

[http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/editorials/stories/DN-tstem\\_1025edi.State.Edition1.331d069.html](http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/editorials/stories/DN-tstem_1025edi.State.Edition1.331d069.html)

## Editorial: Perry on the mark on T-STEM expansion

07:23 PM CDT on Friday, October 23, 2009

What do you know? A real, live idea has emerged in the Republican race for governor. Instead of the hourly whack-the-opponent news releases from the Rick Perry and Kay Bailey Hutchison campaigns, Perry recently announced plans to double the number of T-STEM academies across the state.

Growing out of the Texas High School Project, T-STEM is a program aimed at getting more Texas students interested in science, technology, engineering and math. Since we often discuss the importance of those subjects here, we won't go into detail about why they matter.

Rather, here's why the governor is right: There is a growing body of evidence that these academies, which can operate as schools within a school, are producing desirable results. We have at least four examples in North Texas:

- Berkner High School in Richardson has a T-STEM academy, and, among other things, the school touts one of its students as having won a prestigious statewide math contest. Part of the success is due to the project focus Berkner uses in leading students toward a hands-on feel for science, math, technology and engineering. And the teaching at Berkner is drawing notice. Texas Instruments recently inducted a Berkner T-STEM teacher into its academy for recognized math and science instructors.
- R.L. Turner High School in Carrollton-Farmers Branch also has a T-STEM academy. Like Berkner, Turner's program uses project-based learning and draws heavily from first-year teachers, who come to these subjects fresh.

That's probably one reason Perry wants to recruit more young science and math teachers. He also proposes expanding across the state the U-Teach program, which the University of Texas at Austin created to entice college students into considering careers as math and science teachers.

- Conrad High School, in North Dallas' Vickery Meadows neighborhood, has an academy, too. What caught our eye is that 97 percent of Conrad's students are Latino or African-American. And its academy is showing impressive results, including 95 percent of its ninth-graders passing Algebra I, far higher than a typical Texas high school.
- Williams Preparatory Academy in northwest Dallas serves a similar population. And the charter school's T-STEM program is working with nearby UT-Southwestern to engage its students in these subjects.

Williams' collaboration is a perfect example of how these academies open students to the career possibilities these critical subjects offer. And as the governor noted in his proposal for putting \$160 million into them in the next Legislature, they are succeeding. Texas has given close to 90 percent of T-STEM schools an exemplary or recognized rating, the top two ratings in the state accountability system.

Score one for the governor for introducing a serious idea into the campaign. And score an even bigger one for T-STEM academies. They deserve this boost. Berkner High School, Richardson

R.L. Turner High School, Carrollton-Farmers

Branch

Conrad High School, Dallas

Williams Preparatory Academy, Dallas

Harmony School of Nature, Dallas

Irving T-Stem Academy, Irving