



A Note from Friends of Texas Public Schools Founder

To the Editor:

The College Board released the results of the recent SAT exam earlier this month. The results showed that the average score of the Class of 2015 on the math section of the SAT dropped nine points from last year to 486 and the critics once again wasted no time condemning our schools as failures. Placing emphasis on SAT scores is a disservice to the students and teachers who are working hard to increase the number of students aspiring to higher education.

At Friends of Texas Public Schools we are committed to educating Texans about the strengths and achievements of Texas public schools. My wife Leslie and I founded this organization in 2004 with the mission of facilitating *respectful* conversations about Texas public schools through *honest* communication, productive dialogue, and relentless encouragement. We believe that our students, teachers and administrators deserve a great deal more credit than they are given, particularly in light of the release of these SAT scores.

We agree with Commissioner Williams that the increased participation rates are actually a positive reflection on Texas schools and their efforts to get more students to consider post-secondary education. In a state with one of the highest percentages of students on free lunch, LEP, and single parent homes our goal is not to manipulate scores by limiting participation as many states do. Rather, we would prefer to have more students from all backgrounds aspiring to higher education, even if that causes our scores to decline.

Alief Superintendent, HD Chambers, also said that it stands to reason that SAT scores will be lower when more students are taking the test. He said that scores would improve if we align our TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) curriculum with the standards of norm-referenced tests like the SAT and ACT exams. "We align our coursework to the TEKS, not to the SAT," Chambers said. *To his point, I say, it's like eating an apple then taking a test on what an orange tastes like.*

Some have attributed the lower SAT scores in math to the recent decision in the state of Texas to no longer require all high school students to take Algebra II. Bill Hammond, one persistently misinformed critic of public education with impure motives, is quoted as saying that not requiring students to take Algebra II and other challenging courses dooms our students to lower paying jobs and a mediocre education. We disagree. College preparation is not the goal set for public schools by the state. Rather, we focus on helping our students meet state curriculum requirements known as TEKS. Our students are excelling at that goal.

Sincerely,

Scott Milder
Founder
Friends of Texas Public Schools