

198-905

**Via Certified Mail
& Regular Mail**

May 24, 2017

Dr. Adrain Johnson, Interim Superintendent
Mr. James Taylor, Board President
Ms. Nelda Calhoun, Board Vice-President
Ms. Samantha Salazar, Board Secretary
Ms. Latonya Darnell, Board Member
Ms. Mary Jane Ramirez, Board Member
Ms. Quila Robinson, Board Member
Ms. Tina Rocha, Board Member
Hearne Independent School District
900 Wheelock Street
Hearne, Texas 77859

Dear Trustees and Dr. Johnson:

As you are aware, on April 3, 2017, I notified Hearne Independent School District (ISD or district) of my decision to lower the district's 2015-2016 accreditation status to **Accredited-Warning** and appoint a board of managers and a conservator to the district. These decisions were based on the results of a Special Accreditation Investigation conducted by the Texas Education Agency that made the following findings: the board of trustees and the superintendent failed to work together to provide educational leadership for the district in violation of TEC §11.1512(b); members of the board of trustees were acting in their individual capacities on behalf of the board in violation of TEC §11.051(a-1); the district did not comply with state law and TEA rules by failing to collect criminal history information to facilitate the State Board of Education's (SBEC) national criminal history review for ten noncertified employees as required by TEC, Chapter 22, Subchapter C; and the district lacked internal controls in the business office in violation of 19 TAC §109.41.

The district requested a review of the decision to lower the district's 2015-2016 accreditation status to **Accredited-Warning** and appoint a board of managers and conservator to the district. On May 17, 2017, I met with the district and conducted a formal review of the decision to appoint a board of managers and lower the accreditation status, and an informal review of the decision to escalate the role of the currently appointed monitor to that of a conservator. After considering all of the information presented, including the documentation submitted by the district on May 1, 2017, I have

decided to proceed with the decision to lower the district's 2015-2016 accreditation status to **Accredited-Warning** and escalate the role of the currently appointed monitor to that of a conservator. The conservator appointment and lowered accreditation status are effective immediately, and these decisions are not subject to further review.

Regarding the appointment of a board of managers to the district, based upon the information presented by the district, I have decided not to proceed with the appointment at this time. Please note, however, my decision to proceed with the appointment of a conservator does not relieve the district and its governing board of the responsibility to, at all times, operate the district in compliance with all applicable statutes and rules. The agency reserves the right to implement all available interventions and sanctions under TEC, Chapters 39, and Title 19, TAC, Chapters 97, to address the current, or any future, deficiencies identified for the district.

Districts that are assigned a status of **Accredited-Warning** 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 at <http://tea.texas.gov/accredstatus/>. Hearne ISD must complete the notification requirement **no later than June 23, 2017**. Hearne ISD also must send by certified mail, return receipt requested, documentation showing compliance with the notification requirement. This documentation may be addressed as follows:

Division of Accreditation
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701
Fax: (512) 475-3665

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. Questions related to the public notification requirements may be addressed to accred@tea.texas.gov or (512) 463-5899.

It is my sincere desire that all parties work together in a cooperative and productive manner to address the issues within the district. Any questions regarding this correspondence may be addressed to the Division of Enforcement Coordination at (512) 463-3847 or EnforcementCoordination@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,



Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

MM/cc

cc: Michael Holland, Executive Director, Region 6, Education Service Center
A.J. Crabill, Deputy Commissioner of Governance, TEA
Kara Belew, Deputy Commissioner of Finance, TEA
Penny Schwinn, Deputy Commissioner of Academics, TEA
Leo Lopez, Associate Commissioner, Chief School Finance Officer, TEA
Von Byer, General Counsel, TEA
Christopher Jones, Senior Legal Counsel, TEA
Ashley Jernigan, Legal Counsel, TEA
Ron Rowell, Director, Governance & Investigations, TEA
Leah Martin, Director, Accreditation & Waivers, TEA
Lizette Ridgeway, Director, School Improvement, TEA
Brenda Meyers, Director, Special Investigations, TEA
Patricia Hayes, Conservator