The United States Department of Education (USDE) has approved the 2015-2016 teacher shortage areas submitted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The approved shortage areas give administrators the ability to recruit and retain qualified teachers and to help reward teachers for their hard work using the loan forgiveness opportunities.
http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Educator_Initiatives_and_Performance/Federal_TeacherLoan_Forgiveness_Program/

For the costs of educational field trips and program-related out-of-state travel for school year 2015–2016, federal grant sub recipients do not need to receive prior approval from TEA, nor will TEA issue prior approval.
http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Change_to_Prior_Approval_Policy/

TEA has assigned all local educational agencies a risk level for the 2015–2016 school year. Based upon the outcome of the risk assessment, sub recipients are assigned a risk level of low, medium, or high. You may learn your risk assessment level by accessing the GFFC Reports and Data Collections secure application, in TEASE or TEAL. The specific criteria used in the risk assessment are published on the division’s webpage.

Deadlines for highly qualified teacher requirements and the agency’s plans for continued implementation and improvement toward this NCLB requirement may be accessed at the following website: http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Status_of_NCLB_Highly_Qualified_Teacher_Requirements/

PEIMS Reporting Changes:
- New Data Elements: Early College High School Indicator; T-STEM Indicator; Individual Graduation Committee
- Foundation High School Program Graduation Type: New codes have been added and one was removed
- Truancy Changes: Compulsory school age now 19; truancy preventive measures after 3 unexcused absences; truancy charges changed to complaints and updated to 10 unexcused absences in a 6 month period; truancy discipline codes 16 and 17 have been deleted and new code 29 was added.
- Discipline: Code 50 delete and will report as code 21; wording changes for codes 11, 12, 13, 14 regarding weapons
- Optional Flexible School Day Program: Number of minutes for calculation has changed from 360 to 240.

For any LEA that has placed students in an approved Nonpublic Day School (NPDS) program, the state funding request deadline to offset this expense is due September 18, 2015. Complete guidance is available at:
http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Nonpublic_Day_School_Programs_Report/

Residential Facility (RF) Monitoring update: Effective 2015-2016, the TEA will discontinue separate staging for RF. RF monitoring and/or interventions will be integrated into the PBMAS staging system. However, RF Tracker data entry will continue.

High Cost Funds Changes: The major change is that these funds will be handled as reimbursement funds, so the timeline for applications to TEA will now be the first Friday in April. Notifications will be made as soon as possible after this submission, not no later than July 1 of each fiscal year. To review the entire High Cost Fund State Plan, please go to the following link: http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147490628

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) published a Q&A document about the final Maintenance of Effort (MOE) regulations that were published in the Federal Register. This document is available at the following link: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/osepmemo1510leaupdate.pdf
Accountability and Assessment

- The confidential 2015 Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) report for your school district is now available through the Accountability application on the Texas Education Agency Secure Environment (TEASE) website. Public versions of the reports, with data masked in order to comply with FERPA, will be made available on the agency’s public website on September 18, 2015.
- Implementation of New Student Assessment Contracts timeline and information may be accessed at the following link: http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Implementation_of_New_Student_Assessment_Contracts/
- Information for Districts, Campuses, and Charter Schools with Areas of Need Identified through the 2015 State Accountability System TAA provides requirements, timelines, and resources. http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Information_for_Districts,_Campuses,_and_Charter_Schools_with_Areas_of_Need_Identified_through_the_2015_State_Accountability_System/

Curriculum and Instruction

- The 2015-2016 List of Approved Tests for Assessment of LEP students can be accessed from the TEA webpage at: http://tea.texas.gov/bilingual/esl/education/.
- Instructional Materials Allotment and the High Enrollment Growth Application is available. To be eligible for an increase, the district or charter must have experienced one of four things. Districts and charters are permitted to submit only one application each school year. Applications must be received by Tuesday, December 1, 2015. http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Instructional_Materials/Ordering_and_Distribution/Forms_and_Downloads/
- The Texas high school on-time graduation rate of 88.3 percent set by the Class of 2014 reflects another all-time high for the state and marks the seventh consecutive year the overall rate has increased. The full Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2013-2014 report is available online.

Other

- Deadline to Apply to Professional School Counselor Academy is September 11th. To submit your online application, visit: CTE Professional Development http://cte.tamucc.edu/counselor-academy
- Deadline to Apply to CTE Leadership Academy is September 11th To submit your online application, visit: CTE Professional Development http://cte.tamucc.edu/cte-leadership-academy
- The Texas Education Agency released preliminary financial accountability ratings for more than 1,200 school districts and charters across the state, with almost 98 percent of all Texas school districts and charters earning a successful preliminary rating for 2014-2015.
- Attendance, Admission, Enrollment Records, and Tuition TAA summarizes important statutes relating to student attendance, public school admission, enrollment records, and tuition. Part I of the letter relates to compulsory attendance, Part II relates to attendance for course credit, Part III relates to public school admission, Part IV relates to enrollment records, and Part V relates to tuition. In each part, we have identified which statutes do or do not apply to open-enrollment charter schools.[1] We hope you will find this summary helpful as you begin the 2015-2016 school year. http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Attendance,_Admission,_Enrollment_Records,_and_Tuition__2015-16/
- District’s preliminary 2014-2015 School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) rating is now available in the online School FIRST system. To access the School FIRST system go to the TEA School FIRST webpage.
- Charter school’s preliminary 2014-2015 Charter Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) rating is now available in the online Charter FIRST system. To access the Charter FIRST system go to the TEA Charter FIRST webpage.
- 2015 Annual Notification of Nondiscrimination in Career and Technical Education Programs

“We may be very busy, we may be very efficient, but we will also be fully effective only when we begin with the end in mind.” - Stephen R. Covey