



1701 North Congress Ave. • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • www.tea.state.tx.us

Robert E. Scott  
Superintendent

**IMPORTANT  
ACCREDITATION  
INFORMATION**

**CERTIFIED MAIL**

July 8, 2011

101-909  
101-909-003  
2011-2012

Mr. Albert Coleman, President, Board of Trustees  
Ms. Edna Forté, Acting Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
6010 Little York  
Houston, Texas 77016

Dear Mr. Coleman and Ms. Forté:

The purpose of this letter is to provide advance notice to the North Forest Independent School District (ISD) regarding the status of the district and its North Forest High School campus. I have determined not to order immediate closure of the high school campus. However, the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) has determined that, when it releases ratings on August 1, 2011, both the North Forest ISD and North Forest High School will be rated *Academically Unacceptable* (AU), the district for the third consecutive year and the high school for the sixth consecutive year. It has further been determined that, in 2011, the district will earn a substandard financial accountability rating for the fourth consecutive year. These consecutive ratings, coming after the performance history discussed below, will require me to assign North Forest ISD a 2011-2012 accreditation status of **Not Accredited-Revoked** and to close the district effective July 1, 2012.

**Background Information<sup>1</sup>**

As you are aware, when academic accountability ratings were issued on August 1, 2008, the Forest Brook and Smiley High Schools were rated AU for the third consecutive year. On March 15, 2008, these two high schools were merged to form the North Forest High School, and, in 2008-2009, the campus was required to implement school improvement and reconstitution plans. (See enclosed.) As a result of previous performance concerns, the North Forest High School had been assigned a campus intervention team (CIT), which remained assigned to the campus. (See August 29, 2008 correspondence, Bates pp. 79-84.) Additionally, as described in a letter dated November 1, 2007, the district was assigned a conservator to oversee continued implementation of school improvement and/or reconstitution plans for the multi-year AU campuses within the district. (See enclosed.)

<sup>1</sup> North Forest ISD participated in a record review on April 1, 2011, related to its 2010-2011 accreditation status assignment. The official record developed for that review includes a comprehensive correspondence history for the district and is incorporated here by reference. Documents included in that record are not enclosed with this correspondence but are referenced by date and/or Bates stamp page. Additional documents not already in the specified record are enclosed with this correspondence.

On July 31, 2008, the agency notified North Forest ISD that it would appoint a board of managers and superintendent to exercise the powers and duties of the district's board of trustees due to the district's extensive history of deficiencies, its recent significant problems, and its failure to consistently work cooperatively with previously-assigned conservators to address numerous problems within the district and its campuses. (See enclosed.) The district requested a review of my determination, and, after completion of the review, on October 16, 2008, I assigned the board of managers, effective immediately. (See Bates pp. 52-54.)

On January 8, 2009, a hearing was conducted to provide district leaders an opportunity to explain the continued academically unacceptable performance, lack of improvement, and plans for academic improvement at the North Forest High School. The statutory intervention structure in place to address circumstances of ongoing academically unacceptable performance was reviewed during the hearing. Given the multi-year AU status of the campus, the district was notified of the requirement to develop a contingency plan for possible campus closure should performance not improve. (See Bates pp. 85-86 and enclosure dated December 16, 2008.)

On May 8, 2009, the agency officially notified the district that it was required to submit contingency plans for closure of the North Forest High School campus should the campus be rated AU when the 2009 and/or 2010 academic accountability ratings were issued. (See Bates pp. 85-86.) On May 22, 2009, the North Forest ISD submitted a board of managers-approved contingency plan to the TEA in the event that the North Forest High School did not meet the state accountability standards and was ordered closed for the 2009-2010 or 2010-2011 school years. (See Bates pp. 87-101.)

On July 31, 2009, the North Forest High School was rated AU for the fourth consecutive rating year, and it earned its fifth consecutive AU rating on July 30, 2010. During this time period, the agency continued to implement substantial sanctions at the district level due to ongoing and serious performance, compliance, and governance concerns. Additionally, with the passage of House Bill (HB) 3 during the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session, an additional year was added to the timeline under which I am required to order an ultimate sanction for a chronically underperforming campus. Consequently, the campus was not ordered closed in 2009 or 2010. However, with the campus' sixth consecutive AU rating in 2011, it again is subject to an order under Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.107(e) of closure, repurposing, or alternative management.

In regard to district-level actions, North Forest ISD was assigned an Accredited-Probation status for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 due to findings related to a series of special accreditation investigations conducted in the district and resulting in the sanctions referenced above. (See Bates pp. 1-41.) The district was assigned a 2009-2010 accreditation status of Accredited-Warning based on its academic and financial performance. Specifically, the district was assigned a 2009 academic accountability rating of *Academically Unacceptable*, a 2008 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*, and a 2009 financial accountability rating of *Suspended-Data Quality*. (See Bates pp. 42-44.)

In 2010-2011, the district again was assigned an Accredited-Probation status due to the ratings assigned to the district in the state's academic and financial accountability rating systems and special accreditation investigation findings that remained of concern. Specifically, the district was assigned a 2009 and 2010 academic accountability rating of *Academically Unacceptable*, a 2008 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*, a 2009 financial accountability rating of *Suspended-Data Quality*, and a 2010 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*. (See Bates pp. 18-41, 45-51, 57-59, and 453-464, and enclosure dated May 4, 2011.)

In November 2010, in accordance with the timeline established by TEC §39.112, the board of managers was removed from North Forest ISD, and control of the district was returned to the district's elected board of trustees. Specifically, on November 10, 2010, the agency officially notified the district that all previous appointments would expire upon the newly-elected members of the North Forest ISD board of trustees taking the oath of office in a board meeting to be held on November 15, 2010. (See Bates pp. 76-77.) On July 12, 2010, I reactivated the assignment of a conservator to the district and assigned Ms. Kay Karr the responsibility to assist in the transition to local board control and with the district's ongoing operations. (See Bates pp. 60-75.)

### **Revocation of Accreditation; Annexation**

As stated above, North Forest ISD and North Forest High School will be rated AU when accountability ratings are released on August 1, 2011. With those ratings, the district will have earned a third consecutive year of AU performance, and the campus will have earned a sixth consecutive year of AU performance. Additionally, the district again will earn a *Substandard Achievement* financial accountability rating in 2011. This third consecutive AU rating and fourth consecutive substandard financial rating, coming after the performance history reviewed in this letter and previous records, will require me to assign North Forest ISD a 2011-2012 accreditation status of **Not Accredited-Revoked** and to close the district effective July 1, 2012. Therefore, on or after August 1, 2011, I will issue an order for the closure of North Forest ISD. This order will annex North Forest ISD to Houston ISD (101-912) effective July 1, 2012. The order will notify you of the procedures available to the district to appeal its ratings and to appeal the order of annexation. There is nothing the district needs to do at this time in order to preserve those appeal opportunities.

Given this annexation, I defer the sanction decision under TEC §39.107(e) as to the North Forest High School for the 2011-2012 school year.

### **Conservator**

At this time, I will continue the conservator assignment to the district and charge Ms. Karr with overseeing the closure and annexation process, in addition to relevant duties previously assigned. It will be the role of the conservator to facilitate the annexation process in conjunction with the Houston ISD to ensure a smooth transition and transfer for the district and its students. Ms. Karr will report on her activities to both the North Forest ISD and Houston ISD boards of trustees and will have the authority to direct, approve, and disapprove actions as she deems necessary to promote the smooth transition of functions from North Forest ISD to Houston ISD. The cost of the services provided by the conservator will continue to be paid by the district.

### **Preclearance**

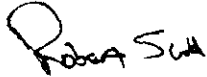
The annexation of North Forest ISD to Houston ISD has been determined a change requiring preclearance under the National Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. §1973-1973aa-6). When TEA applies for preclearance from the United States Department of Justice, you will be notified.

While it saddens me to take this action, given the expectations of state law and my concern for the long-term education of the students served by North Forest ISD, I am compelled to move forward with this process. I am committed to an effective transition, and I will make agency staff available to support the two districts as questions or issues may arise. It is my sincere desire that the agency, the district, and the community work together in a cooperative and productive manner to address the needs of the district's students.

Mr. Albert Coleman, President, Board of Trustees  
Ms. Edna Forte, Acting Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
Page 4

Any questions you may have regarding this correspondence may be addressed to Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation, at (512) 463-5899 or by email at [accred@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:accred@tea.state.tx.us).

Sincerely,



Robert Scott  
Commissioner of Education

RS/jt

Enclosures

cc: Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center  
Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation, TEA  
David Anderson, General Counsel, TEA  
Karen Batchelor, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Ron Rowell, Director, Governance and General Inquiries, TEA  
Ted Kerr, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Mary Jane DeBusk, Campus Intervention Team Contact  
Kay Karr, Conservator

LEA Name:	North Forest ISD	Indicate Type of Submission Below (Check Appropriate Box)		Submission Date
Co/Dist Number:	101-909	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Draft (Due September 29, 2008) <input type="checkbox"/> Draft with Staffing Recommendations (Due February 27, 2009) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Version (Due June 15, 2009)		06-30-09
Campus Name:	North Forest High School	Final Version (For use by REVIEWER only): <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> NOT Approved- Resubmission Required		
Campus Number:	003			
ESC Region Number:	4			
Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Resources [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
1. Staff Changes/Retention	Hire a strong instructional leader is needed in order to ensure the successful merger of the two high school campuses. Hire highly qualified staff trained to meet the needs of the student is needed in order to ensure academic standards and retention of staff. Hiring of key personnel should go beyond district personnel, when needed.	Hire a highly qualified Dean of Instruction to assist with the implementation of a rigorous, personalized curriculum for each student. Use a scoring rubric for hiring of personnel. Disaggregate data to determine staff effectiveness. Use PDAS to document and provide support to staff.	Title I Funds Seek grants and sponsorships to underwrite various projects	July 2008- May 2009
2. Rigorous Academic Content	Assess LEA's Curriculum in all content areas for cross discipline instruction. Use all types of data, not just test data, more effectively to determine root causes for the lack of academic achievement. Check certifications closely for placement of staff to teach courses, especially AP courses. Current practices or curriculum is not meeting the needs of the students.	Working in conjunction with district personnel, department chairperson and school personnel, teachers will be allowed to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Provide training and require staff to use data to guide instruction. Provide professional development to design rubrics that will be used by teachers and students to evaluate student performance.	Title I Funds Seek grants and sponsorships to underwrite various projects	August 2008-June 2009

SIP Part B: Reconstitution Plan

Development and Implementation of Reconstitution Plan

LEA Name:	North Forest ISD	Indicate Type of Submission Below (Check Appropriate Box)		Submission Date
Co/Dist Number:	101-909	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Draft (Due September 29, 2008) <input type="checkbox"/> Draft with Staffing Recommendations (Due February 27, 2009) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Version (Due June 15, 2009)		06-30-09
Campus Name:	North Forest High School			
Campus Number:	603			
ESC Region Number:	4	Final Version (For use by REVIEWER only): <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> NOT Approved- Resubmission Required		
Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Resources [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
3. Personal Attention and Guidance	<p>Assessed and continue to assess the school's Discipline Plan. A mentorship program is needed to support students. Counselors need to be more involved in the "counseling" aspect of being a counselor.</p>	<p>Develop an Individual Academic plan for each student. Require teachers to use "Your Study Guides" in assisting students. Request all staff members to mentor at least 10 students. Counselors need to make sure that all students 4-year plans are updated and discussed with each student annually. Research student intervention programs that can be used to improve academic performance of students. Additional training or hiring of counselors that are current on high school trends and counseling practices.</p>	<p>Title I Funds Seek grants and sponsorships to underwrite various projects</p>	<p>August 2008-June 2009</p>
4. High Expectations for Students	<p>Based on classroom observations, lesson plans, assessments and conversations with staff, it was determined that not all staff members expectations are high for students. Students need to be challenged more in the classroom through higher-order questioning and projects.</p>	<p>Provide Benchmark testing each six weeks that not only covers material taught the sixth weeks but encompasses material covered each previous six weeks. Reinstate the Honor Society and other student organizations that promote good citizenship, academic excellence and preparedness to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Increase dual credit course offerings. Continue to assess staff expectation of students. Allow students the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities that are challenging and compliment the academic curriculum. Monitor student failures each six weeks.</p>	<p>Title I and General Funds</p>	<p>August 2008-June 2009</p>

2008-2009  
Second Year AU  
SIP Part B: Reconstitution Plan  
Development and Implementation of Reconstitution Plan

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Co/Dist Number:	101-909	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Draft (Due September 29, 2008)		06-30-09
Campus Name:	North Forest High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft with Staffing Recommendations (Due February 27, 2009)		
Campus Number:	003	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Version (Due June 15, 2009)		
ESC Region Number:	4	Final Version (For use by REVIEWER only): <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> NOT Approved. Resubmission Required		
Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations: [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Resources [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
5. Curriculum and Instructional Changes	Replace some staff members who are not following district guidelines and providing an instructional program to meet the needs of the students they teach. Opportunities for students to be involved in real-world learning experiences are needed. Some staff members are not incorporating the lesson cycle in their daily planning. Department chairpersons are not actively engaged in helping to improve the instructional program within their respective departments.	Continue to utilize a meaningful curriculum in ELA, math, science, and social studies with teachers being allowed to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of the students they teach. Allow students to take academic field trips, provide speakers and presenters to address students, and provide simulation experiences on campus. Require department chairpersons to conduct classroom observations, team teach and provide demonstration lessons. Each member of each department will be required to demonstrate lessons during departmental meetings or class time.	Title I, General Funds, Contracted Services, Region 4	
6. Structural and Managerial Innovations	All departments should have common planning time during the instructional day. Each administrator and counselor should be responsible for a grade level or "house" and should "spiral" up as their students move through high school. Scheduling of inservices and training should be done so that school personnel is not pulled from the schools during testing or special activities.	Incorporate Block scheduling to allow more time on task. Involve department chairperson more in decision making as it relates to their department. Ninth graders should be housed together to create a learning environment that promotes safety as well as optimal learning. Require departments to meet at least twice a month to plan. Staff meeting should not only be the delivery of information but a time for learning. Common planning time for each department should be incorporated into the master schedule. Hire a School Improvement Coach to assist the staff and students in increasing student achievements through professional development, mentoring of staff, classroom observations with feedback, modeling of lessons, small group tutoring, and resources.	Title I and General Funds	August 2008-June 2009

SIP Part B: Reconstitution Plan  
Development and Implementation of Reconstitution Plan

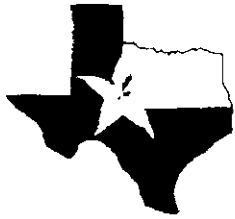
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Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Resources [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
7. Sustained Professional Development	Meaningful job-embedded professional development opportunities are need for all staff members.	Incorporate a professional library for the staff to be housed in the school's library. Provide institutional membership to professional organizations for each discipline area. Utilize train-the-trainer model for sharing professional development. Allow opportunities for administrative team to be involved in professional development opportunities together to learn and plan. Conduct research to determine root causes and needs of our students	Title I and General Funds	August 2008- June 2009
8. Financial Commitment	Budget and financial procedures should be followed. Understanding campus based budget procedures should be provided and shared with the staff.	Provide each department with a budget and allow the departments to determine some of the basic expenditures. Inform the staff of the budget and allow them to be involved in expenditures of funds.	Title I Funds Seek grants and sponsorships to underwrite various projects	September 2008- June 2009



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Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
9. Enhanced Parental and Community Involvement	There is a need to increase parental and community involvement. Positive parent and community perceptions of the school need to improve.	Hire a consultant to increase community and parental involvement in the school. This consultant will establish a parent center to be housed in the school and provide information and assistance to parents as identified through parent and community surveys. Determine and use different strategies for communicating school events and information to parents, such as newsletters, marquee, calling system, letters to parents, and local media.	Seek grants and sponsorships to underwrite various projects
10. Other Elements of Innovative Campus Redesign	Career and Technology programs are not being highlighted or highly utilized by students.	Evaluate CTE offerings for student interest and teacher effectiveness. Offer courses based on student interest, sustainability of campus needs, and current job market and trends, such as Media Technology, Printing, Photography, Welding, etc. Increase community and student awareness through Career and Technology Days, Open House, Technology Fairs, etc.	District Funds, CTE Funding September 2008- June 2009

SIP Part B: Reconstitution Plan  
Development and Implementation of Reconstitution Plan

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Targeted Reconstitution Focus Areas [See guidance document]	Reconstitution Determinations [See guidance document]	Actions [See guidance document]	Resources [See guidance document]	Interim Timelines [See guidance document]
11. Other (Identify):				
12. Other (Identify):				



# TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

Robert Scott  
Commissioner

**IMPORTANT  
MONITORING  
INFORMATION**

101-909  
2006-2007

November 1, 2007

Mr. William Jones, Interim Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
6010 Little York  
Houston, Texas 77016

Dear Mr. Jones:

On March 26, 2007, the Texas Education Agency (TEA or Agency) sent a letter to the North Forest Independent School District (ISD) to update the district regarding the information that the board president, former superintendent, campus principal, and external campus intervention team representative presented to the Commissioner of Education and TEA staff at a hearing conducted in accordance with Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.132(6) on February 23, 2007. The purpose of the hearing was to provide district and campus leaders an opportunity to explain the academically *unacceptable performance, lack of improvement, and plans for academic improvement* at the Oak Village Middle School (101-909-043) campus within the North Forest ISD, which had been identified as academically unacceptable (AU) for three consecutive rating years.

At the hearing, the North Forest ISD was notified that a contingency plan for the possible closure of the Oak Village Middle School campus was required to be developed, approved by the North Forest ISD board of trustees, and submitted to the TEA no later than June 15, 2007. The contingency plan was required to address both a possible 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 effective date for closure of the campus, pending the results of 2007 and 2008 campus accountability ratings. On June 20, 2007, the TEA received a contingency plan from the North Forest ISD addressing the possible 2007-2008 closure of the Oak Village Middle School campus. The 2007 state academic accountability rating for this campus was issued on August 1, 2007, and the campus again was rated AU.

On August 15, 2007, a letter was sent to notify the North Forest ISD that the TEA would not order closure of the Oak Village Middle School campus for the 2007-2008 school year. The agency also requested that the district update the contingency plan related to campus closure and resubmit it to the TEA no later than October 1, 2007, to address the campus boundary revisions and student campus assignments that would be implemented by the district should the campus be ordered closed in 2008-2009.

In addition to reviewing the status of the Oak Village Middle School in the 2007 state academic accountability rating system, the TEA has reviewed the 2007 academic accountability ratings for the other campuses within the North Forest ISD and has taken into account other information gathered to date, including the closure contingency plans, monthly campus intervention team (CIT) reports, and reports from the fiscal conservator appointed to the district, in order to update certain sanction and intervention recommendations for the district and its campuses. As you are aware, as of the ratings issued on August 1, 2007, in addition to the Oak Village Middle School that has been rated AU for four consecutive school years, the North Forest ISD has four campuses that have been rated AU for two consecutive school years. In the August 15, 2007, letter from the TEA, the district was notified that, under the authority granted under TEC §39.1331, the district must acquire professional services specifically targeted to any and all subject areas of low performance identified for the Oak Village Middle School and other district campuses identified as AU as a result of 2007 campus accountability ratings. Additionally, I personally made an on-site visit to the Oak Village Middle School on September 24, 2007, to review the progress being made by the campus and discuss in more detail the sanctions which will be required should campus performance not be acceptable when 2008 state academic accountability ratings are issued.

As stated previously, the agency expects drastic improvement in the performance of campuses serving the students of the North Forest ISD. Therefore, under the authority granted by TEC §39.1324(c), the TEA also has determined that a conservator will be assigned to the district to ensure and oversee the continued implementation of school improvement and/or reconstitution plans for the multi-year AU campuses within the North Forest ISD. The conservator also will work with any district personnel assigned to serve in a central office coordination role for under-performing campuses. Additionally, under the authority granted by TEC §§39.071 and 39.131, I will expand the charge of the conservator to include oversight of LEA-required actions as reflected in an October 30, 2007, Performance-Based Monitoring (PBM) report related to compliance and program effectiveness concerns for the special education program area. I am assigning Ms. Barbara Wilson to the North Forest ISD as the TEA conservator to direct the actions of the district for matters related to academic improvement and program compliance and effectiveness. Ms. Wilson has served most recently as the superintendent of the Hitchcock ISD and previously has served as a curriculum director and principal.

As a TEA conservator, Ms. Wilson's role will include, but will not be limited to:

- Taking a lead in analyzing local education agency (LEA) data;
- Identifying causal factors for low performance on the TAKS;
- Working with the LEA to incorporate findings and develop an improvement plan that is reasonably calculated to improve student performance on the TAKS;
- Overseeing implementation of improvement planning activities, including the acquisition of related professional services and correction of noncompliance and program effectiveness concerns in the special education program area as reflected in the PBM system;
- Periodically reporting to the TEA on progress;
- Recommending additional actions that the TEA may need to take; and
- Directing an action to be taken by or approve or disapprove any action of a principal, the superintendent of the LEA, or the LEA board as necessary to achieve her charges.

Mr. William Jones, Interim Superintendent  
North Forest ISD  
Page 3

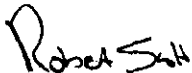
Additionally, I am requiring the acquisition of professional services under the provisions of TEC §39.1331 for the purpose of monitoring assessment administration on the Oak Village Middle School campus, and Ms. Wilson will be responsible for making determinations regarding the selection and acquisition of these services for the district. Furthermore, it is recommended that the district secure professional services to monitor assessment administration at other district campuses, particularly those that have been rated AU for two consecutive years.

A conservator appointed by the commissioner to oversee fiscal matters of the district, Mr. Henry Boening, is in place at the North Forest ISD. Mr. Boening and Ms. Wilson will, together, serve as a management team to direct the operations of the district in areas of unacceptable performance, in accordance with TEC §39.131(a)(8).

Agency staff will be present at the next meeting of the board of trustees to introduce Ms. Wilson to the members of the board and the administrators. The cost of the conservator's services will be paid by the district, in accordance with TEC §39.134. The fee shall not exceed \$60 per hour (not to exceed \$480 per day) plus necessary travel expenses not to exceed the state per diem rate. Failure to make timely payments to the conservator may result in appropriate amounts being deducted from the district's Foundation School Program funds.

The conservators will keep me apprised of the conditions in the LEA and of the level of continued cooperation shown by the administration and faculty. It is my sincere desire that all parties work together with the conservators in a cooperative and productive manner to address the deficiencies in student performance, program effectiveness, and fiscal matters. Any questions you may have regarding the assignment of Ms. Wilson may be addressed to Ted Kerr in the Division of Program Monitoring and Interventions at (512) 463-9414.

Sincerely,



Robert Scott  
Commissioner of Education

RS:LT:aa

cc: Barbara Gaston, President, North Forest ISD Board of Trustees  
Charles Russell, Principal, Oak Village Middle School, North Forest ISD  
Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center  
Lizzette Reynolds, Deputy Commissioner, Statewide Policy and Programs, TEA  
Susan Barnes, Associate Commissioner, Standards and Programs, TEA  
Gene Lenz, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Special Programs, Monitoring,  
and Interventions, TEA  
Laura Taylor, Senior Director, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
David Anderson, Chief Counsel, TEA



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Robert Scott  
Commissioner

2007-2008  
101-909

July 31, 2008

CERTIFIED MAIL

Members of the Board of Trustees  
Mr. William Jones, Interim Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
P.O. Box 23278  
Houston, Texas 77228-3278

Dear Members of the Board and Mr. Jones:

The purpose of this letter is to notify the North Forest Independent School District (ISD) of an increase to the sanction and intervention levels currently imposed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) on the district. The district's extensive history of deficiencies, its recent significant problems, and its current failure to consistently work cooperatively with the assigned management team compel me to once again exercise my responsibility for safeguarding the educational environment provided for the district's students.

Problems in the North Forest ISD have been addressed by the TEA dating back many years. Financial, data reporting, and programmatic compliance concerns have plagued the district since the mid-1990s when the district's external auditor identified financial deficiencies and a failure to report accurate data caused the lowering of the district's academic accountability ratings in the 1999 and 2000 rating years. Additionally, the district has repeatedly failed to produce adequate documentation to validate proper coding of fiscal and student data and proper expenditure of funds.

In the intervening years, progress has been sporadic and regression has been frequent. The most recent interventions by the agency have consisted of the assignment of a lowered 2007-2008 accreditation status as referenced in a June 13, 2008, TEA letter. The status of Accredited-Probation was assigned following a special accreditation investigation conducted by the agency, which identified material, systemic, and pervasive weaknesses in the district's financial, accounting, and data reporting systems and in its systems of complying with federal and state program requirements, reflecting a lack of proper internal controls to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the district. These deficiencies remained even after the assignment of a management team to the district. As you are aware, a financial conservator was placed in the district in March 2007, and an academic conservator was added in November 2007 to form a management team. Despite the diligent work of Mr. Henry Boening and Ms. Barbara Wilson, critical areas of deficiency remain.

Deficient conditions in the district continue to center around three major areas: finance, compliance with federal and state statutory and regulatory requirements, and efficient and effective district management. According to reports submitted by the management team and data compiled by TEA staff, current cash flow concerns will result in an approximately \$11.8 million deficit in the district's operating fund at the close of the 2008 fiscal year (August 31, 2008). The district will not be able to sustain itself financially at its current taxing structure. The district's precarious financial condition has resulted in an inability of the district to meet payroll with appropriate sources of funds

Members of the Board of Trustees  
Mr. William Jones, Interim Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
Page 2 of 3

and to secure short-term bridge loans, which have been denied by several banks, including the district's depository bank. Additionally, the district's bond rating has been downgraded because of the district's ongoing financial problems and recent declarations of financial exigency. The district's ongoing inability to manage its finances also is reflected in its inability to reconcile the district's current bank statements.

Clear problems with federal and state compliance have existed and remain in the district. The agency's recent review of the district's special education program, as requested by the United States Department of Education, Office of Inspector General, has resulted in preliminary findings of substantial noncompliance with procurement laws which are likely to result in a substantial questioned cost. These problems are in addition to issues of noncompliance identified by a TEA monitoring team in a report issued in October 2007, which continue to be addressed by the academic conservator. Additionally, a review of the federal No Child Left Behind program by TEA monitors and auditors disclosed a failure of the district to implement program requirements, resulting in substantial questioned costs to be detailed in an upcoming TEA report.

School governance is unstable in the North Forest ISD and has been so for quite some time. According to members of the management team, quality effective board leadership is not evident. The board of trustees has taken little independent initiative to find solutions to the critical ongoing financial solvency concerns and instructional needs of the district, and trustees on several occasions have failed to support recommendations from the interim superintendent, the conservator, and TEA staff. This failure is reflected in the board's decision to release the district's former superintendent with a \$233,000 buyout of his contract and in the subsequent multiple attempts of the board to rehire the same superintendent. To make decisions critical to the welfare of the district, the conservator also has had to overrule the board of trustees on several occasions. This ongoing failure of leadership and direction has resulted in significant and pervasive operating deficiencies within the district and an inability of the district to sustain progress and retain quality staff over time.

Under the authority of Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.131(a)(9), and pursuant to the requirements of 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §97.1073(e), I will assign a board of managers to the North Forest ISD. I am requesting preclearance from the Department of Justice to allow the temporary appointment by the TEA of this board of managers. According to state statute, the board of managers will exercise the powers and duties of the district's board of trustees. Pursuant to TEC §§7.055(b)(32) and 39.136, the powers of the existing board and interim superintendent will be suspended when the board of managers and a TEA-assigned superintendent are introduced to the district at a meeting of the board of trustees in the near future. TEC §39.134 stipulates the provisions for paying specific members of the board of managers and the superintendent. Those will be detailed in the upcoming correspondence that names the individuals to be assigned.

In accordance with 19 TAC §97.1037(a)(3), the district may request a record review related to the assignment of board of managers under TEC §§39.131 and 39.136. A request for record review related to this assignment must be received by the TEA **no later than August 14, 2008**, and may be addressed as follows.

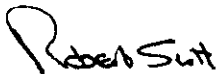
Dr. Adrain Johnson  
Associate Commissioner for Accreditation  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701  
Fax: (512) 463-3136

Members of the Board of Trustees  
Mr. William Jones, Interim Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
Page 3 of 3

Additional information regarding the record review process can be referenced at 19 TAC §97.1037 at the *Texas Administrative Code—Currently in Effect* link available at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/index.html>.

My concern for the long-term education of the students served by the North Forest ISD compels me to take this action. As is customary with state intervention, the board of managers and superintendent will report to me on a regular basis concerning the progress of the district. Any decisions regarding modification of the intervention assigned will be based heavily on the content of those regular reports. Any questions concerning the state intervention described herein can be address to Dr. Johnson at (512) 463-5899.

Sincerely,



Robert Scott  
Commissioner of Education

RS/aw

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Mario Gallegos, State Senator  
The Honorable Rodney Ellis, State Senator  
The Honorable John Whitmire, State Senator  
The Honorable Senfronia Thompson, State Representative  
Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center  
Ray Glynn, Deputy Commissioner for School District Leadership and Educator Quality, TEA  
Adrain Johnson, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation, TEA  
Laura Taylor, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Gaye Lang, Senior Director, Campus Turnaround, TEA  
Rita Chase, Senior Director, Financial Audits, TEA  
Ron Rowell, Senior Director, Governance and General Inquiries, TEA  
David Anderson, General Counsel, TEA  
Jeff Armstrong, Senior Counsel, TEA  
Sandy Lowe, Senior Counsel, TEA  
Jim Thompson, Senior Counsel, TEA  
M.J. Nicchio, Governmental Relations, TEA  
Barbara Wilson, Management Team Member  
Henry Boening, Management Team Member





# TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

Robert Scott  
Commissioner

**ACTION  
REQUIRED**

**CERTIFIED MAIL & FAX**

December 16, 2008

101-909-003  
2008-2009

Mr. George McShan, President, Board of Managers  
Dr. Adrain Johnson, Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
P.O. Box 23278  
Houston, Texas 77228-3278

Dear Mr. McShan and Dr. Johnson:

This letter is to notify you that, pursuant to §39.132(6) of the Texas Education Code (TEC), the commissioner of education is ordering a hearing to be held at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to discuss the performance of the North Forest High School (101-909-003). On August 29, 2008 you received a letter from the TEA stating that the Smiley High School (101-909-002) and the Forest Brook High School (101-909-003) in the North Forest Independent School District (ISD) were both rated as *Academically Unacceptable (AU)* for three consecutive rating cycles. For 2008-2009, these two campuses have been merged into one campus, the North Forest High School.

This action is being taken as a result of these campuses having been rated AU for three consecutive rating cycles. These ratings were based on an analysis of the performance of the campuses on the state academic excellence indicators and the specific criteria outlined in the accountability manuals for the relevant years.

TEC §39.132(6) reads, in pertinent part:

If a campus performance is below any standard under Section 39.073(b),...the commissioner shall,...to the extent the commissioner determines necessary, order a hearing to be held before the commissioner or the commissioner's designee at which the president of the board of trustees, the superintendent, and the campus principal shall appear and explain the campus's low performance, lack of improvement, and plans for improvement.

Therefore, the noted representatives of the North Forest ISD, the president of the North Forest ISD Board of Trustees, and the designated contact for the campus intervention team are requested to attend a TEC §39.132(6) hearing called in alignment with the statutory language referenced above. The purpose of the hearing will be for the North Forest ISD to explain to the commissioner of education or his designee and TEA staff the issues surrounding the campus's ongoing low performance and the plan the district has for improving the performance of students attending the campus.

Mr. George McShan, President, Board of Managers  
Dr. Adrain Johnson, Superintendent  
North Forest ISD  
Page 2

Please bring with you to the hearing any materials or documentation relevant to the discussion. If additional district personnel will attend, please provide to me their names and position with the district.

The hearing is scheduled to take place as follows:

**Location:** William B. Travis Building  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701  
2nd Floor, Room 2-195

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (tentative agenda attached)


**Date:** Thursday, January 8, 2009

If you have additional questions regarding the requirements contained in this letter, you may contact Ted Kerr in the Division of Program Monitoring and Interventions at (512) 463-5226.

The TEA will use the information resulting from the hearing to determine whether additional TEA interventions or sanctions will be necessary.

We appreciate your cooperation with the activities described in this correspondence. As you are aware, our focus must be on the academic strength of the children who attend this campus, and this very important consideration compels the commissioner to take this action.

Sincerely,



Laura Taylor  
Associate Commissioner (Acting)  
Department of Accreditation

LT:jt

cc: Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center  
Charles Russell, Principal, North Forest High School, North Forest ISD  
Ray Glynn, Deputy Commissioner for School District Leadership and Educator Quality, TEA  
David Anderson, General Counsel, TEA  
Ted Kerr, Manager, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Jacqueline Blanton, Campus Intervention Team Contact

Mr. George McShan, President, Board of Managers  
Dr. Adrain Johnson, Superintendent  
North Forest ISD  
Page 3

Agenda for a Hearing Before the Commissioner of Education or Designee  
January 8, 2009  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

- I. Opening Remarks  
*Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner of Accreditation (Acting)*  
*Dr. Adrain Johnson, Superintendent, North Forest ISD*
  
- II. Presentation Regarding Campus Performance and Implementation of the School Improvement and Reconstitution Plan for the North Forest High School (1 Hour)  
*North Forest ISD Personnel*
  
- III. Questions and Discussion
  
- IV. Closing Remarks  
*Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner of Accreditation (Acting)*



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Robert Scott  
Commissioner

**IMPORTANT  
ACCREDITATION  
INFORMATION –  
ACTION  
REQUIRED**

**CERTIFIED MAIL**  
101-909  
2010-2011

May 4, 2011

Ms. Edna Forté, Acting Superintendent  
North Forest Independent School District  
6010 Little York  
Houston, Texas 77016

Dear Ms. Forté:

In a Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) letter dated March 1, 2011, North Forest Independent School District (ISD) was informed that TEA had assigned accreditation statuses to school districts for the 2010-2011 year under the authority of Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.051 and §39.052 and 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §97.1055, and that, under the requirements of statute and rule, North Forest ISD had been assigned an accreditation status of **Accredited-Probation** due to the ratings assigned to the district in the state's academic and financial accountability rating systems and special accreditation investigation findings that remain of concern. Specifically, North Forest ISD was assigned a 2009 and 2010 academic accountability rating of *Academically Unacceptable*, a 2008 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*, a 2009 financial accountability rating of *Suspended-Data Quality*, and a 2010 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*. North Forest ISD was assigned an Accredited-Probation status for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 due to findings related to a series of special accreditation investigations conducted in the district and was assigned a 2009-2010 accreditation status of Accredited-Warning based on its academic and financial performance. The district continues to exhibit many of the same financial, academic, special program, and data quality problems that led to these lowered statuses.

The March 1, 2011, TEA letter notified North Forest ISD that superintendents of districts assigned a status of Accredited-Probation could request a record review related to the assignment of that status. The letter further stated that a request for record review related to the assignment of the 2010-2011 accreditation status was required to be received by TEA no later than March 18, 2011. In correspondence dated March 10, 2011, and hand-delivered to the agency on March 11, 2011, a record review was requested related to the assignment of an Accredited-Probation status to North Forest ISD. In TEA correspondence dated March 17, 2011, North Forest ISD was notified of the scheduled record review, and the record review was conducted on April 1, 2011, in the William B. Travis Building, Austin, Texas. The purpose of this letter is to provide the district with official notification of the final order resulting from the record review and the district's assigned 2010-2011 accreditation status.

The Associate Commissioner for Accreditation was my designee for conducting the record review. The record review offered an opportunity for North Forest ISD to provide oral and written information on the initial assignment of an Accredited-Probation status to the district. It was noted that the Texas academic and financial accountability system ratings, as relied upon by the agency in making the initial status determination, were final because all appeals to the ratings provided by law had been exhausted.

During the record review, you and other representatives of North Forest ISD provided information regarding the district's financial status and fiscal and operational strategies. Additionally, information from a draft of the district's 2009-2010 Annual Financial and Compliance Report (audit report) was shared, and the district's independent auditor discussed general fund operations trends, highlights of the district's 2008-2009 audit report, and proposed timelines for certain actions to be taken by the district to address ongoing financial concerns. Furthermore, the district presented updates regarding efforts and initiatives undertaken to address continuing academic concerns at the district level and at North Forest High School, which has been rated *Academically Unacceptable* at the campus level for five consecutive ratings cycles.

While the draft 2009-2010 audit report presented during the record review noted certain improvements in the district's financial standing and provided an unqualified opinion related to the status of compliance with major programs, it continued to report a deficit fund balance in the general fund. Furthermore, the auditor issued a qualified opinion on the financial statements and noted material weaknesses in internal control over financial reporting. Exhibit D-3 of the draft audit report noted that the district continues to review the situation surrounding its use of \$13.3 million in bond proceeds to meet payroll and other general expenditures beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. Since the time of the record review, the district's final 2009-2010 audit report has been submitted to the agency. The final report, which was received on April 15, 2011, continues to reflect the findings referenced above. It should be noted that, given the materially late submission of this audit report, and due to other issues reflected in the report, it is anticipated that the district will earn a 2011 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement*.

In regard to its academic programs, the district submitted information for the record comprised of Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports. In addition to updates on secondary school instructional delivery options within the district, information related to the North Forest High School's Texas Title I Priority Schools (TTIPS) grant also was presented. The high school principal provided an update on improvement efforts underway at the campus. The district acknowledged its ongoing concerns about graduation and completion rates and noted that the accuracy of related student records continues to be an issue.

The TEA has completed its review of the oral and written information presented by representatives of North Forest ISD during the record review and has determined that, given the issues presented and the district's ongoing and serious financial, academic, programmatic, and data quality concerns, the district will be assigned a 2010-2011 accreditation status of **Accredited-Probation**. As noted in 19 TAC §97.1037(f), this final order is not subject to another record review and is not subject to appeal under 19 TAC Chapter 157, Hearings and Appeals, Subchapter EE, Review by State Office of Administrative Hearings: Certain Accreditation Sanctions.

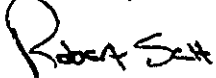
As referenced in the March 1, 2011, TEA letter to the district, districts that are assigned a status of **Accredited-Probation** must take specific actions to notify the parents of students enrolled in the district and property owners in the district. The requirements for public notification are specified in 19 TAC §97.1055(f), and a template that reflects the TEA-required format and language for the public notice is posted to the TEA website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/accredstatus>. In accordance with

19 TAC §97.1055(f)(3), North Forest ISD is required to complete the notification requirements under *specified timelines as calculated from the May 4, 2011, date of accreditation status assignment*. The district also is required to send certain notification documentation to the TEA according to the requirements of 19 TAC §97.1055(f)(4). On April 25, 2011, the agency received certain documentation from the district related to steps already taken by North Forest ISD to complete the required public notification. Those documents currently are under review by TEA, and additional communication from the agency related to that review is forthcoming. Districts with an accreditation status below Accredited may be subject to additional accreditation sanctions as referenced in 19 TAC Chapter 97, Planning and Accountability, Subchapter EE.

Additional information regarding the assignment of accreditation statuses to school districts may be viewed on the *Texas Administrative Code* link available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/index.html> or at the *Accreditation Status* homepage of the TEA website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/accredstatus/>.

We appreciate your ongoing assistance with the implementation of accreditation requirements. If, after reviewing the TEA website, you have questions regarding the assignment of accreditation statuses to school districts or required public notification, please contact your regional education service center or the Division of Program Monitoring and Interventions at (512) 463-5226 or [pmidivision@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:pmidivision@tea.state.tx.us).

Sincerely,



Robert Scott  
Commissioner of Education

RS/jt

cc: Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center  
David Anderson, General Counsel, TEA  
Laura Taylor, Associate Commissioner for Accreditation, TEA  
Karen Batchelor, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Ron Rowell, Director, Governance and General Inquiries, TEA  
Rita Chase, Director, Financial Audits, TEA  
Ted Kerr, Manager, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Judy Struve, Manager, Program Monitoring and Interventions, TEA  
Kay Karr, Conservator