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Michael Williams
Commissioner

**IMPORTANT
ACCREDITATION
INFORMATION**

**Certified Mail
& Regular Mail**

084-904

November 12, 2015

Ms. Nakisha Paul, President, Board of Trustees
Ms. Terri Watkins, Superintendent
La Marque Independent School District
PO Box 7
La Marque, Texas 77568

Dear Ms. Paul and Ms. Watkins:

The purpose of this letter is to notify La Marque Independent School District (ISD or district) of my decision to assign a 2014-2015 accreditation status of **Not Accredited-Revoked** to the district, order closure of the district effective July 1, 2016, and assign a conservator to the district.

La Marque ISD was assigned an accreditation status of **Not Accredited-Revoked** for 2014-2015 pursuant to 19 Texas Administrative Code §97.1055(d)(1)(C) because the district received a rating of *Academically Unacceptable* for 2011, and a rating of *Improvement Required* in the state's academic accountability rating system for 2013 and 2014. In addition, La Marque ISD was assigned a financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement* for 2011-2012. The district requested a review related to its 2014-2015 accreditation status assignment, and, following the review, in which no final order was issued, La Marque ISD entered into an agreement with the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) to abate the proceedings.

The terms of the abatement agreement provided, in part, that in the event La Marque ISD received a preliminary 2014-2015 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement* or a preliminary 2015 academic accountability rating of *Improvement Required*, a board of managers would be appointed to the district to exercise all powers and duties assigned to the board of

trustees by law, rule, or regulation. The abatement agreement further provided that in the event the district received a final 2014-2015 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement* or a final 2015 academic accountability rating of *Improvement Required*, I would assign an accreditation status of Not Accredited-Revoked to La Marque ISD for 2014-2015 and order closure of the district effective July 1, 2016.

In August 2015, the TEA released preliminary accountability ratings, which indicated that La Marque ISD received a 2014-2015 financial accountability rating of *Substandard Achievement* and a 2015 academic accountability rating of *Met Standard*. As a result of the preliminary financial accountability rating, and pursuant to the terms of the above-referenced abatement agreement, in correspondence dated September 23, 2015, I notified the district of my decision to appoint a board of managers. On October 19, 2015, in response to the district's request, I conducted a formal review of the decision to appoint a board of managers.

On October 22, 2015, final financial accountability ratings were issued by the TEA, and La Marque ISD's rating remained *Substandard Achievement*. As a result of the 2014-2015 financial accountability rating, and pursuant to the terms of the abatement agreement, **I am assigning a 2014-2015 accreditation status of Not Accredited-Revoked to the district and ordering its closure effective July 1, 2016.**

Pursuant to the abatement agreement, the district has agreed that my decision with respect to the informal review of the 2014-2015 accreditation status is final and unappealable, and has waived any challenge of this decision under TEC §39.152. Therefore, this order is final and unappealable. 19 TAC 157.1155(b). The closure of the district will be effective July 1, 2016. TEC §13.005(c). I will announce my decision regarding the annexation of the district in later correspondence.

Additionally, after conducting the formal review and considering the response of the district, I am not inclined to change my decision to appoint a board of managers. However, rather than appoint the board of managers at this time, I am assigning a conservator to the district due to the on-going and long-standing deficiencies of the district and because such intervention is necessary to prevent substantial or imminent harm to the welfare of the district's students or to the public interest. I am appointing Doris Delaney to the district to serve as the conservator.

As a TEA conservator, Ms. Delaney's role will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Overseeing the financial management and governance of the district to ensure the district complies with state and federal law;
- Attending board meetings, including executive sessions, and directing the board as necessary; and
- Overseeing all closure activities of the district.

Please note that the appointment of a conservator does not relieve the district and its governing board 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 Title 19, TAC, Chapters 97, including the appointment of the board of managers, which has been determined after formal review to be an appropriate sanction, to address the current, or any future, deficiencies identified for the district.

Agency staff will be present at the next meeting of the district's governing board to introduce Doris Delaney to the members of the board. The cost of the conservator's services will be paid by the district in accordance with TEC §39.110. The conservator's fee shall be \$85 per hour 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 Foundation School Program (FSP) funds.

Any questions regarding this correspondence may be addressed to the Division of Enforcement Coordination at (512) 463-3544 or EnforcementCoordination@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Michael Williams
Commissioner of Education

MW/cc

cc: Dr. Pam Wells, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Service Center
Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds, Chief Deputy Commissioner, TEA
Michael Berry, Deputy Commissioner, Policy and Programs, TEA
Sally Partridge, Associate Commissioner, Accreditation and School Improvement, TEA
Alice McAfee, Associate Commissioner, Complaints, Investigations, Enforcement, TEA
Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Associate Commissioner, School Finance/Chief School Finance Officer, TEA
Nora Hancock, Associate Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal Compliance, TEA
Criss Cloudt, Associate Commissioner for Assessment and Accountability, TEA
Von Byer, General Counsel, TEA
Nichole Bunker-Henderson, Deputy General Counsel, TEA
Christopher Jones, Senior Legal Counsel, TEA
Ron Rowell, Director, Governance, TEA
Leah Martin, Accreditation
Doris Delaney, Conservator