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce.

The proposals are far reaching and will affect nearly every facet of education, according to Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business.

Among them, changing the prime measuring stick for public school accountability from TAKS test results, to a demonstrated ability to make a 'skillful transition to skilled employment, advanced military training, associates degree, bachelors degree or technical certification, without the need for remediation.'

Hammond said as many as fifty percent of graduates from Texas public schools today need remedial help before being able to compete at the community college level or on the job site.

Brooke Terry of the Texas Public Policy Foundation says many of the proposed changes will affect teachers.

"Streamline the teacher certification process, so someone from private industry can change careers easily if he or she chooses to become a public schoolteacher," she said.

Currently, teacher certification include impediments to mid career transition, including the need to receive additional college education and undergo student teaching.

Terry said the state should streamline and improve its aggressive 'pay-for-performance' program, awarding teachers who turn out students who are more highly qualified graduates.

Another proposal, to require high schools to offer dual credit courses or courses which will count toward a graduate's professional or technical certification, and make them available to all students.

"Because if you come out of high school and you already have college credit, or you are halfway to technical certification or you are halfway to a state license, you are a lot more likely to go ahead and continue your study, and graduate and become a productive member of society, said the Coalition's Andy Erban.

The business groups also call for reforming the core credit requirements for high schools, and raising Texas curriculum standards 'immediately' to reflect the knowledge and skills students need to be college or career ready.

Zachry said in the massive construction business he runs, it is not uncommon to find job applicants who can't master simple skills like reading, showing up on time, or following the needed instructions to meet on-the-job safety standards.

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