SPEAKING OUT AND DRIVING CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

children at Risk

Texas Public School Rankings 2011 Methodology

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I. Introduction

CHILDREN AT RISK is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization dedicated to addressing the root causes of poor public policies affecting children. The organization began in the fall of 1989 when a group of child advocates met to discuss the lack of documentation on the status of children and the absence of strong public policy support for youth. Since then, the organization has produced eleven major publications including *Growing Up in Houston*, which focuses on critical children's issues and is published biennially. Over the course of two decades, CHILDREN AT RISK has evolved from an organization researching the multitude of obstacles our children face to one that also drives macro-level change to better the future of our city and state through community education, collaborative action, evidence-based public policy, and advocating for our youth at the local and state level. Through its Public Policy and Law Center—established in 2006 as the only center of its kind in Texas—CHILDREN AT RISK uses policy and legal expertise as a powerful tool to drive change and create a better future for our children. In recent years, CHILDREN AT RISK has grown exponentially in its capacity to speak out and drive change for children and has become the premier resource on children's issues among major media outlets, public officials, and the non-profit sector. Today, the mission of CHILDREN AT RISK is to improve the quality of life for children across Texas through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration, and advocacy.

Since 2006, the school ranking system developed by CHILDREN AT RISK has highlighted the successes and need for improvement of local public schools. As a research and advocacy organization, the purpose of the rankings is not only to provide a tool to parents and students, but also to provide information to campuses and districts on how they perform relative to their peers and compared against successful models of high-performing public schools. In 2009, CHILDREN AT RISK began to include all eligible high schools in the state of Texas as well as extend the ranking system to include eligible elementary and middle school campuses. Thus far, the CHILDREN AT RISK rankings have proven to be instrumental in generating conversations among educators and the public regarding methods for improving our public education system. In addition, the School Rankings aim to:

- Serve as an accessible guide for parents, educators, and community members on the performance of local schools.
- Generate conversations not just about the data used in the ranking, but how schools and districts are performing overall in creating college-ready students.
- Be transparent. Research is strongest when it is made available to the public and open to scrutiny. Thus, discussion can be generated, the ranking methodology can be improved upon, and all districts can utilize this avenue of assessing campuses.
- Encourage the use of data in public school reform. The rankings have successfully encouraged further data analysis at the campus and district level, targeted school intervention, aided teacher and staff professional development, allocated funds to better serve children, and promoted changes in strategic planning.

Each year, CHILDREN AT RISK reexamines its methodology of ranking schools to ensure that this report most accurately reflects school performance, utilizes the best data available, and

incorporates feedback from educators, researchers, and service providers. Because CHILDREN AT RISK continually improves the methodology, this year's School Rankings are not directly comparable to previous years' results.

II. Data

A. Overview of School Rankings Data

To rank public schools across Texas, CHILDREN AT RISK compiles and analyzes universal data collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) through the Academic Excellence Indicator System, the Student Assessment Division (TAKS™ data), and through direct requests to TEA. CHILDREN AT RISK emphasizes utilizing a diverse array of indicators which encourages a holistic examination of school quality when evaluating campuses. CHILDREN AT RISK seeks to hold schools accountable for students' performance on standardized testing in addition to numerous other measures such as performance on college entrance exams, participation in advanced coursework, student retention, and graduation rates. CHILDREN AT RISK examines fourteen indicators at the high school level, ten at the middle school level, and twelve at the elementary level, each of which are described in greater detail below.

B. High School Performance Measures

High schools are judged for the School Rankings on the basis of fourteen criteria, from graduation rates to participation in advanced coursework, each of which is described in detail below.

TAKS Commended English/Language Arts (2.5%): the percentage of 11th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the English/Language Arts (ELA) section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. In 2010, the Texas Education Agency reported strong correlation between TAKS and SAT/ACT scores. TEA has also developed college readiness benchmarks within the TAKS test.[1] Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 62 out of 73 total possible points (85% correct) on the TAKS English/Language Arts section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing high school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Mathematics (2.5%): the percentage of 11th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Mathematics section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 52 out of 60 total possible points (87% correct) on the TAKS Mathematics section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing high school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

[1] The College Board. "The Development of a Multidimensional College Readiness Index." June 1, 2010. <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/pdf/10b_2084_DevMultiDimenRR_WEB_100618.pdf> Accessed December 14, 2010.

TAKS Commended Science (2.5%): the percentage of 11th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Science section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 49 out of 55 total possible points (89% correct) on the TAKS Science section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing high school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Social Studies (2.5%): the percentage of 11th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Social Studies section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 47 out of 55 total possible points (85% correct) on the TAKS Social Studies section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing high school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

Recommended High School Program (5%): the percentage of graduates who satisfied the course requirements for the Texas State Board of Education Recommended High School Program. This 26-credit program is designed to prepare high school graduates with a solid foundation in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. It also includes foreign language, speech, fine arts, economics, technology studies, health education, and physical education. Rather than meeting minimum requirements to graduate, a top-performing high school will "require" students to achieve this state standard as their academic goal. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Advanced Course/Dual Enrollment Completion (6%): the percentage of students who completed and received credit for at least one advanced course in grades 9-12. Advanced courses include Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dual Enrollment, and other courses identified by the Texas Education Agency. A complete list of advanced courses for the 2009-2010 academic year is available in *Appendix C* of the 2009-2010 AEIS Glossary. Research shows that students who are enrolled in a challenging high school curriculum will more likely graduate from college.[2] CHILDREN AT RISK assumes that a top-performing high school will offer and encourage participation in high-level coursework that challenges students to gain advanced knowledge and skills, as well as prepares students for college-level coursework. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

AP/IB Test-Takers (5%): the percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 who took at least one Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate examination. A top-performing high school will have a greater percentage of its student body taking AP or IB subject tests. According to The College Board, 28.7% of the Texas public high school class of 2009 took at

[2] The College Board. "2010 College-Bound Seniors Results Underscore Importance of Academic Rigor." Access September 13, 2010. <http://www.collegeboard.com/press/releases/213182.html> Accessed December 14, 2010.

least one AP Exam during high school.[3] (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

AP/IB Passing Rate (6%): the percentage of students who took one or more AP or IB exam(s) and scored at or above the criterion score (3 on AP or 4 on IB) on at least one exam. A top-performing high school will prepare its students in AP/IB or Honors courses to pass the AP/IB tests. In its AP Report to the Nation, The College Board found that 14.9% of the Texas public high school class of 2009 earned a score of 3 or higher—the benchmark found to predict future success in college—on at least one AP Exam during high school. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

SAT/ACT Test-Takers (5%): the percentage of graduates who took either the ACT or the SAT test. A top-performing high school will encourage all of its students to take the necessary steps to enroll in college, including taking the SAT and/or ACT exam. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Mean SAT Score (5%): the average score for all students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).[4] Research shows that SAT scores are a good predictor of college success.[2] A top-performing high school will prepare its students to perform well on the SAT test. For the Class of 2009, the average combined (Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing) SAT score in Texas was 1509.[5] (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Mean ACT Score (5%): the average score for all students who took the American College Test (ACT). A top-performing high school will prepare its students to perform well on the ACT test. A score of 21.3 is the national benchmark composite score that represents a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses including English composition, social sciences, college algebra, and biology. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Attendance Rate (10%): the rate of attendance for all students over one school year. The attendance rate is calculated as total number of days students were present in 2009-2010 divided by the total number of days students were in membership during this school year. A top-performing high school will be highly engaging and create a culture that encourages 100% attendance. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

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[3] The College Board. "The 6th Annual AP Report to the Nation, Texas Supplement." February 10, 2010. <http://www.collegeboard.com/html/aprtn/pdf/state_reports/AP_State_report_TX.pdf> Accessed January 19, 2011.

[4] By examining aggregate mean SAT score data in conjunction with participation rates in college entrance exams, among numerous other factors, CHILDREN AT RISK balances the effect of increased rates of participation in these exams on diminished mean scores. The College Board recommends using aggregate SAT scores only alongside other factors, including performance on other standardized tests, graduation rates, and other measures, when comparing schools. For more information, please see The College Board website.

[5] The College Board. "2009 College-Bound Seniors State Profile Report: Texas." <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/TX_09_03_03_01.pdf > Accessed January 19, 2011.

Graduation Rate (25%): the four-, five-, or six-year graduation rate calculated by CHILDREN AT RISK. Tracking first-time freshmen entering in 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 and following them to any Texas public high school for six, five, or four years, respectively, this rate is the percentage of students that have graduated by 2009 from any Texas public high school. The cohort of first-time freshmen used in this calculation is built by the Texas Education Agency using the same rules the Agency applies for the cohort used for its own Graduation, Dropout, and Completion Rates for state and federal accountability purposes. First-time freshmen are those students enrolled in ninth grade for the first time, looking back at five years of enrollment data in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), who are attributed to the campus that he or she most recently attended. For each campus, the highest value among the four-, five-, and six-year graduation rate calculation was selected to include in the Rankings analysis. This method does not account for the small percentage of students who transfer to private school, attend home schooling, leave the state/country after having started high school as freshman, or pass away. (Data Source: Information Request, Texas Education Agency)

Percent Economically Disadvantaged (18%): the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged (i.e. the percentage of students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance). The effects of poverty are pervasive and have been shown to impact how well a child is able to learn and perform academically. Research shows that poverty is a predictor of whether or not a student will graduate from high school in four years and will achieve post-secondary academic success. Thus, CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a high school that is working with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students must put forth more effort to retain and support these students. For this reason, these schools are rewarded. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

C. Middle School Performance Measures

Ten indicators, outlined in greater detail below, are examined in conjunction with one another to evaluate middle schools for the School Rankings.

TAKS Commended Reading (10%): the percentage of 8th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Reading subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 45 out of 48 total possible points (94% correct) on the first administration of the TAKS Reading section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing middle school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Mathematics (10%): the percentage of 8th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Mathematics subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 45 out of 50 total possible points (90% correct) on the first administration of the TAKS Mathematics section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing middle school will have the

majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Science (10%): the percentage of 8th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Science subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 44 out of 50 total possible points (88% correct) on the TAKS Science section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing middle school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Social Studies (10%): the percentage of 8th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Social Studies subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 40 out of 48 total possible points (83% correct) on the TAKS Social Studies section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing middle school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Writing (10%): the percentage of 7th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Writing subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 38 out of 44 total possible points (86% correct), as well as an essay writing score of 3 or higher, on the TAKS Writing section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing middle school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended All Tests (12%): the percentage of students who achieved "Commended Performance" on every TAKS subject test they took in the 8th grade. This value should be no greater than the percentage of 8th grade students who achieved commended scores on any given subtest. A top-performing middle school will have the majority of its students reaching Commended Performance benchmarks on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam in all subject areas. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

Attendance Rate (15%): the rate of attendance for all students over one school year. The attendance rate is calculated as total number of days students were present in 2008-2009 divided by the total number of days students were in membership during this school year. A top-performing middle school will be highly engaging and create a culture that encourages 100% attendance. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Retention Rate (5%): the rate of retention of students for grades 7 and 8. The retention rate is the percentage of students held back a grade, or the percentage of students who enrolled in the fall of 2009-2010 in the same grade as their grade in the last reported six-week period of the prior year. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing school will adequately prepare students in order promote them to the next grade level, citing a body of research suggesting

that grade retention has a negative impact on the future academic success of students. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Percent Economically Disadvantaged (18%): the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged (i.e. the percentage of students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance). The effects of poverty are pervasive and have been shown to impact how well a child is able to learn and perform academically. Research shows that poverty is a predictor of whether or not a student will graduate from high school in four years and will achieve post-secondary academic success. Thus, CHILDREN AT RISK assumes an elementary, middle, or high school that is working with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students must put forth more effort to retain and support these students. For this reason, these schools are rewarded. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

D. Elementary School Performance Measures

CHILDREN AT RISK examines twelve indicators at the elementary level. Each of these indicators is explained in detail below.

TAKS Commended Reading (11%): the percentage of 5th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Reading subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination.[6] Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 39 out of 42 total possible points (93% correct) on the English version and a score of 37 out of 42 possible points (88% correct) on the Spanish version of the first administration of the TAKS Reading section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing elementary school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Mathematics (11%): the percentage of 5th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Mathematics subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 40 out of 44 total possible points (91% correct) on the English version and a score of 40 out of 44 total possible points (91% correct) on the Spanish version of the first administration of the TAKS Mathematics section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing elementary school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Science (11%): the percentage of 5th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Science subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect a score of 37 out of 40 total possible points (93% correct) on the English version and a score of 37 out of 40 total

[6] For each subject test, CHILDREN AT RISK computes the percentage of students achieving commended performance on either the English or Spanish TAKS, if five or more students took either exam, as the total count of students achieving "Commended Performance" on either test by the total number tested.

possible points (93% correct) on the Spanish version of the TAKS Science section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing elementary school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS Commended Writing (11%): the percentage of 4th grade students who achieved "Commended Performance" on the Writing subject test of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. Commended Performance standards reflect an essay writing score of 3 or higher as well as a score of 28 out of 32 total possible points (88% correct) on the English version and a score of 26 out of 32 total possible points (81%) on the Spanish version of the TAKS Writing section. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing elementary school will have the majority of its students achieve this higher standard. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

TAKS All Tests (13%): the percentage of students who achieved "Commended Performance" on every TAKS subject test they took in the 5th grade. The percentage of 5th grade students who reached Commended standards (described above) on every subtest they took, which should be no greater than the percentage of 5th grade students who were commended on any given subtest. A top-performing elementary school will have the majority of its students reaching Commended Performance benchmarks on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam in all subject areas. (Data Source: Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency)

Attendance Rate (15%): the rate of attendance for all students over one school year. The attendance rate is calculated as total number of days students were present in 2008-2009 divided by the total number of days students were in membership during this school year. A top-performing elementary school will be highly engaging and create a culture that encourages 100% attendance. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Retention Rate (5%): the rate of retention of students for grades 1-5. The retention rate is the percentage of students held back a grade, or the percentage of students who enrolled in the fall of 2009-2010 in the same grade as their grade in the last reported six-week period of the prior year. CHILDREN AT RISK assumes a top-performing school will adequately prepare students in order promote them to the next grade level, citing a body of research suggesting that grade retention has a negative impact on the future academic success of students. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Class Size (5%): the average class size for grades 1–3. A growing body of research suggests that small classes in the early grades are associated with short- and long-term positive academic outcomes for students, particularly when classes are consistently small.[7] The inverse of the z-

[7] A review of the research can be found through the Center for Public Education at: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lvIXIiN0JwE&b=5114799&ct=6857787&notoc=1

score statistics is used for this indicator so that those schools that have a low class size are rewarded. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

Percent Economically Disadvantaged (18%): the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged (i.e. the percentage of students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance). The effects of poverty are pervasive and have been shown to impact how well a child is able to learn and perform academically. Research shows that poverty is a predictor of whether or not a student will graduate from high school in four years and will achieve post-secondary academic success. Thus, CHILDREN AT RISK assumes an elementary, middle, or high school that is working with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students must put forth more effort to retain and support these students. For this reason, these schools are rewarded. (Data Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency)

E. Missing Data

For a school to be included in the school rankings, a campus must have complete data from the Texas Education Agency for each of the indicators included in the analysis. If a campus is missing one or more data points for the most recent year, CHILDREN AT RISK attempts to fill in the missing data with data collected for a given campus from the prior year and, if not available, up to four years prior. Thus, in order to be excluded from the School Rankings analysis for 'Missing Data', a school must have missing data, for at least one indicator, consistently for the past three years (i.e. missing from 2008-2010 for percent economically disadvantaged and 2007-2009 for mean SAT score). In the case where a high school is missing a mean SAT or ACT score for the past three years, CHILDREN AT RISK uses the ACT-SAT Concordance tables, released jointly by ACT and the College Board, to estimate a mean SAT or ACT score for that campus instead of excluding the school from the rankings.[8]

III. Method

A. Public School Ranking Methodology

The CHILDREN AT RISK ranking methodology employs a statistically straightforward method for ranking schools across various measures. Much like the methodology used by other institutions to rank higher education programs (e.g. MBA programs and law schools), CHILDREN AT RISK's method uses the z-score statistic to standardize the data and compute a ranking among campuses included in the analysis. The z-score, sometimes called a normal deviate, describes how much a data point deviates from the mean. Z-scores, which can be negative or positive, indicate presence above and below the sample mean for a raw score. This standardization of scores makes it possible to compare scores from different distributions where measurement is based on different scales. When the variables used in the CHILDREN AT RISK ranking are examined in conjunction with each other, they provide an accurate assessment of how well a campus has prepared students for the next level of their education and ultimately post-secondary success. To calculate the school rankings, CHILDREN AT RISK first computes a

[8] College Board. (2011). "ACT-SAT Concordance Tables." Available at http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/act-sat-concordance-tables.pdf Accessed March 9, 2011.

standardized score, or z-score, for each of the measures, comparing a campus' performance against schools across the state. CHILDREN AT RISK then applies predetermined weights to each measure (*see Appendix A*) and aggregates the weighted values to produce a composite score. A state rank is determined as the order in which campuses are listed when the weighted composite z-scores are sorted from highest to lowest.

The weights applied to each indicator in the CHILDREN AT RISK ranking calculation were determined by staff members and influential members from the education community (e.g. school district administrators, school board members, and staff from other education service providers). More weight is given to indicators that better predict college success based on a growing body of research. Other prominent school ranking systems (e.g. Newsweek and Philadelphia Magazine) apply a similar methodology where more weight is given to indicators that are more important and that come from more objective data sources with fewer missing data points.

CHILDREN AT RISK rankings are computed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels across the state of Texas. The Greater Houston area is defined as the following eight counties: Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller. Greater Dallas includes the following nine counties: Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Rockwall, and Tarrant. The Greater Austin area includes seven counties: Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson. Finally, Greater San Antonio is defined as the following six counties: Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, and Medina. The School Rankings' analysis is conducted at the state level before campuses are extracted to rank schools in smaller geographic areas (i.e. Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio).

B. Excluded Schools

The following criteria are causes for exclusion from the elementary, middle and high school rankings. Campuses that are alternative or disciplinary sites are excluded from the rankings, as are schools for which one or more required data points have been consistently missing over the past four years. Elementary campuses must consist of first through fifth grades and middle schools must consist of seventh and eighth grades. Campuses that do not have the required grade range but have been assigned paired campuses for accountability purposes by the Texas Education Agency (e.g. a K-2 school that feeds directly into a 3-5 school in the same district, as identified by TEA and indicated in AEIS) are eligible for inclusion in the rankings, with criteria for the relevant grades drawn from each campus. In these cases, the campus with the highest grade level (e.g. the campus with grades 3-5 rather than the campus housing grades K-2) is used for the analysis and assigned a rank. Finally, a high school campus must consist of ninth through twelfth grades or have a ninth grade center that directly feeds into a single high schools' campus (e.g. ninth grade centers in Aldine ISD).[9] In addition, the campus must have

[9] Due to the demands of the Dallas community and the presence of irregular school structures at the high school level in this area, some exceptions were made through the calculation of district- or multi-school level graduation rates (e.g. Richardson ISD). If you believe your district should qualify for such an exception, please contact Caroline Holcombe at cholcombe@childrenatrisk.org.

graduated its own students for the class of 2009 in order to calculate a graduation rate and be included in the 2011 School Rankings. Campuses that serve elementary, middle, and high school students, or two of these three groups, are evaluated in each ranking for which they qualify.

C. Explanation of High School Sub-Lists

Top 10 Most Improved High Schools: This list represents area schools that have shown the greatest improvement across the fourteen measures used in the rankings over the past three years. Campuses with missing data points are excluded. CHILDREN AT RISK uses weighted total aggregate z-score values for each campus for each academic year and computes the positive difference across years for total positive change over the last three years. We then found which campus demonstrated the highest positive difference in aggregate z-scores. Finally, to be recognized as a Most Improved High School, the campus must have a six-year graduation rate of at least 50% in the most recent year.

Top 10 Urban Comprehensive High Schools: This list represents the top Greater Houston area comprehensive high schools that are located in urban districts and house majority, 50% or more, economically disadvantaged student populations. For the purpose of this sub-list, urban districts include the following independent school districts: Aldine, Alief, Channelview, Cypress-Fairbanks, Galena Park, Houston, Humble, Katy, Klein, North Forest, Pasadena, Spring Branch, and Spring.

Top 10 High Schools in Science and Mathematics: This list represents the top area high schools in math and science. This ranking examines math and science specific indicators, including advanced course offerings, AP math and science participation and success rates, and performance on the math and science sections of college entrance exams. See *Appendix B* for an overview of the thirteen variables included in this analysis.

IV. Study Limitations

There are numerous factors that affect the success of children and schools. Research shows some of the biggest factors for student success are parental involvement, social and emotional development, extracurricular participation, teacher and parent expectations of students, and engaging class work that stimulates critical thinking. However, there is no standard measure for any of these constructs, and it would be particularly difficult to collect this data efficiently and consistently for ranking nearly 6,000 schools. Another restraint is CHILDREN AT RISK's dependence on data collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Thus, the limitations posed by TEA data are valid criticisms for this school ranking system. Any erroneous data reported to or by TEA may have an effect on the rankings. Additionally, the CHILDREN AT RISK ranking is limited to campuses that have complete data available through TEA for all measures included in the ranking.

Appendix A – Table of Indicators for Public School Rankings

Variable Name	Year	Weight
HIGH SCHOOL		
TAKS Commended Reading	2010	2.5%
TAKS Commended Math	2010	2.5%
TAKS Commended Social Studies	2010	2.5%
TAKS Commended Science	2010	2.5%
Recommended High School Program	2009	5%
Advanced Courses	2009	6%
AP/IB Test-Takers	2009	5%
AP/IB Students Passing	2009	6%
Attendance Rate	2009	10%
CHILDREN AT RISK Graduation Rate	2009	25%
SAT/ACT Test-Takers	2009	5%
SAT Score	2009	5%
ACT Score	2009	5%
Economically Disadvantaged	2010	18%
MIDDLE SCHOOL		
TAKS Commended Reading	2010	10%
TAKS Commended Math	2010	10%
TAKS Commended Social Studies	2010	10%
TAKS Commended Science	2010	10%
TAKS Commended Writing	2010	10%
TAKS Commended All Tests	2010	12%
Attendance Rate	2009	15%
Retention Rate (Grade 7)	2009	2.5%
Retention Rate (Grade 8)	2009	2.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	2010	18%
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL		
TAKS Commended Reading	2010	11%
TAKS Commended Math	2010	11%
TAKS Commended Science	2010	11%
TAKS Commended Writing	2010	11%
TAKS Commended All Tests	2010	13%
Attendance Rate	2009	15%
Class Size (Grade 1)	2010	2%
Class Size (Grade 2)	2010	1.5%
Class Size (Grade 3)	2010	1.5%
Retention Rate (Grade 1)	2009	1%
Retention Rate (Grade 2)	2009	1%
Retention Rate (Grade 3)	2009	1%
Retention Rate (Grade 4)	2009	1%
Retention Rate (Grade 5)	2009	1%
Economically Disadvantaged	2010	18%

Appendix B – Table of Indicators for Math & Science Rankings Sub-List

Variable Name	Year	Weight
MATH & SCIENCE SUB-LIST		
TAKS Commended Math	2010	5%
TAKS Commended Science	2010	5%
Advanced (AP/IB) Course Offerings in Math & Science (Count)	2010	10%
AP Math Test-Takers	2009	5%
AP Math Students Passing	2009	5%
AP Science Test-Takers	2009	5%
AP Science Students Passing	2009	5%
C@R Graduation Rate	2009	25%
SAT/ACT Test-Takers	2009	5%
SAT Mean Math Score	2009	6%
ACT Mean Math Score	2009	3%
ACT Mean Science Score	2009	3%
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	2010	18%