Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Mike Morath

1701 North Congress Avenue • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • tea.texas.gov

Via E-Mail,
Certified Mail &
Regular Mail

220-905

November 6, 2025

Dr. Karen Molinar, Superintendent
Roxanne Martinez, Board President
Tobi Jackson, First Vice President
Dr. Michael Ryan, Second Vice President
Anael Luebanos, Board Secretary
Wallace Bridges, Trustee
Anne Darr, Trustee
Kevin Lynch, Trustee
Quinton Phillips, Trustee
Dr. Camille Rodriguez, Trustee
Fort Worth Independent School District
7060 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth, Texas 76116

RE: Appointment of Board of Managers and Conservator Due to Campus Performance Ratings after Informal Review

Dear Superintendent Molinar and Trustees:

As you are aware, in correspondence dated October 23, 2025, I provided notice of my intent to appoint a board of managers to the Fort Worth Independent School District ("ISD" or "district") to exercise the powers and duties of the district's board of trustees and of the appointment of a conservator to the district. On October 30, 2025, I conducted an informal review of the appointments at the Texas Education Agency ("TEA" or "agency"). After careful consideration of the information submitted by the district and presented during the review and in the best interest of the students of Fort Worth ISD, I am affirming my appointment of a board of managers and a conservator to the district. With the appointment of a board of managers, I am also required to appoint a superintendent.[1] As detailed below, I will announce the board of managers and superintendent appointments in future correspondence.

[1] TEC §39A.202(a)(2).

Consideration of the District Arguments During Informal Review

During the informal review, the district made a number of legal arguments and one primary factual argument. The agency has analyzed all legal arguments and determined that the underlying basis for the previously announced board of managers placement remains valid. The district's primary factual argument asserted that TEA applied the incorrect sanction pause years for the Texas Partnership agreement and, therefore, the 2023 *F* rating should not be included in the Texas Education Code ("TEC") §39A.111 consecutive-year count. The agency has reviewed this contention and has concluded that the district is incorrect. Among other pieces of evidence, a determinative fact, which the district did not reference at all, is that per the Foundation School Program ("FSP") records, the Leadership Academy at Forest Oak 6th Grade campus received funding adjustments in the form of additional aid for partnering to operate a district campus (per TEC §48.252(a)(1) and 19 Texas Administrative Code ("TAC") §61.1010) beginning with the 2020-21 school year. Since the district received additional funding for the partnership beginning with the 2020-21 school year, this would, among other key pieces of evidence, establish the start of the applicable pause year. The agency finds that the FSP record supports the beginning pause year, while evidence provided by the district does not support their argument.

Final Decision

Based on the reasons set forth in the correspondence dated October 23, 2025, I have decided to appoint a board of managers and a conservator. I am ordering the appointment of a board of managers to govern the district as provided by TEC §39A.111 and the appointment of a conservator to the district pursuant to the authority in TEC §§39A.002(7), 39A.051(a), 39A.102(b), and 39A.102(b-1), and 19 TAC §§97.1064(m), 97.1065(c), and 97.1073(c).

a. Board of Managers and Superintendent Appointments

This appointment is authorized as Fort Worth ISD's governing board was unable to address the academic deficiencies that led to five consecutive unacceptable ratings at the Leadership Academy at Forest Oak 6th Grade campus prior to its closure. It should be noted that in August 2023, the district submitted a request to close the campus per 19 TAC §97.1066, effective at the end of 2022-23 school year. Accordingly, the campus earned an accountability rating for the 2022-23 school year, and that rating counts toward the TEC §39A.111 consecutive-year count, and the subsequent closure of the campus has no bearing on, and does not abrogate, the compulsory action the statute requires be taken. The campus had not had an acceptable performance rating since the 2014-15 school year. The district-level failures to improve student and campus performance demonstrate the need to improve overall performance for the district's students and necessitate the appointment of a board of managers.

b. Conservator Appointment

I am appointing a conservator to the district to ensure the district supports its low-performing campuses and implements the district's turnaround plans. Christopher Ruszkowski will serve as the appointed conservator to the district. As a TEA conservator, Mr. Ruszkowski will have all authority permitted under Texas law and his role will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Overseeing and directing as necessary the actions of the superintendent, principals, and/or governance team;

- Reporting to the agency on all governance activities of the district and the academic progress of the district; and
- Attending board meetings, including executive session.

Please note that the appointment of a conservator does not relieve the district 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 39A, and 19 TAC, Chapter 97, individually or in combination, to address the current, or any future, deficiencies identified for the district and its campuses. The cost of the conservator's services will be paid by the district in accordance with TEC §39A.903. The conservator's hourly rate is $250 per hour and $50 per hour for travel, plus necessary travel expenses not to exceed the state per diem rate. Failure to make timely payments to the conservator may result in appropriate amounts being deducted from the district's FSP funds.

Opportunity for SOAH Review

The district may, but is not required to, request an administrative review of the appointment of a conservator and a board of managers decision to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH).[2] Pursuant to 19 TAC §157.1155, a petition for review of this decision must be received no later than **fifteen (15) calendar days after the date of this letter**. If a petition for review complying with the requirements contained in 19 TAC §157.1155 is received by the deadline, it will be forwarded to SOAH for a hearing.

If the petition for review does not meet the requirements of 19 TAC §157.1155, the petition for review will be dismissed without further review and without referral to SOAH.[3] Any written response or other correspondence pertaining to this notice must be sent to:

Matthew A. Tiffee, Senior Litigator
Office of General Counsel
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

The administrative law judge must uphold my decision unless the administrative law judge finds the decision is not supported by substantial evidence.[4] The decision of the administrative law judge is final and may not be appealed.[5] If a petition for review is not submitted by the deadline, my decision will become final and unappealable.[6]

Pursuant to 19 TAC §157.1165, the pendency of a SOAH review does not stay or otherwise affect the enforcement of my decision. As such, the conservator appointment is effective immediately. As stated in the October 23, 2025 correspondence, the agency began the application process for the board of managers and prospective superintendent candidates. Following the completion of the

[2] TAC §157.1151(7), (9).
[3] TAC §157.1155(b).
[4] TEC §39A.301(b) and TAC §157.1157(a).
[5] TEC §39A.301(c)(3).
[6] TEC §39A.301 and TAC §157.1155(a) and (b).

application process and SOAH review and decision, if requested, I will announce the members of board of managers and the superintendent in a future correspondence.

Board of Managers Procedures

As stated in the October 23, 2025 correspondence and above, the agency began the application process for identifying prospective community members for the board of managers and prospective superintendent candidates. This process is currently ongoing. Interested community members can find more information and apply to serve on the board of managers by visiting the Texas Education Agency's website at tea.texas.gov/board-of-managers. Following the completion of the application process and SOAH review and decision, if requested, I will announce the members of board of managers and the superintendent in future correspondence.

During the period of the appointment of the board of managers, the powers of the board of trustees will be suspended.[7] The board of managers will have all powers of the board of trustees and shall continue to order the elections of the members of the board of trustees as required by applicable law.[8]

The appointment of a board of managers to a district is not permanent and is subject to statutory timeline expiration.[9] My hope is that members of the board of trustees will engage with members of the board of managers in an advisory capacity during the term of the board of managers appointment so that when the time comes for the elected officials to return, the transition will be seamless.

In the meantime, it is my sincere desire that all parties work together in a cooperative and productive manner in the best interest of the district's students. If you have questions about the appointment of the board of managers, superintendent, or conservator, please contact Garrett Black in the Division of Governance Interventions at (512) 463-9146 or Garrett.Black@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,



Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

MM/lm

[7] TEC §39A.202(a)(1).
[8] TEC §39A.208(a).
[9] TEC §39A.208(b).