

TO: Board of Directors  
Brownsville Chamber of Commerce  
FROM: David Merrill  
Education Reform Task Force  
RE: Activity Report and Outlook  
DATE: 4-22-204

Here are the primary activities on which to brief you:

**March 8** - At our request, Sen. Eddie Lucio convened a meeting of business interests to discuss the outlook for the special session of the legislature. As headlines have since shown, the Governor has a plan that would eliminate the so-called “Robin Hood” financial system.

**March 22 and 23** – Attended the Texas Education Reform Caucus in Austin. Governor Perry personally presented his plans for education finance. It was not very well received.

Looking forward:

**May 6** – I will be in Austin as a new board member for the Texas Public Education Reform Foundation. This honor comes because Frank Field introduced a group of us to the founder, State Rep. Kent Grusendorf.

**May 17** – 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM at UT-B/TSC ITEC conference rooms. A very important briefing for business people on a very controversial subject: Bilingual Education. The National Institutes of Health has been conducting scientific research on the subject. Brownsville is one of ten research sites in the nation. David Francis of the University of Houston is a principal researcher. He will tell us what the research proves.

We will also hear from a group called CIRCLE/TEEMS, which is another leading edge project here in Brownsville.

Seating will be limited. UT-B/TSC is providing the lunch.

**June 15** – The former CEO of Honeywell, Jim Ranier, will be coming to town. He is a founder of the Success By Six movement. He’ll speak at noon at the Sheraton, sponsored by BEDC. Plain and simple, early childhood development and education is an essential element in any plan for Brownsville’s prosperity.

#### **REQUEST FOR BOARD AUTHORIZATION:**

The Task Force has obtained a \$10,000 grant from the Brownsville Foundation for Health and Education. The money will fund Phase 1 of the development of the Brownsville Education Leadership Institute. Details are available on request (especially by email). Essentially, we will develop a program to “raise our own” leadership. The product will

be better-informed decision-makers on the school board and in the business community. This will lead to better schools and higher graduation rates.

I would ask that the Board authorize Mr. Field to accept the funds for this purpose.

**Potential Event:**

Senator Shapleigh, Democrat of El Paso, is an eloquent advocate for education finance reform. His staff has expressed interest in making the Senator available for a Public Affairs luncheon. Dates are very much up in the air, but this could be a good opportunity to look at alternatives other than those offered by the Republican leadership in Austin. Without objection, we will continue to work on this.