2017 Texas State Plan: Nomination of National Blue Ribbon Schools

Texas will participate in the Blue Ribbon School (BRS) Program of 2017 by nominating schools in the high performing category but not in the closing-the-achievement-gap category. The following provides an overview of the assessment and accountability systems in Texas and how the Texas nominees will be chosen.

Content Areas Included in State Assessment

In spring 2016, the Texas assessment program tested in the following content areas and courses in grades 3–8 and high school:

- Grades 3–8 mathematics and reading
- Grades 4 and 7 writing
- Grades 5 and 8 science
- Grade 8 social studies
- Algebra I
- Biology
- English I and II
- U.S. History

Content Areas Included in the Federal Accountability System

The assessment results for 2016 included in the indicators used for federal accountability include the following STAAR grade-level assessments administered to students in grades 3–8 and the following STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessment results for all EOC assessments administered to students enrolled in English I, English II, and Algebra I:

- STAAR grades 3–8 mathematics and reading
- STAAR EOC Algebra I
- STAAR EOC English I and II

Other Indicators Included in the Accountability System

In addition to performance rates, the other indicators in the federal accountability system are participation rates, graduation rates, and limits on use of alternative assessments (districts only). The performance rates, participation rates, and graduation rates were calculated on seven student groups: all students, three racial/ethnic groups (African American, Hispanic, and White), economically disadvantaged students, students receiving special education services, and English language learners (ELLs).

The Use of Assessments and Other Indicators in Holding Schools Accountable

The federal system safeguards are designed to meet federal accountability requirements by requiring all campuses and districts to meet ambitious, but achievable, annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for each student group evaluated. Performance rates, participation rates, graduation rates, and limits on use of STAAR Alternate are calculated to meet federal requirements, and federal targets have been set for these indicators. Failure to meet the safeguard target for any reported subgroup must be addressed in the campus or district improvement plan.

The federal system safeguards apply the same AMO targets to all districts and campuses, including charter districts and alternative education campuses. Alternative education campuses that primarily serve at-risk students have modified performance index targets for state accountability rating labels only, yet these campuses must meet the same performance, participation, and federal graduation rate targets that are required for all Texas school districts and campuses.

> Federal Performance Rate Targets: Uniform federal performance rate targets are applied to seven student groups in the reading/English language arts and mathematics subject areas. The seven student groups evaluated are all students, African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, students receiving special education services, and English language learners. The AMOs were 87% for every student group in 2015–16 in reading/ELA and mathematics per the waiver in effect through the 2015–16 school year.

> Federal Participation Rate Targets: Participation rate targets of 95% are applied to the seven student groups evaluated for performance in the reading/English language arts and mathematics subject areas. The seven student groups evaluated are all students, African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, students receiving special education services, and English language learners.

> Federal Graduation Rate Targets: The long term statewide goal for Texas for the four-year graduation rate is 90.0 percent. High schools and school districts that do not meet the 90.0 percent graduation-rate goal must meet either an annual target or a growth target for the four-year graduation rate or an annual target for the five-year graduation rate. The seven student groups evaluated are all students, African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, students receiving special education services, and English language learners.

> Four-Year Graduation Rate Annual Target: For 2016 accountability determinations, 88% of students graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years.

> Four-Year Graduation Rate Growth Target: The growth target is a 10% decrease in the difference between prior year graduation rate and the 90.0 percent goal.

> Five-Year Graduation Rate Target: For 2016 accountability determinations, 90% of students graduate with a regular high school diploma in five years.

The Measurement of Achievement Gaps

Since a uniform set of AMOs is applied to each student group, underperforming student groups must demonstrate significantly higher rates of progress in order to eliminate the achievement gap between these student groups and all other student groups by 2020.

The all-students group does not have a minimum size requirement. For all student subgroups, with the exception of all students, one of the following minimum size requirements is used in measuring achievement gaps:

- For each subject, there are test results for 25 or more students in the student group (summed across all grades), and the student group comprises at least 10% of all test takers in the subject.
- There are test results for 200 or more students in the student group, even if that group represents less than 10% of all test takers in the subject.

Elements of Ranking Schools

Schools will be ranked together, regardless of grade configuration, based on combined performance in reading and math across all grades tested, which will be measured by the percentage of proficient students. In grades nine and ten, rankings will include performance in writing, as well.

After the exclusions described above, Texas BRS nominees will be chosen from the top 1% (all student performance in reading/English language arts and mathematics) of campuses based on the following, in priority order:

- *Graduation rates
- All students' performance in reading/English language arts and mathematics
- Student group performance in reading/English language arts and mathematics

Subgroups, configured separately, are defined as all students, African American, White, Hispanic, English language learners (ELLs), students receiving special education services, and students considered economically disadvantaged. Schools will *not* be eliminated from the ranking process based solely on the size of subgroups, though subgroup size may be a factor if further decision-making is required after schools are ranked.

*Texas is required by state statute to use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) graduation rate calculation. In May 2010, the USDE approved the graduation rate calculations, goal, and targets for Texas following the graduation rate peer review, as required by the October 2008 Title I regulations. The four-year graduation rates follow a cohort of first-time ninth graders through their expected graduation three years later. The five-year rates follow the same cohort of students for one additional year. For the 2016 federal accountability determinations, the four-year graduation rate is based on the Class of 2015 longitudinal graduation rates, and the five-year graduation rate is based on the Class of 2014 longitudinal graduation rates.

Specific Methodology of Ranking Schools

To develop the cohort of campuses used for ranking schools in Texas, we complete the following steps prior to ranking:

1. Exclude campuses with enrollment of fewer than 100 students.
2. Exclude campuses testing fewer than 10 students in the state assessments for reading or math in one or more tested grades.
3. Exclude campuses that received the National Blue Ribbon award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.

Ranking Schools

Step I. Combined reading (or reading/English language arts) and math performance across all grades tested as measured by the percentage of proficient students:
1. Calculate 15% of the total number of campuses.
2. Determine reading (or reading/English language arts) and math performance by taking each campus's total number across all grades tested of reading (or reading/English language arts) and math tests passed divided by the total number of reading (or reading/English language arts) and math tests taken. The minimum size requirement is 25 tests across all grade levels for both reading and math. If either value is less than 25, the percentage of proficient students is not calculated for that campus.
3. Rank the resulting figure, which represents the percentage of proficient students for reading (or reading/English language arts) and math performance for all students, from highest to lowest achievement.
4. Using the figure calculated in Step 1 above, determine the 15% of campuses with the highest percentage of proficient students in reading and math.

Step II. Graduation rates:
1. Identify all secondary campuses with a graduation rate.
2. Calculate 15% of the total number of secondary campuses with a graduation rate.
3. Using the 2016 four- and/or five-year graduation rates do as follows:
   o For campus with a 2016 four- and five-year graduation rate, sum the respective numerators and denominators of both graduation rates and divide to get a combined rate.
   o For campuses with only one (1) graduation rate, use the graduation rate that is available.
4. Rank order the graduation rates for all campuses from highest to lowest. The minimum-size requirement is 10 students for the four- and five-year graduation rate denominators. If either value is less than 10, graduation rate is not evaluated for that campus.
5. Using the figure calculated in Step 2 above, determine the 15% of campuses with the highest graduation rates.

Step III. Subgroup performance in reading and math:
1. Calculate 40% of the total number of campuses.
2. Determine reading (or reading/English language arts) and math performance by taking each campus's total number of reading (or reading/English language arts) and math tests passed

divided by the total number of reading (or reading/English language arts) and math tests taken for each subgroup (African American, White, Hispanic, English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students considered economically disadvantaged). The minimum size requirement is met in one of the following ways:

- For each subject, 25 or more students in the student group (summed across all grades) if the student group comprises at least 10% of all test takers in the subject
- Test results for 200 or more students in the student group even if that group represents less than 10% of all test takers in the subject

3. Rank the resulting figure, which represents the percentage of proficient students for reading (or reading/English language arts) and math performance for all students, from highest to lowest achievement.
4. Using the figure calculated in Step 1 above, determine the 40% of campuses with the highest percentage of proficient students in reading (or reading/English language arts) and math for all subgroups.

In order to be considered for Blue Ribbon School nomination, elementary and middle schools have to appear on both lists generated through Steps I and III above. In order to be considered for Blue Ribbon School nomination, high schools have to appear on all three lists generated through the steps described above.

Final Considerations

After establishing the list of schools to be considered through the steps outlined above, the following schools will be eliminated from the consideration list:

- Schools that are not Title I schools.
- Schools offering grade 7 or higher that do not teach languages other than English
- Schools that have not been in existence for five full years, from at least September 2011
- Schools in which tested grades have not been part of the school for at least the past three years
- Schools that do not meet the TEA-established threshold of low-income students served (threshold to be determined; 2016 threshold was 20%)
- Schools that did not meet AMO/AYP requirements the previous year
- Schools that do not meet any one or more of the additional BRS requirements