

TSCA TESTIMONY RESPONSE Sept. 17, 2013:

Dear Board Members:

I would like to respond to some of the testimony and some of the questions of board members from today's SBOE meeting in relation to the effort to continue the addition of the one-half credit of speech to the high school graduation requirements.

- Communication applications (and later the professional communications) arose 12 years ago from the demands of the business community for courses that would assist their future employees even if they move straight into the workforce after high school graduation. This mandate has not changed. The many recent scholarly studies we have provided the board support this statement. Please see the testimony and additional documents in Rhonda Smith's testimony today for additional studies. We understand the difficult position the SBOE is in regarding the HB 5 mandates of flexibility and local control. We ask that you continue to support your original decision to add the speech credit as you have for 12 years.
- In response to the usefulness of the course for college preparation, Dr. Beebe testified today that "A survey of 70 colleges and universities in Texas found that 91% either require a communication course (75%), or make available through a required election option (16%) that students take a college-level communication course.
- The TSCA supports Dr. Paredes' statement that courses such as communication applications—which is under the English Language Arts curriculum—can stand alone as an advanced course.
- The TSCA did contact the state legislature offices about testifying but was told that speech is under the SBOE's control and that we needed to take our message to you.
- At present, no courses other than communication applications and professional communications focus exclusively on the foundations of the discipline of communication studies: listening skills, interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication, small group communication, and public speaking. This is a large reason why the business community asked the SBOE to develop Communication Applications in the late 1990's. ELA courses were not providing this explicit instruction.
- Smaller schools have successfully included communication applications and/or professional communications in their curricula for the past 12 years. The future should hold no different position for those schools. Students' need for communication skills should take precedence over ease of scheduling.
- Allowing other courses that may contain one or two of the foundational communication topics to count for speech credit would dilute the meaning and goals of communication studies. If rigor is the goal of the courses, then allowing courses that address a minimal amount of communication TEKS is counter-productive.
- Furthermore, because communication studies is a discipline that holds the same legitimacy as mathematics, science, English, and social studies, only teachers holding speech communication certification should teach these courses or any other course in which the focus of the course is

on communication. By analogy, science teachers may have students submit lab reports, but this does not mean that the lab reports should suffice for the writing component in English courses.

- Unfortunately, the speech credit will most likely not be added by local school boards. North East ISD, Killeen ISD, and Cy Fair ISD testified today about the inconvenience it causes them. That's over 200,000 students who will not benefit from learning these skills. As we saw with Tech Apps several years ago, school boards will likely not require a class you don't mandate. There are just too many other things on their plate. Additionally, as our testimony proved today, because of the fear of public speaking, many students will most likely not choose to take this course if it was an elective.
- The TSCA would welcome an invitation from board members to assist in creating curriculum for other courses that would meet the goals of communication studies. We also welcome the opportunity to educate more people about our courses so that they may understand why they are unique and in need of protection.

I look forward to partnering with you on this subject and sincerely hope to be included in future discussions. My contact information is below.

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