



To: Senate Education Committee
From: Buck Gilcrease, Superintendent Hillsboro ISD
Legislative Chairman, Texas Rural Education Association
Subject: Selected letters from Superintendents regarding the efficiencies afforded school districts
by Education Service Centers
Date: July 17,2012

Attached are a few selected letters from school superintendents in various regions in Texas. I think you will get an idea of how school districts rely on the services afforded them by their respective Education Service Center by reading them.



Jerry Burger, Superintendent
Sheree Grimes, Business Manager

Honorable Members
Texas Senate
Austin, TX 78711

During recent legislative sessions, the validity of the Educational Service Centers has been scrutinized by the Senate Education Committee. The idea of eliminating ESC's is ludicrous and should be discontinued by the State Educational Committee as a cost cutting measure.

While school district funding steadily decreases, the value of the service centers become more valuable to all districts trying to meet local budgets. Products received from the services centers are reasonable and cost effective. School districts continually work to offer students many quality options. If services centers were reduced or eliminated, the costs of these products would be passed on to local districts. This domino effect is already being seen by all districts in Texas through federal reduction and state budget cuts.

The services received from the ESC's and their staff is utilized very well and meets the daily needs of most school districts. Normangee ISD uses 20 services from four separate service centers. Service centers do not duplicate their products, therefore streamlining costs to districts statewide.

My request for the Senate Education Committee is to increase funding to all services centers so more feasible products can be developed and utilized by Texas school districts.

Sincerely,



Jerry Burger

RED LICK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rose Mary Neshyba, Superintendent

June 27, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee:

As you make plans for funding education, please continue to fund the 20 Educational Service Centers in Texas. As a rural school superintendent, I depend greatly on the services the ESC 8 provides us on a weekly, if not, daily basis. As a school administrator in varying size school districts, I have had the opportunity to work with the service centers located in Huntsville, San Antonio, and Mount Pleasant. Each of these three centers provided high quality support and training.

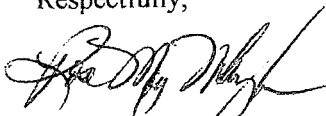
The ESCs provide the consistency needed for districts to ensure they are meeting federal and state guidelines and meeting the varied instructional needs of all students. The Red Lick ISD has a rich history of success, however, the many required administrative tasks, required trainings, and updates are provided to us through our Educational Service Center.

Below is a list of the many services our district receives from the ESC 8.

- Student Management Software, Training, and Support
- Business Management Software, Training, and Support
- Federal Applications Training and Support
- Core Curriculum Website Access, Training, Updates, and Support
- Gifted and Talented Training and Support
- Technology Updates, Training, and Support
- Special Education Updates, Training, and Support
- New Superintendent and Principal Training and Support
- Annual Required Training for Boards of Trustees and Superintendents

The staff at the Educational Service Center 8 provides a great support to our district and they respond to our concerns and needs in a very timely manner. I strongly encourage you to continue to support the Educational Service Centers in Texas.

Respectfully,



Rose Mary Neshyba
Superintendent
Red Lick Independent School District

Mason Independent School District

Jeff Owen, President
Treg Hudson, Vice President
Tina Cantu, Secretary

Pam Kruse, Superintendent 325/347-1144
Chris Habecker, High School Principal 325/347-1122
Clint Askins, JH School Principal 325/347-1122
Tammy Parrish, Elementary School Principal

Shanda Schmidt, Elem/JH Counselor
Melany Canfield, HS Counselor

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

June 20, 2012

Dear Senate Education Committee Members:

I am writing this letter to urge you to make funding Education Service Centers a top priority in your budgetary considerations. Mason ISD is a small, rural school district that depends on ESC XV for many services. We are geographically isolated being at least 100 miles from the nearest large city making it very difficult to receive essential services at an affordable cost. After experiencing funding cuts of over \$600,000 in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years doing away with education service centers would be almost catastrophic to us.

ESC XV provides services to Mason ISD such as food cooperative services and pricing for our cafeteria as well as training and other support as needed for cafeteria personnel. Mason ISD went through an audit from the Texas Department of Agriculture this past school year and our representative from ESC XV travelled here two days to help my cafeteria director with required paperwork.

They also provide staff development for teachers and administrators at no cost or at reduced rates. Our service center has just entered an agreement with the WhyTry? Program to offer the school districts in our region reduced price training saving us \$150/staff member trained.

Some of the other services provided by ESC XV are:

- Investment training
- Human resources training and support
- Internet service
- Email service
- Technological service and support
- Library services
- Federal and state compliance issues support
- ESL and migrant support
- Board member training

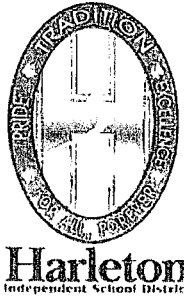
These are just a few of the many invaluable services provided to Mason ISD by ESC XV. While they are not free, the cooperative pricing made available to small districts through the service center save MISD tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Please consider these issues before making a decision regarding education service centers.

Sincerely,



Pam Kruse, Superintendent
Mason ISD



Dr. J. Craig Coleman
Superintendent

June 20, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to you to let you know of the significant impact that Education Service Centers have upon the school districts in Texas. In particular, I want to tell you how this impact is felt at Harleton Independent School District.

As a part of the Region 7 Educational Service Center boundary, Harleton ISD has the ability to cooperatively work with 96 other districts. This ability allows us to save money by entering into cooperatives and shared service arrangements for purchasing, providing special services, and providing opportunities for our staff members to engage in professional development. The milk and bread provider purchasing cooperative saved our small district several thousand dollars last year alone.

In a small, rural district, like Harleton ISD, we don't always have the luxury of availability of services and suppliers that many of the larger districts possess. We have to rely upon the Educational Service Center to pool our resources with other districts to insure that our students have as many opportunities as any other student in other districts. The Service Center allows us to obtain access to these products and services at a significantly reduced cost.

The Educational Service Center also provides a means of communication for the state and all of its public schools. With the increasing regulations, both state and federal, it becomes more and more difficult to insure that districts are meeting all of the requirements. Most districts do not have the luxury of being able to have staff members whose sole responsibility is to stay up-to-date with the changing regulations and requirements. Most district personnel wear many "hats" and, although they would love to do so, have little time to stay abreast of the ever changing rules and requirements. The Educational Service Center does have those specialists who continually receive the latest and most updated knowledge about these programs and requirements. They, in turn, are able to pass the pertinent information along to the districts. This is a fairly effective and efficient means of communication for the legislature and the Texas Education Agency.

Tonya Knowlton, High School Principal
PO Box 710, Harleton, TX 75651
903-777-2711 Fax: 903-777-2778

Paul J. Davis, Jr. High Principal
PO Box 610, Harleton, TX 75651
903-777-3010 Fax: 903-777-3009

Wendy Newman, Elementary Principal
PO Box 400, Harleton, TX 75651
903-777-4092 Fax: 903-777-2782

Frankly, I don't know how we would replace the services and support that we receive from our Educational Service Center. I know that our district and our students would suffer if Region 7 Service Center were not around.

Thank you for your time. I urge you to consider the detriment to public school districts and charter schools around the state if we no longer had the supports and services provided by the Educational Service Centers. I would be happy to talk further with you about these issues. You may contact me at 903-777-2372 or email me at colemancraig@harletonisd.net.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Craig Coleman", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

J. Craig Coleman, Ed. D.
Superintendent, Harleton ISD



MCCAMEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO Box 1069
McCamey, Texas 79752
432-652-3666 Ext. 302 Fax: 432-652-4219

July 6, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Senate Education Committee Members:

In the Education Committee meeting to be held on July 17, 2012, please consider the important role that the Education Service Centers provide in educating the children of Texas.

McCamey is a small, rural class A community that is located in Region 18 about 53 miles south of Odessa. Without the services of the Region 18 ESC we would not be able to educate our children. The biggest service that is provided to MISD is our Internet access. In the past 10 years our service from the ESC has been free. Due to legislative budget cuts we will now pay \$16,000 for the 2012-13 school year. Our research has showed that we would pay \$75,000 or more to have the same service with a private company. This is one way that the ESC saves our school district money.

Region 18 ESC provides great staff development opportunities to MISD at a very low cost and the accessibility of the ESC staff is outstanding. The staff development impacts the learning of our students in a positive way. Through our service center MISD is teaching kids a higher level and our kids are learning at that level. MISD also saves money through the purchasing cooperative and we have hired several teachers through their alternative education program. We count on our ESC to provide great service and they do.

Finally, when our school district makes decisions, we ask a simple question, "Is it good for kids?" Please ask yourself that same question. Are the Education Service Centers good for kids? I think you will find the answer to be yes. They provide a service that benefits the learning of the children in Texas. An ESC impacts the learning of thousands of students all across Texas in a positive way.

As an Education Committee Member, I realize your job is tough and I thank you for your service to our great state. Please understand the impact that your decisions will have on the students of Texas. I am confident that you will make good decisions and good luck.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donny Wiley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "W".

Donny Wiley
Superintendent
McCamey ISD



Jay Waller
Superintendent
Office: (325) 573-2629
Fax: (325) 573-9887
e-mail: jwaller@ira.esc14.net

Ira Independent School District
6143 W FM Road 1606
Ira, TX 79527

Senate Education Committee Hearing on Education Service Centers

The Region ESC 14 is vital to our school district and its functioning measures. Ira is a small school located on the eastern edge of West Texas. The location is not significantly remote but in a sparsely populated area, rural farm, ranch, and oil production area of the state. If not for the support of our service center in Abilene, our productivity and financial balance towards efficiency would be hindered dramatically.

It is a day and time in public education when the increased responsibilities of our local districts to meet the needs of students, teachers and staff, our centers are invaluable. With these new mandates from state and federal agencies requiring us to manage more and more duties we are in desperate need of our supporting partner the Region ESC 14.

I ask that the support deserved by our Regional ESC 14 continue from the all branches of the state levels and all communities that are associated to education. It is very necessary for our educational system to have avenues of support to meet the changing needs for our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay Waller', written over a horizontal line.

Jay Waller
Ira Superintendent
Ira Texas



Warren Independent School District

P.O. Box 69 • Warren, TX 77664

Phone: (409) 547-2240 • Fax: (409) 547-3405

<http://www.warrenisd.net>

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Members,

I would like to thank you for your support of public education, particularly through a very challenging 82nd Legislative Session. As we embark on the 83rd Legislative Session and the state budget process, I felt it necessary to communicate the importance of Education Service Centers and the continued need to fully fund Regional ESCs as we move forward in the budgeting process.

As you are aware, we, like all of the other school districts across the state, have committed to finding ways to do more with less as a result of the state funding reductions already imposed on Texas Public Schools. The Warren Independent School District remains a small 2A school district serving approximately 1250 students. As a result, many of the services required to support our students and staff are contracted through the Region 5 Education Service Center. A few examples include: The district curriculum, student database software, budgetary templates along with numerous hours of professional development offered at a discounted rate. The curriculum savings alone generates a conservative estimate of \$35,000 annually.

Without the services provided by ESCs both small and large school districts would suffer. Programs and services will cost districts more, placing an even greater burden on local school budgets and the taxpayers. Unfortunately, inadequately trained and or undertrained School Boards, Administrators, and Staff members will not have the knowledge to effectively educate our students in a very dynamic environment. Foreseeing the end result is quite simple. Students and schools will suffer as a result of the loss or defunding of Education Service Centers. On behalf of the students and shareholders in the Warren Independent School District, I encourage you to continue to support Education Service Centers in an effort to protect our students' best interests.

Sincerely,

Lance Johnson
Superintendent
Warren ISD



Salttilo Independent School District

150 CR 3534, P.O. Box 269, Salttilo, TX 75478

Phone: 903-537-2386 Fax: 903-537-2191



Paul Jones, Superintendent

Bill Giles, Elementary Principal
Kevin Woolley, Secondary Principal

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee;

Salttilo ISD is a small rural school district located in northeast Texas. Salttilo ISD by all accounts can be viewed as a successful and efficient school district. Salttilo ISD has been rated either exemplary or recognized for 14 of the past 16 school years. We have been selected as one of America's best high schools twice in the past four years by *U.S. News and World Report*. Each year we have 100% graduation rate and 0% drop out rate. Our students perform as well in extra curricular activities as they do in the classroom. We compete at the regional, state and national levels in athletics, fine arts, FFA, FCCLA, and BETA Club. Salttilo ISD is achieving what all parents, politicians and pundits expect a school district in the state of Texas to accomplish. We accomplish all this with fewer resources, less state funding than comparable school district our size, and with less staff.

That is why I'm asking your support of the continuation of Educational Service Centers across the state. Salttilo ISD could not be as successful and efficient as we are without the support of our ESC. Listed below are the services that we receive from ESC 8; these are services that we pay for, however, we receive much more in support.

Personnel/Administrative Services, Electronic Application and Recruitment System, Strategic Planning Co-op, TxEIS Software and Support, DBA Services, txGradebook (includes txConnect for parent viewer), a Core Curriculum Co-op Package which includes assistance and training to teachers in Social Studies, ELA, Foreign Languages and Fine Art, Math/Science Co-op, and Reading Co-op; Other services include Curriculum Developer, Library Instruction Technology Co-op, Elementary and Secondary Act Co-op, Library Co-op Services, Consolidated Federal Funding Application Assistance, Bilingual and ESL Co-op, Safe and Supported Schools Initiative, and Computer Network Services. Many of these services are mandated requirements of the Federal and State government.

Salttilo ISD's continued success depends on the support of our ESC. We cannot accomplish what we have without ESC 8. Thank you for taking time to listen to the needs of local communities and school districts. Please contact me if I can be of any assistance or to clarify any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Paul Jones
Superintendent
Salttilo Independent School District

Show you care by treating children with respect
Use every opportunity to guide and inspire students.
Choose to make the most of each day.
Commit to excellence in everything that you do.
Express your praise to students and co-workers for their good deeds.
Share your enthusiasm for the value of education.
Strive to build team spirit among students, parents and staff.

GROVETON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 728 207 N. Main Street

Groveton, Texas 75845

www.grovetonisd.net

<p>Joe Driskell Superintendent joe_driskell@grovetonisd.net P.O. Box 728 Ph: (936) 642-1473 Fax: (936) 642-1628</p>	<p>Don Hamilton Asst. Superintendent don_hamilton@grovetonisd.net P.O. Box 728 Ph: (936) 642-2224 Fax: (936) 642-1628</p>	<p>Todd Moore Jr.-Sr. High School Principal todd_moore@grovetonisd.net P.O. Box 700 Ph: (936) 642-1128 Fax: (936) 642-1616</p>	<p>Mark Brown Jr.-Sr. High Asst. Principal mark_brown@grovetonisd.net P.O. Box 700 Ph: (936) 642-1128 Fax: (936) 642-1616</p>	<p>Rachel Gallaway Elementary Principal rachel_gallaway@grovetonisd.net P.O. Box 580 Ph: (936) 642-1182 Fax: (936) 642-3254</p>
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July 13, 2012


Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin Texas, 78711

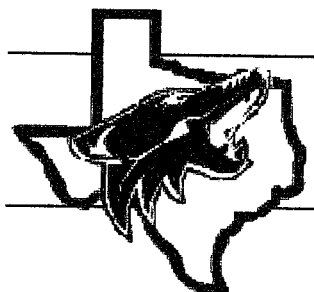
Dear Members,

I am writing this letter in regards to the twenty Educational Service Centers throughout Texas. It is imperative that the Service Centers continue to be a feasible, practical, and functional resource for schools. Without their vital help the Groveton ISD would not be able to offer the staff development, technology and it's required support, compliance reports and audits to name just a few of the services we depend on for help. This allows us to fulfill many obligations without going through several different vendors and entities and without having to hire more employees to do these tasks. Not only do we receive professional help from the ESC's but at a reduced cost. It has been our experience that outside vendors are much more costly and must be scheduled sometimes a year in advance. The service centers are regional and are always immediate in providing help.

Please keep our financial burden from becoming worse by taking action to support the ESC's. By partnering with the service centers Groveton ISD can meet the requirements the state and federal governments demand. With the help of our local Region 6 service center the Groveton Schools will continue to be successful in a feasible and cost effective manner. Their support is fundamental in educating our students to meet and exceed the expectations our great state and nation expect and depend upon.

Respectfully submitted,


Joe Driskell
Groveton ISD
Superintendent



Richland Springs ISD
700 W. Coyote Trail
Richland Springs, Texas 76871

To: Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

I am writing to you as an administrator of a small, rural school that depends heavily on the assistance of the qualified personnel at the Region XV Education Service Center at San Angelo, Texas. Education Service Centers contribute to efficiencies in small, rural districts such as Richland Springs ISD. Richland Springs could not afford to hire the personnel with expertise to direct the district's operations in many critical areas. Region XV personnel provide the expertise we need at an affordable cost to our district.

Our Region XV Education Service Center helps Richland Springs ISD contain costs by assisting with Cooperative Purchasing, Professional Development Training for Teachers, Administrators and School Board members, Assistance with financial accounting, Distance learning to provide classes where qualified teachers are not available, Additional counseling when disasters strike, School Nurse assistance, Assistance in complying with reports that use federal dollars, Curriculum assistance, CSCOPE, Student data services, Advice on any questions asked, Assistance in any area needed, and the list goes on.....

Please support our ESC with financial support needed to provide essential support for our students' continued success!

Sincerely,

Don Fowler-Superintendent

Richland Springs ISD
700 W. Coyote Trail
Richland Springs, TX 76871
School (325)-452-3427
Cell (325)-372-7273

SUPPORT OUR REGION XV EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER

Chisum Independent School District

3250 Church St. • Paris, Texas 75462
(903) 737-2830 • FAX (903) 737-2831

Committed To
Quality

Diane Stegall
Superintendent of Schools

Board of Trustees

June 20, 2012

Jimmy Caffee
President

Larry Rickman Senate Education Committee
Vice-President Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Dashielle Floyd
Secretary

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Lori Collins
Alternate Secretary

Travis Ball

Lisa Butler

Paul Hutto

Building a house without the proper tools is a difficult task. Operating a school district without the assistance of Region Service Centers is a more difficult task. In this time of a waning economy, high accountability, and reduction in school district staff, the rural public school is very dependent on Education Service Centers to be a part of our toolbox to build effective and successful schools.

Our Education Service Center allows our district to save funds (local, state, and federal) through the cooperative purchasing program for regular operations as well as food service. Through state bid contracts, we save time and get a better price because of the large scale purchasing.

As the new accountability system is implemented and the STAAR and EOC tests are fully in place, the training of teachers and administrators will be critical. Our district has always depended on the expertise of the Education Service Center personnel to provide the latest training in best practices for our teachers and staff. As rural districts, we do not have personnel employed to do this in house. Our Service Center considers our success or failure to be their success or failure; therefore, they work very closely with us to make sure our teachers have the knowledge they need in order to teach the students so they can be successful.

Since budgets are dwindling due to reduced state and federal funding, it is important that school districts use the funds they have in the most efficient way. Because rural districts cannot afford to employ statisticians and certified public accountants, they depend on the financial consultants of the Education Service Center to provide them with suggestions on ways to make their education dollars stretch to meet the needs of the district. The time necessary to research, evaluate, and study the funding formulas to determine the most efficient spending methods is difficult for rural schools due to the fact that most personnel, including the superintendent, wear many hats. The Education Service Center personnel are a part of our staff to assist us in areas where we need that specialized expertise.

Please continue your support for Education Service Centers in Texas. They are important tools that help us build stronger, more efficient, and higher achieving schools. The students will benefit from the services provided by Education Service Centers and thus become stronger contributors to our state.

Sincerely,

Diane Stegall
Superintendent

Resolution in Support of the Education Service Centers
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TEAGUE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESOLUTION CONCERNING EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS
Of TEXAS

STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTY OF FREESTONE §

Whereas, we believe student achievement is improved when our school district personnel receive required and relevant professional development and ongoing support-a must in a time of larger classes and less funding for public education; and

Whereas, Teague Independent School District is able to save taxpayers money because education service centers operate on a cost-recovery basis and offer cost-sharing pools that help school leverage and share resources, directing more money to the classroom; and

Whereas, Teague Independent School District employees and staff receive equal access to innovative, affordable educational programs and opportunities that would be inaccessible to us if they were not provided by education service centers; and

Whereas, the state has a legal obligation as mandated through legislation to support Education Service Centers, which help schools operate more effectively and efficiently in a safe and orderly environment; and

Whereas, Teague Independent School District saves money on programs and services provided by third-parties as a result of fee reductions negotiated by education service centers; and

Whereas, we believe education service centers bridge financial gaps, preserving and generating more money for additional resources through grants, collaboration and strategic alliances; and

Whereas, the work of Education Service Centers provide teachers with additional training and support to assist economically disadvantaged children break the cycle of poverty through academic achievement that will lead to independent, productive lives; therefore be it

Resolved that the Teague Independent School District Board of Trustees calls on the Texas Legislature to continue the funding of regional education service centers, which deliver critical programs and services to Texas public schools. Funding for the 20 Education Service Centers should be maintained and/or increased in order to support schools and districts as they work to comply with additional mandates. Education Service Centers are a vital part of the Texas public School system and offer numerous cost-saving services that benefit Texas public school children and save taxpayer dollars. Adequate funding is critically important to prevent students from being denied educational opportunities as they prepare to compete on a global scale in higher education and in future careers.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AND APPROVED on this 24th day of May, 2012.

[Signed May 24, 2012]

[Signed May 24, 2012]

By: _____

By: _____

Lovie Whyte, Secretary

Jeff Gonzales, President

TORNILLO ISD

Post Office Box 170
Tornillo, Texas 79853



We Make Dreams Come True!

July 16, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Members:

Please accept this brief letter as my contribution to your information-gathering endeavor regarding the efficiency benefits of the Education Service Centers (ESC's). My school district is a rural, 2A district in the El Paso area. We boast 1,334 students. ESC 19 is our primary provider of service, although we also use accounting software developed by ESC 20; with the technical support for this software coming to us from ESC 18.

Respecting the number of inputs you will get, I wish to share with you one illustrative example of efficiency that my district gets by partnering with ESC 19; as opposed to my submitting a comprehensive list. Being a border district, it comes as no surprise that Tornillo ISD has a significant number of Migrant students; approximately sixty-five. This is a number big enough to require services under Federal mandates, yet way too small to justify an appropriate number of personnel to provide these services in a quality manner. By partnering with the Region, we are able to pool our Federal funds with other small schools to create the economy of scale needed to service these students with great programming.

In short, if the ESC's were closed tomorrow, our services to students in several academic areas would take a severe quality hit. It strikes me as odd that we now have people in Texas who seem to favor consolidation of many smaller districts for the sake of efficiency, yet do not see that the ESC's are entities that currently provide a de facto consolidation – at least programmatically.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Vranish".

Paul Vranish

TORNILLO ISD

Post Office Box 170
Tornillo, Texas 79853



We Make Dreams Come True!

July 16, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Members:

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Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Vranish".

Paul Vranish

JEFFERSON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

1600 MLK DRIVE, JEFFERSON, TX. 75657

903-665-2461 OPT. 8

July 16, 2012

To: Honorable Members – Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Greetings:

This letter is written to all concerned and is to serve as a recommendation for full and continued support for the Education Service Centers of Texas, specifically regarding ESC8 in Mt. Pleasant, Texas. The public school districts of Northeast Texas stand together in declaring the existence of ESC8 is absolutely essential to our past, current and future success. ***To effectively conduct day-to-day district operations, we must be able to partner with our neighbors, ESC 8.*** Jefferson ISD is located in Marion County, with a high percentage of poverty and over 400 miles of bus routes to cover. We are cutting at every corner and must have the assistance and expertise of a fully staffed service center to provide us with services we otherwise cannot afford. As ESC's face an uncertain future, keep in mind that total state funding only accounts for less than 15% of ESC funding which the state has control over via the Texas Education Agency and through legislation over ESC's and how they are overseen.

Be certain of these facts:

1. ESC's are held accountable through annual independent audits, annual legislative reports, annual regional performance hearings, party client satisfaction surveys, workshop evaluation systems and many other systems. Most importantly, school districts hold ESC's accountable through superintendent and other advisory councils.
2. ESC's provide services and support to small and large, rural, urban and suburban school districts across the state.
3. ESC's operate on a cost-recovery basis and are not large profit centers. **See attached statements.**

Did you know that because of the help and guidance we get from ESC 8, Jefferson ISD has worked to become:

- **Effective** in all areas of school business. For the 4 years I've served as JISD Superintendent, ESC 8 has helped us become more effective in educating students of Marion County. In addition the staff is present and visible in our district. **Marilyn** was in our offices Thursday assisting our payroll specialists!
- **Efficient** in operations. TIPS is available to help us save on business proposals. ESC staff are called upon to assist in district offices to make procedures more efficient; thus saving district funds. Board training is offered close to home for those who cannot afford to travel long distances. **Karen** makes sure her staff comes to the rescue when we call for help!

- Energized by recognizing the efforts of all stakeholders such as recognizing districts and school board members at the annual Northeast Texas School Board Dinner. Dr. Glynn continues systemic planning training! Lacy is the spark plug of energizing others!
- Informed through regularly scheduled Regional Advisory Committee meetings, a joint conference with ESC 7, email, phone calls, etc... Tina sends us information regularly.
- Engaged in effective training to engage district faculty and staff. Superintendents are kept abreast of changes in education and effective, best practices through book studies and other avenues. Cynthia, Tommy and Sheila are all one phone call away on speed dial!
- United Forces working together to solve problems. Our contracts were actually reduced last year and remained the same in cost this year.

With great respect for the job and decisions ahead of you, I strongly encourage you to hear the voice of the scholar practitioners in the trenches. Every effort must be made to save the service centers. And for those of us who already drive a long distance for training, consolidation is not always the best answer either. We are seriously underfunded by billions of dollars and as stated in an article from Texas ISD.com Today's News, "Legislature has implemented major cuts to education funding but it hasn't cut funding for high-stakes testing. The state has already paid Pearson, an educational conglomerate based in London, \$151 million for the STAAR exams. If the state doesn't terminate the contract, by 2016 Texas will have paid Pearson a total of \$468 million". As the writer said, and I repeat: What a waste! We do understand accountability but cut the waste on added testing.

As for the future of ESC 8, it is their vision "to create a State-Wide Systemic Culture to sustain a high-performing learning community" and certainly they are doing just that. ESC 8 is not only a powerful entity and partner throughout Northeast Texas; their presence is currently impacting districts in other parts of the state. The Systemic Planning model is being used in other school districts in Texas. That is a fact. The facts are quite simple. We support and need ESC 8!

Thank you for listening,

Dr. Sharon Ross
Jefferson ISD Superintendent



**Linden-Kildare
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DR. JAMES B. COWLEY
Superintendent of Schools

July 16, 2012

Honorable Members
Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senate Education Committee Members:

Linden-Kildare CISD is a rural East Texas District located in Cass County. Our current finances are such that we were one of 145 Districts that were able to apply for and receive financial relief through the adjustment made in the Regular Program Adjustment Factor (RPAF). LK CISD has also maintained a long history of receiving a Superior Achievement rating as designated by the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas. The FIRST Rating indicates to our taxpayers that we wisely use what financial resources we have, and the adjustment in the RPAF indicates that we are on the lower end of finances received from the State.

To assist LK CISD meet the multitude of unfunded or underfunded mandates (reference: <http://www.tasb.org/legislative/legislative/reports/2012/documents/transman2012.pdf> and <http://www.tasanet.org/sites/tasa/files/gr/2010/mandates10.pdf>) the education service centers across the State provide valuable services to districts. I have specifically worked with Regional Education Service Centers VIII and 10. As Superintendent, I have work mostly with Region VIII and have discovered the services to be both personal and professional.

Professional Staff Development provided by Region VIII are available to LK CISD at a reduced cost as compared to those services provided by a for profit commercial vendor. These trainings range from Gifted and Talented to specific special education topic training.

With the State push to reduce the number of special education students the need for full time on-staff personnel has diminished. Region VIII is able to provide the part time personnel required for such items as adaptive physical education instructors and other specific personnel, thus decreasing the personnel cost incurred by LK CISD. We also utilize the distance learning equipment to meet the foreign requirements for our students.

Countless dollars have been saved by using the purchasing cooperative offered by the service centers. For each dollar saved through these coops I am able to place more dollars in the classroom for instruction.

I encourage you to visit LK CISD and when you do I will be happy to show you how we are preparing students to be successful in the college and career readiness standards and how they will be ready to be the next voters and taxpayers of the State.

Respectfully,

James B. Cowley, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Cc: Dr. Ray Glynn, Executive Director Region VIII