

# Star-Telegram

## Fort Worth arts academy named one of state's best high schools, but Fort Worth district schools rank low

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The Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts charter school is one of the highest-ranked high schools in the state, while most Fort Worth district schools ranked near the bottom, according to a new report from a Houston-based nonprofit.

The Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts, operated by the Texas Boys Choir, ranked sixth in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and 11th statewide. The school opened in 2001 and enrolls students in third through 12th grade based solely on an audition process.

"We battle the preconceived notion that because we are a charter school or because we're fine arts we're not strong academically when just the opposite is true," Principal Craig Shreckengast said. "We have a high number of students in [Advanced Placement] courses who go on to go to the top colleges in the nation."

Other top-rated Tarrant County high schools included Colleyville Heritage, 13th in the area, Grapevine, 14th, and Keller, 18th.

The Children At Risk group analyzed 902 high schools statewide, including 158 in North Texas. The report looked at data from the 2007-08 school year and earlier, using performance measures including graduation rates, participation in advanced classes and performance on college entrance exams.

Not all area high schools were ranked because of the methodology used to calculate rankings. Schools with no freshman classes, such as Carroll Senior High and L.D. Bell High, and those not open during the 2003-04 school year, such as Mansfield Legacy, were not included.

Most of the high-ranking schools had low percentages of minority and poor students. The exceptions were the Dallas school district's magnet programs: Its School of Science and Engineering and School for Talented and Gifted ranked first and second, respectively, in local and statewide rankings. Traditional public high schools in the top 10 were Highland Park, fourth, and Coppell, eighth.

Robert Sanborn, president of Children At Risk, said the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts and Dallas' magnet schools are further proof that smaller, focused schools work best. The arts academy has 418 students.

"We know how to do urban schools right in America," he said. "Those doing well are small learning communities that have a theme focus. . . . At the bottom of the lists are big urban campuses" that have a harder time keeping students engaged.

Most of the Fort Worth district's high schools rank toward the bottom of the statewide list. Among the lowest-rated schools were South Hills, Polytechnic, O.D. Wyatt and Eastern Hills, which was third-lowest in the state.

The district began a redesign of middle and high schools two years ago that includes having smaller learning teams within campuses.

**In the middle school rankings, the Fort Worth Harmony Science Academy charter school was the only Tarrant County school in the area's top 20, coming in at No. 15.**

How they ranked The Children At Risk group evaluated 158 high schools in North Texas and 902 statewide, looking at various measures including graduation rates, participation in advanced classes and performance on college entrance exams.

Local rank	School	District	State rank
6	Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts	charter	11
13	Colleyville Heritage	Grapevine-Colleyville	32
14	Grapevine	Grapevine-Colleyville	35
18	Keller	Keller	46
26	Martin	Arlington	84
29	Birdville	Birdville	116
31	Paschal	Fort Worth	127
33	Central	Keller	144
36	Richland	Birdville	160
48	Lamar	Arlington	219
52	North Crowley	Crowley	238
53	Summit	Mansfield	267
54	Northwest	Northwest	278

59	Boswell	Eagle Mountain-Saginaw	300
60	Arlington	Arlington	314
62	Mansfield	Mansfield	317
66	Arlington Heights	Fort Worth	341
67	Fossil Ridge	Keller	345
72	Azle	Azle	381
74	Burleson	Burleson	398
76	Kennedale	Kennedale	419
86	Lake Worth	Lake Worth	453
88	Crowley	Crowley	457
92	Southwest	Fort Worth	484
98	Western Hills	Fort Worth	520
103	Bowie	Arlington	583
106	Haltom	Birdville	621
109	Trimble Tech	Fort Worth	642
115	Castleberry	Castleberry	698
118	Brewer	White Settlement	705
134	Sam Houston	Arlington	807
135	Everman	Everman	809
137	Diamond Hill-Jarvis	Fort Worth	813
138	Carter-Riverside	Fort Worth	814
141	Dunbar	Fort Worth	827
147	North Side	Fort Worth	853
152	South Hills	Fort Worth	877
153	Polytechnic	Fort Worth	887
154	O.D. Wyatt	Fort Worth	891
157	Eastern Hills	Fort Worth	900

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