 Click to Print[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

EDUCATION

## Regional 'Blueprint for Educational Change' to be unveiled

**Plan has been called a bold effort to improve educational outcomes and pipelines.**

By [Laura Heinauer](#)

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Thursday, May 29, 2008

When area superintendents, business leaders and higher education officials meet today at the Erwin Center — the stage for dozens of local high school graduations in the next few weeks — the spotlight will be on Central Texas seniors who won't receive diplomas this year.

About 7,000 empty seats will be lit up and taped off during the meeting to symbolize one of the many challenges education leaders try to address in the Blueprint for Educational Change, the culmination of a two-year effort to improve education in Central Texas.

Drafters of the blueprint, meeting today to release copies of the report, said they want to see:

95 percent of Central Texas students graduate from high school. Only two-thirds of ninth-graders now go on to graduate in four years.

A 20 percentage-point improvement in eighth-grade passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills among students from all ethnic groups. Black and Hispanic eighth-graders sometimes lag 30 to 40 percentage points behind whites, 80 percent of whom pass all sections of the state achievement test.

70 percent of children enter kindergarten "school ready" by 2015. One study shows that 40 percent of children in Central Texas now enter kindergarten with up to an 18-month delay in skills.

The coalition of business and education leaders who worked on the blueprint said they also want 20,010 more students enrolled in college by 2010 and want the number of students who are "college and career" ready to double by 2015. Now, only about 43 percent of area high school graduates can take college-level courses without remedial work.

Susan Dawson, executive director of the E3 Alliance, the group that led the blueprint effort, said the intent is "to look at where other countries and cities are outpacing us and to find ways to fix that."

The E3 Alliance will work with area educators to assemble a list of specific short-term targets for each district and, when possible, for each campus in Travis, Hays, Williamson, Bastrop and Caldwell counties. About 360,000 students in those counties attend classes in 35 districts, 15 charter schools and seven colleges and universities, alliance officials said.

Dawson said meeting the goals set out in the blueprint is crucial to Central Texas' economy. She said the group estimates that dropouts cost the area \$425 million annually in potential earnings, lost tax revenue and extra social services costs.

"Think of that as almost five Long Centers you could buy every year," she said, referring to Austin's large new performing arts center.

Ed Sharpe, a faculty member in the University of Texas' School of Education and a board member for the E3 Alliance, said, "We really do need to have measurements that over time ... indicate whether we're having success."

Sharpe said the blueprint is "big, bold, audacious," adding that he could think of no other place to try it.


"If not Austin, if not now, then when and where?" he said. "But it's going to take the community rallying in ways that probably have never been done in the state or the nation, perhaps."

lheinauer@statesman.com; 445-3694

Vote for this story!

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/05/29/0529blueprint.html>

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.