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### **Coalition to lobby state Legislature on bolstering education standards**

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AUSTIN -- A coalition of business groups and research organizations on Thursday said they planned to urge lawmakers next year to improve education standards to ensure that students are ready for college and work after graduation. "Career- or college-ready is the standard we are pushing for," said Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association for Business and spokesman for the **Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce**.

Hammond said the coalition would encourage lawmakers to reform school accountability standards to measure whether students are improving each year on the path to college or the workplace.

Too many students, Hammond said, drop out of Texas schools. And many of those who graduate need remedial classes in college and aren't prepared to meet employers' demands.

The coalition also will urge legislators to improve career and technology education programs and to give incentive pay to teachers whose students show improvement from one year to the next.

Carlos Martinez, director of community and governmental relations at El Paso Independent School District, said officials there have been working with the business community to meet local work-force needs.

Measures the coalition recommended, he said, would improve the district's ability to ensure that graduates are prepared for higher education or to start a career.

But, he said, the state must pay for measures such as teacher incentives.

"These recommendations that they're making are great," Martinez said. "Now, it's up to the Legislature to follow up."

Richard Dayoub, president of the Greater El Paso Chamber of

Commerce, said the recommendations are a good start but not the entire solution to problems in Texas' education system.

The business and education communities, he said, must first agree on what standards students should meet, and then schools must have the resources to achieve those goals.

"To get there, we need to look at a multitude of varying solutions that are adaptable to various communities and cultures that exist there," he said.

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