



Proposed Expansion of CLEAR Public Charter School – Considerations for Local Communities

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Purpose and Process

- **Purpose:** The material herein has been prepared to help educate local communities regarding the State's potential approval of CLEAR Public Charter School ("CLEAR"), a privately operated charter requesting to locate a K-8 campus in San Marcos.
- **"Charters"** are privately managed organizations that are approved by the State to simultaneously operate taxpayer funded schools inside school districts.
- **Approval Process:** The Texas Education Agency ("TEA") coordinates the approval process for new privately managed charters, with validation by the State Board of Education. The State does not request input from local parents, taxpayers and stakeholders.

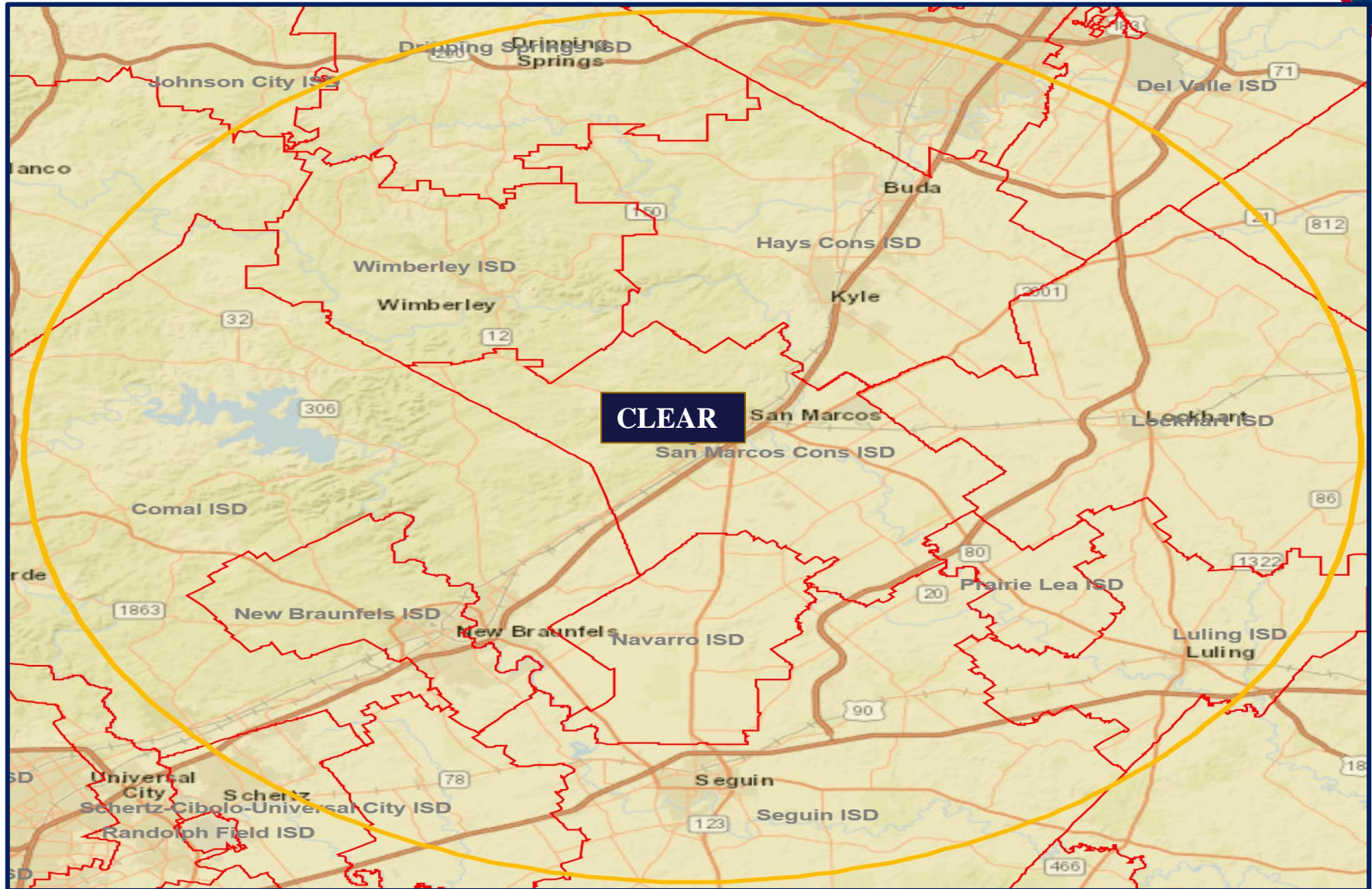
CLEAR Public Charter School: Overview

- **General:** CLEAR Public Charter School is a start-up charter that desires to open an initial K-8 campus for 896 students to serve San Marcos and surrounding communities.
- **Stated Need:** “In San Marcos, Lockhart, Prairie Lea and Luling, most of the nearly 10,600 elementary and middle school students are attending schools performing below state average when comparing STAAR state average scores to local ISD's scores”.
- **CLEAR: Community, Leadership, Empowerment, Achievement and Resiliency**
- **Educational Model:** CLEAR will offer a personalized learning model that supports individualized learning and growth for all students. The key design elements of this model include 'Fostering a Community of Learners' (FCL), a research-based teaching and learning pedagogy, mastery-based progression and multi-year looping.
- **History:** CLEAR initially applied for a State charter in 2019, but it was not awarded. The primary changes within CLEAR's 2020 charter application relates to the addition of Board members that have prior experience with charter schools in Texas.

CLEAR: Leadership

- **Dr. Jason Harris – Superintendent:** Educator at Austin Achieve Public Schools, Former Principal at Hallettsville Elementary, Teacher at YES PREP and IDEA, Air Force Veteran.
- **Mrs. Ginny Janaki – Chief Operating Officer:** Reading Interventionist at Austin Achieve Public Schools, Former Assistant Principal at Hallettsville Elementary and Teacher
- **Mr. Jeremy Jones - Board President:** The Learning Accelerator, Managing Partner – Schools & Systems Strategy, TEA Contractor/Consultant – Effective Schools Framework, Founding Executive Director – Democracy Prep SB 1882 Partnership with San Antonio ISD, YES Prep, Achievement School District – Tennessee
- **Mr. George Helfenstine – Board Member:** Founder, Noble Educational Leadership to Facilitate TEA’s Effective School Framework and Assistant Principal at Wayside Schools.
- **Ms. Abbey Carnes – Board Member:** Director of Marketing/Sales at Ozona National Bank.
- **Mr. Todd Armstrong – Board Member:** Director of Technology/IT Manager, North Zulch ISD, Lindsay ISD, Hallettsville ISD and Horizon Montessori.
- **Terry Clearley-Key – Board Member:** Senior Lecturer, Texas State University
- **Ms. Molly Rosas-Garcia – Board Member:** Community Activist
- **Mr. Lance Kruse – Board Member:** Commercial Lender, Ozona National Bank
- **Ms. Maggie Moreno – Board Member:** Justice of the Peace

CLEAR: Proposed Location – 120 Stagecoach Trail



Targeted School Districts for Enrollment

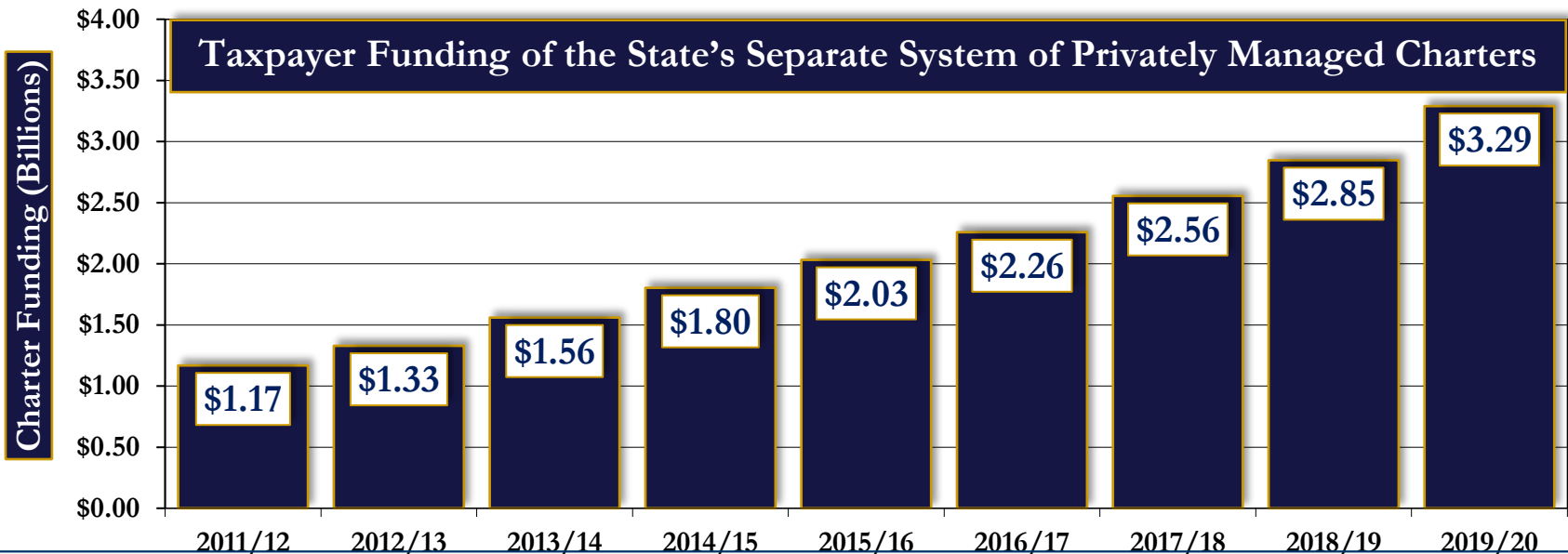
Targeted School Districts -Academic Ratings

School District	State Academic Rating
Comal ISD	A (92)
Hays CISD	B (84)
Lockhart ISD	C (78)
Luling ISD	C (73)
Prairie Lea ISD	C (79)
Navarro ISD	A (91)
New Braunfels ISD	B (89)
San Marcos CISD	C (77)
Seguin ISD	C (72)
Wimberley ISD	A (92)

Despite the unique needs of each community, every school district within CLEAR's proposed enrollment boundary has an acceptable State academic rating and 3 school districts have an "A" rating.

Financial Impact

- **Charter Funding Process:** The State funds its separate system of charters by recapturing taxpayer funding from locally governed school districts and redistributing it to the privately managed charters it has approved.
- **Annual Charter Funding:** In 2019/20, charters were provided \$3.2 billion of taxpayer funding.
- **CLEAR Funding:** CLEAR is estimated to reduce the annual funding of school districts by over \$60 million over the next 10 years.



Concern: CLEAR Is Unlikely to Enroll Students at Low-Performing Campuses

- CLEAR cited certain “low-performing” school district campuses within its application to demonstrate the need for its charter. However, CLEAR also stated that it will recruit students from the 10 school districts previously referenced (see page 6).
- Based upon the comparison of student populations within the table below, CLEAR is unlikely to enroll many students from the “low-performing” school district campuses cited to demonstrate the need for another charter.
 - ✓ “At Risk” students at the school district campuses are as high as 89.3% - CLEAR is 55%.
 - ✓ “ELL” students at Strawn Elementary is 69.4% - CLEAR is 12.0%.
 - ✓ “Student Mobility” is 21.1% at Travis Elementary.

Comparison of Low-Performing Campuses and CLEAR (Proposed)

Campus	State Academic Rating	Economically - Disadvantaged	At Risk	ELL	Special Education	Student Mobility
Travis Elementary	F	84.4%	67.3%	10.6%	10.4%	21.1%
Strawn Elementary	F	85.3%	89.3%	69.4%	8.9%	17.5%
Gerdes Junior High	F	70.6%	74.8%	16.3%	11.8%	11.3%
CLEAR (Proposed)	--	74.2%	55.0%	12.0%	9.0%	--

Concern: Co-Founders – Limited Academic Success in Administrative Roles

- Prior to pursuing the approval of CLEAR, the administrative school experience of the Co-Founders included roles as the Principal and Assistant Principal of Hallettsville Elementary in 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- **In 2017/18, Hallettsville Elementary had an Overall rating of “C” (70), an “F” (56) rating for Academic Growth and an “F” (54) rating for Closing the Gaps as summarized in the table below.**

Hallettsville Elementary – 2017/18 State Ratings

Description	Rating
Overall Rating	C (70)
Student Achievement	C (77)
Academic Growth	F (56)
Relative Performance	C (75)
Closing the Gaps	F (54)
Distinctions	None

Concern: Board Member - Lack of Academic Success at Charters

- The CLEAR Board President launched an SB 1882 Agreement to allow Democracy Prep to operate Stewart Elementary in San Antonio ISD, beginning in 2018/19.
- Serving as the State appointed “District Coordinator for School Improvement”, the SB 1882 Charter partnership resulted in a “D” or “F” rating in every category in 2018/19, including an “F” (51) rating for Student Achievement and an “F” (53) rating for Relative Performance as shown in the table below.

Democracy Prep SB 1882 Results - Stewart Elementary	
Description	2018/19 Rating
Overall Rating	D (61)
Student Achievement	F (51)
Academic Growth	D (60)
Relative Performance	F (53)
Closing the Gaps	D (64)
Distinctions	None

Concern: Board Member – Limited Academic Success at Charters

- Another CLEAR Board member is an Assistant Principal at Wayside Schools that is responsible for supervising and evaluating the math, science and engineering/computer science departments.
- As shown in the table below, the highest academic rating of Wayside Public Schools in 2018/19 was a “C” (76) and its Academic Growth rating was a “D” (60).

Wayside Public Schools – State Academic Ratings	
Description	2018/19 Rating
Overall Rating	C (76)
Student Achievement	C (76)
Academic Growth	D (60)
Relative Performance	C (76)
Closing the Gaps	C (76)
Distinctions	None

Concern: Multi-Year Looping Will Not Be Applicable to 45% of Students

- A key component of CLEAR's education model relates to the "Multi-Year Looping" of teachers and students for 2 consecutive years. In other words, students will have the same teacher for science, math, etc. for 2 years.
- However, the average teacher turnover rate for charters in Texas is 29.8% and the average student mobility rate at San Marcos CISD is 16.1%.
- Based upon these facts, during every 2-year looping period 11 of 36 teachers will change due to turnover and the student population will change by 144 students due to student mobility. As a result, "Multi-Year Looping" will not be applicable to an estimated 400 students or 45% of CLEAR's expected enrollment during each 2-year cycle.
 - Turnover of 11 Teachers X 24 Students per Class = 264 Students
 - Student Mobility Changes Student Population = 144 Students
 - Students that Multi-Year Looping is Not Applicable = 400 Students

Disclosures: It's Your Students, Schools, Tax Dollars and Community

This material was prepared by William J. Gumbert, a voluntary advocate for public education. The material was assembled to provide local communities with information relating to the proposed expansion of CLEAR Public Charter School to help them determine the most appropriate public education system for their communities. No compensation has been provided for the preparation of this material. The contents herein are based upon information provided by CLEAR's charter application, Texas Education Agency, Txschools.gov, and other publicly available information. While the author believes these sources to be reliable, the author has not independently verified the information.

The opinions expressed herein are solely the opinions of the author. All readers are encouraged to complete their own review of the proposed expansion of CLEAR and make their own independent conclusions.