

North Forest Independent School District
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Kathy Hill,
Executive Secretary to the
Superintendent for Board Affairs

Standards
→ Special Programs*
* please prepare a
response for
Commissioner's signature
AB
12-12-07

Fax

To: Robert Scott, Commissioner of Education **From:** Allen Provost, Board Vice President

Fax: ~~542-407-3507~~ 512. 463. 9838 **Date:** December 10, 2007

Phone: **Pages:** 3

Re: **CC:**

Urgent For Review Please Comment Please Reply Please Recycle

NOTES/COMMENTS:

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2007 DEC 12 PM 6:09
OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER



December 7, 2007

Commissioner Robert Scott
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Ave.
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

Dear Commissioner,

This communication references the TEA Special Education summary report I received in response to my request for information on the outcome of the Agency's February 2007, onsite visit to the North Forest Independent School District.

This report is disturbing on several counts-it is obviously fragmented with pages out of sequence, dark segments of text; the information contained in it is extremely negative and makes no references to the research-based, adapted best practice strategies and measures the District has put in to place to address TEA- identified compliance issues within the last two years; it arrived too late for use in intervention planning; and it is reflective of an evident delay in the time between the preparation of the document and the date it was allegedly sent to the District (a fact reflected on page 12 of 15) that contains a least one deadline for the submission of information for the District that was set for the next day (October 31, 2007) upon the arrival of the report. Also, the copy I have was faxed to the superintendent by TEA when the original report could not be located in the District.

Furthermore, this report is more critical than instructive in its overall approach to the results of the monitoring visit and appears aimed at painting the worst possible picture of the NFISD Special Education Department's staff and district personnel, by focusing a microscope on various incidental findings that are not reflective of the comprehensive improvements that have been put into place.

In essence, it appears that this report and the timing of its release reflect the prevailing political winds that seem to be against NFISD at the moment regardless of the fact that the District's Special Education program is committed to doing, in good faith, everything reasonable and necessary to ensure the success of our students and the maintenance of local determination in collaboration with the Agency. There is also strong evidence to suggest that there was a negative change in tenor of the findings of the TEA visiting team between the time of the exit interview with the NFISD staff and the time of issue of the final report.

"Excellence: Everyday. Every Way!"

As a third-term board member in NFISD, I am aware that our District has many challenges in this and other areas. I also know that some of our issues are inherent and interrelated with the demographics of our special education population and will not be resolved except through planning and implementation of effective instructional strategies practiced over-time.

I am suggesting, however that a report which focuses on the emerging strengths of NFISD's Special Education Department-documented, increased meaningful parent and community involvement: demonstratively improved recruitment and retention of highly qualified, diverse and culturally skilled staff; innovative approaches to providing appropriate support services recently implemented; an experienced, pro-active special education director whose two year tenure in NFISD has sparked a massive overhaul of her department by instituting best practices that, when coupled with realist timeframes, are producing fruit and will continue to do so over the long haul-rather than a report that is unequivocally negative would better serve our students and staff. Such a report might also help to create a climate more conducive to student achievement and help to improve staff and District morale without negating or undermining the need for continuing improvement efforts.

I and my fellow Board members are committed to the success of our students in NFISD-as we hope the Agency is-and remain open to any reasonable suggestions as to what can be done in the way of realistic measures to address this untenable report which belies the hard work and progress our District is making. I await your earliest possible response to this inquiry.

Respectfully,



Mr. Allen Provost, Vice President NFISD Board of Trustees

cc: Congresswoman, Shelia Jackson-Lee
Senator, Rodney Ellis
Senator, John Whitmire
Senator, Mario Gallegos
Representative, Senfronia Thompson
Representative, Harold Dutton
NFISD Board of Trustees
Interim Superintendent, Mr. William Jones