

Dear parents, families, teachers, staff, and community of La Joya ISD:

On May 9, 2023, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued a Final Report to the La Joya Independent School District (La Joya ISD or District) that contained the results of a years-long investigation into allegations of corruption, criminal activity, and illegal behavior by the district's school board and administration. Based on the findings of the investigation, the Final Report recommended that the Commissioner of Education appoint a Board of Managers to replace La Joya ISD's elected school board. The purpose of this letter is to explain where the agency is in that process and what the community can expect moving forward.

While there are many good things happening in La Joya ISD classrooms for you to be proud of, the investigation report makes clear that the school board responsible for governing the school district has been plagued by systemic governance issues that have undermined the hard work of the district's students and staff. The investigation concluded that the district's school board violated multiple laws by, among other things, misusing public resources and failing to properly oversee the management of the district. The report further concluded that those violations enabled criminal behavior to occur that resulted in two former La Joya ISD board members and three former district administrators pleading guilty to federal crimes last year.

Nevertheless, before a Board of Managers can formally be appointed, due process under state law is afforded to the district. First, the district's school board exercised its right to appeal the TEA recommendation, and that appeal is scheduled to be considered by an administrative law judge (ALJ) at a hearing that will occur later this summer. The ALJ will then make findings, and those findings will be presented to the Commissioner to make a final decision. The Board of Managers cannot be appointed until after the Commissioner makes his final decision, and then only if the Commissioner determines that the ALJ's findings support the replacement of the school board with a Board of Managers.

The Commissioner has not made a final decision and will evaluate the ALJ's findings before issuing a final decision.

However, to ensure that TEA is prepared to support the community should the Commissioner ultimately decide to appoint a Board of Managers, the TEA Division of Sanction Monitoring will be initiating a process to recruit prospective members of a Board of Managers. That process will begin with an online application available at www.tea.texas.gov/LaJoya. The application will close on August 13, and applicants will then be required to attend a Lone Star Governance training on August 19 and 20 and participate in at least one interview before final selections will be made.

TEA will be holding two community meetings later this month to present additional details and answer community questions about the recruitment process. More details are also available at www.tea.texas.gov/LaJoya. TEA will not, however, answer questions regarding the pending hearing in front of the ALJ, as the matter is ongoing.

Additionally, should the Commissioner ultimately decide to appoint a Board of Managers, state law also permits him to appoint a new superintendent. Accordingly, a process will also be initiated to recruit prospective superintendent candidates should the Commissioner decide to appoint a new superintendent.

TEA is committed to a fair and transparent process that benefits all students in La Joya ISD, and the agency looks forward to engaging with the community. Thank you for your support of and dedication to the students of La Joya ISD district. If you have any questions, feel free to email boardofmanagers@tea.texas.gov.

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