

Dr. Marta Pérez, Board Member

SUBJECT: ONLINE CHECKBOOK REGISTER

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT

**STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY OF DECISION MAKING
THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is emerging as a national leader in recognizing that transparency in government is a key factor in stakeholder satisfaction. It recently posted its checkbook register online, making financial transactions available for viewing by the public at large (<http://tea.state.tx.us/tea/CheckRegister.html>). Similarly, numerous districts in Texas either paved the way or followed suit and posted various versions of their checkbook register on their individual websites. The state legislature is currently reviewing various bills proposing state-mandated posting of districts' checkbook registers.

Houston Independent School District ("HISD"), the state's largest district and seventh in the nation, with approximately 209,000 students, unveiled its online checkbook register in April 2007 with a user-friendly format easily accessible from its home page. It has a search engine, with payroll and payroll-related checks/transactions such as those affected by HIPAA being the only exclusions. In the implementation phase, HISD committed the resources of one staff member for approximately two weeks, for a cost of about \$5,300, according to their Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Melinda Garrett. Thereafter, the SAP team downloads the check register to the portal every two weeks on Sunday nights. It can be viewed at <http://prodnet.houstonisd.org/CROSE/checkRegister.aspx>.

Many of the smaller school districts with limited IT resources simply post a .pdf copy of their weekly or monthly check report at a negligible cost.

Although the idea of posting the checkbook register online was met with skepticism in various districts, citing technology issues and high cost of implementation, it was quickly realized that the obstacles were minor, the cost minimal and the positive feedback from the community enormous. Viewing the checkbook register online will increase transparency and possibly reduce the number of public records requests handled by the Citizens Information Center.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. MARTA PÉREZ: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of posting the checkbook register online and report to the board no later than the July board meeting. Cost to the district: \$160.00 (1 hr @ \$64 + 2 hrs @ \$48).