

Changes Will Make a Difference

By John Chapman

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) places many requirements on certified teachers. Not only does a teacher have to pass a generalist test and subject area test, many more must obtain additional certifications and / or Continuing Professional Education (CPE) hours in order to meet the demands of the state. All core area teachers are certified to teach gifted and talented children. The state requires core teachers to obtain 30 hours in gifted and talented and an additional 6 hour update annually. In years past, the district had less than 10% of the teachers who met these requirements. The law reads:

According to the Texas Education Code 89.2, school districts shall ensure that:

- *prior to assignment in the program, teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students have a minimum of 30 hours of staff development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students;*
- *teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education; and*
- *administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.*

As of August 24, 2009, 100% of our administrators and teachers meet the requirements in the Texas Education Code 89.2.

Many people have asked the question as to why our elementary classrooms are arranged differently this year. They are not asking about the furniture or new paint schemes but why some classes have all bilingual students. That is a great question, and it can be answered in three simple words—it's the law. Not all of us agree with every single law put into practice, but we are all bound to follow the law whether we agree or not. All Bilingual / ESL students must be served by a Bilingual / ESL teacher. CISD has not done this in years past, but to meet the laws, the district has hired certified teachers to teach our children effectively.

19 TAC Chapter 89, Adaptations for Special Populations, Subchapter BB, Commissioner's Rules Concerning State Plan for Educating Limited English Proficient Students, Section 89.1205, Required Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language Programs, states the following:

“(a) Each school district which has an enrollment of 20 or more limited English proficient students in any language classification in the same grade level district-wide shall offer a bilingual education program as described in subsection.....

b) of this section for the limited English proficient students in prekindergarten through the elementary grades who speak that language. "Elementary grades" shall include at least prekindergarten through Grade 5.”

Kudos to all CISD educators for going the extra mile in order to obtain the appropriate certifications and training hours needed to meet the demands of the state as well as the needs of each individual learner. Comfort ISD teachers / paraprofessionals are one the finest group of educators across the state. You are fortunate to have a dedicated, determined group of people nurturing, teaching and molding our children eight hours a day, five days a week.