



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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DATE:	August 6, 2021
SUBJECT:	Preliminary 2020–2021 School FIRST Ratings
CATEGORY:	Accreditation Information
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

Your school district's preliminary 2020–2021 School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) rating is now available online. To access your district's School FIRST rating:

- access the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website by using this link <https://tea.texas.gov/>;
- click the Finance and Grants webpage tab link <https://tea.texas.gov/finance-and-grants/>;
- click the Financial Compliance link <https://tea.texas.gov/finance-and-grants/financial-compliance/>;
- click the [Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas](#) link; and
- click the School District FIRST Ratings link.

Basis for School FIRST Rating

Your district's rating is based on an analysis of the district's financial data for fiscal year 2020 (the fiscal period ended June 30, 2020, or August 31, 2020, depending on the ending date of your district's fiscal year). We determined your district's rating using the financial indicators specified in [19 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §109.1001\(e\)\(5\)](#).

Please carefully review your district's preliminary School FIRST rating and the data associated with each of the 20 indicators.

Opportunity for Appeal

If your district wishes to appeal an adverse issue it identifies in the preliminary rating, your district may submit a written appeal with supporting evidence to the TEA Financial Compliance Division. For the appeal to be considered, it must be received by **September 8, 2021**. Send your appeal and supporting documentation to the following email address: FinancialAccountability@tea.texas.gov.

Please note, all appeal requests, including supporting documentation, must be submitted via email to FinancialAccountability@tea.texas.gov on or before September 8, 2021. Appeals and supporting documentation that are not submitted to the Financial Accountability email address by the required deadline will not be considered or processed.

Please see [19 TAC §109.1001\(n\)](#) for the rules regarding the filing of an appeal. As stated in that section, only an appeal that would result in a change to your district's rating will be considered. **If no appeal is submitted by your district, your district's preliminary rating becomes final on the 31st day after the preliminary ratings are released (September 9, 2021).**

Final School FIRST Rating and Required Reporting

Final ratings will be issued to school districts after all of the appeals submitted by the deadline have been reviewed. Final 2020–2021 School FIRST ratings are anticipated to be released in November 2021.

Within two months of the release of your school district's final School FIRST rating, your district must announce and hold a public meeting to distribute a financial management report that explains the district's rating and its performance under each indicator for the current and previous year's ratings.

The report also must provide the financial information described in [19 TAC §109.1001\(q\)\(3\)](#). We encourage your district to include in the report additional information that will be beneficial to stakeholders, especially information explaining any special circumstances that may have affected the district's performance under one or more of the indicators.

A required newspaper notice, to inform taxpayers of the meeting, must be published no more than 30 days and no fewer than 10 days before the public meeting. Your district may combine the meeting with a regularly scheduled meeting of the board of trustees.

For full requirements related to the financial management report and public meeting, see [19 TAC §109.1001\(q\)](#). For a template that your district can use in developing its financial management report, see the TEA [School FIRST](#) web page.

To access additional rules concerning financial accountability ratings, please see [19 TAC §109.1001](#).

Accreditation Status

Please note that the TEA considers a district's School FIRST rating when assigning an accreditation status, as required by the accreditation status rules in [19 TAC §97.1055](#).

Contact for Further Information

If you have questions about your district's School FIRST rating, please contact Rita Bunton at (512) 936-3712 or by email at Rita.Bunton@tea.texas.gov.