

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Education in Texas Gets Failing Grade Expert Witness Testifies Rating System Seriously Flawed

Austin, TX – A new analysis released today concludes that 40 percent of the 50 largest school districts in Texas are failing to meet the state's minimum graduation rate.

Testifying at trial in support of the school districts suing the state, Dr. Walter Haney, Director of the Education Pipeline project at Boston College, stated that the "dropout data on which ratings have been based have been at best unreliable, and in some instances completely fraudulent." In analyzing enrollment and graduation data, Haney found that using the state's own accountability standards, "public education in Texas, in general, and in most large districts, is of unacceptable quality."

Haney faulted the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for using faulty data in its accountability/accreditation system "to make it appear that dramatic progress has been made, when in reality it has not. The apparent progress was a sham and delusion," said Haney.

Haney, a nationally recognized expert and lead author of the Ford Foundation sponsored study, "The Education Pipeline in the United States," testified that analyzing enrollment and graduation statistics is the best way of examining rates of progress through public schools in the United States generally, not just in Texas.

Between 1995 and 2002, according to Haney, there were only four out of 400 instances (50 districts times eight years) in which the academic quality of these districts was rated as less than acceptable. "Despite the fact that the TEA has given the 50 largest districts acceptable or better ratings in nearly every case (396 out of 400), the graduation rates present a very different picture of the real academic quality of these districts," Haney told the court.

Twenty districts (of the 50 largest) have not once over the period of eleven years' results (1990-1991 through 2000-2001) had a graduation rate as high as 74 percent. Furthermore, said Haney, "among the eleven largest districts in Texas, over this period, six -- Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Aldine -- have not once had a graduation rate as high as 74 percent."

"A graduation rate of 74 percent is a very low standard of quality," Haney said. "But, even by this low standard implied by TEA accountability rules, 40 percent of the 50 largest school districts are failing." On top of this dismal record, according to Haney's analysis, the graduation rate for Black and Hispanic students over the last ten years has been less than 70 percent. "Houston, in particular, said Haney "has not just the worst graduation rate of large districts, but one of the worst graduation rates of any of the nation's largest school districts."

Haney's testimony also presented a June 2004 report from the U.S. Census Bureau that confirms his findings and demonstrates how badly misleading Texas official dropout statistics have been over the last decade. The Census report shows that Texas has one of the very worst rates of high school completion of any of the fifty states.

Haney's expert report in the *West Orange Cove* case will be available 10:00AM Tuesday, August 24 at: <http://www.bc.edu/research/nbetpp/>