

April 19, 2010

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: New testing and accelerated instruction requirements under the Student Success Initiative

This letter provides districts with important information on changes to the Student Success Initiative (SSI), a state law designed to ensure that all students receive the instruction and support they need to be academically successful in mathematics and reading. In 2009, through the enactment of House Bill 3, the 81st Texas Legislature made significant changes to the SSI, including the following:

- The grade 3 advancement requirements related to testing were eliminated. Students in grade 3 are no longer required to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading test to be promoted to grade 4.
- Beginning in spring 2010, the SSI grade advancement requirements apply only to the TAKS mathematics and reading tests at grades 5 and 8. **If a student does not demonstrate proficiency on one or both of these tests, the student may advance to or be placed in the next grade level only if (1) he or she completes all accelerated instruction required by the grade placement committee (GPC), and (2) the GPC determines, by unanimous decision, that the student is likely to perform at grade level at the end of the next school year given additional accelerated instruction during the course of the year.** In making promotion decisions, the GPC is required to consider the recommendation of the student's teacher, the student's grades, the student's TAKS scores, and any other relevant academic information.
- School districts are required to provide accelerated instruction to all students who do not demonstrate proficiency on TAKS. Whether they are in an SSI grade (grade 5 or 8) on a non-SSI grade (grades 3, 4, 6, or 7), students who do not meet the standard on TAKS must receive appropriate instructional intervention so that they will be able to make the academic progress necessary to do on-grade-level work at the next grade. Accelerated instruction may require participation by the student before or after normal school hours and may include participation at times of the year outside normal school operations.
- An eligible student who enrolls in a school district or charter school on any day between January 1 and the date of the first administration of the grade advancement assessments is subject to all of the SSI grade advancement requirements, including automatic retention. An eligible student who enrolls after the date of the first administration of the grade advancement assessments is not subject to the grade advancement requirements but must receive the opportunity to test and have access to required accelerated instruction.
- School districts must ensure that **any** student who fails to demonstrate proficiency in TAKS mathematics or reading completes required accelerated instruction before being promoted or placed in the next grade, and, when promoted to the next grade level, receives instruction in that subsequent grade from a teacher who meets all state and federal qualifications to teach that subject and grade. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a highly qualified teacher as one who has obtained a full state teacher certification or has passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state; holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject-area competence in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches.

The amended Commissioner's Rules Concerning Grade Advancement and Accelerated Instruction appear at the following page on the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) web site: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter101/ch101bb.html>. In addition, TEA is currently revising the *Grade Placement Committee Manual* to reflect these statutory changes. The updated manual will be posted by April 23 at the following page on TEA's web site: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3230&menu_id=793#manual.

If you have questions about any of this information, please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Assessment Contact Information

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