

February 28, 2013

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202-6100

SUBJECT: Request for Waiver under P.L. 107-110, Section 9401
to Reduce Duplication and Unnecessary Burden on the SEA and LEAs

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is requesting that the U. S. Department of Education (USDE) waive specific provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by P.L. 107-110 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The waiver requests are submitted under NCLB's Section 9401 waiver authority and would give TEA and more than 1,200 local education agencies (LEAs) additional flexibility while reducing duplication.

Our state's educational system is aligned with the three principles outlined in your provisional waiver application. We are hopeful that you and your staff will recognize the potential gains that Texas schools and students could make by better aligning the federal and state systems.

Texas has been a national leader in the college- and career-readiness movement. We were the first state to develop and implement college and career readiness curriculum standards, the first state to assess those standards, and we will be the first to implement an accountability system to hold schools accountable for preparing students for post-secondary success.

Independent of federal requirements, Texas has developed and begun full implementation of a statewide system that surpasses the requirements of the ESEA statute. Specifically, three years ago, the state completed full implementation of the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards. This year, we are transitioning to a consolidated, differentiated accountability and interventions system with tiered interventions beginning in school year 2013-2014. Upon approval of this waiver request, Texas would have a single, differentiated accountability system. This differentiated accountability system is based on the state's rigorous new assessment program, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

Texas also continues to build upon its rigorous teacher certification system that is working to improve teacher and principal accountability to ensure high quality teaching and learning for all students.

Despite Texas' progress on these fronts, the failure of Congress to reauthorize ESEA has forced LEAs to operate within two (and at times conflicting) accountability and intervention systems while taking valuable resources and time away from focusing on improving student achievement. The federal requirements and guidelines of ESEA have become an obsolete system that does not adequately reflect the performance of the state's schools. For example:

- More graduates in the Class of 2012 scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam than took AP Exams in 2002.
- Based on the U.S. Department of Education's new graduation rate calculation, Texas tied for the third highest high school graduation rate in the country for all students and ranks number one in graduation rates for Asian, African-American, and white students.
- In 2011, every major ethnic group of Texas students significantly outscored their peers nationally on the eighth grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test, and Texas Hispanic and African-American students earning the second highest score on the eighth-grade mathematics test.
- Annual undergraduate degrees and certificates awarded to Hispanics have increased by 150% since 2000.

Therefore, to further support the implementation of Texas' College and Career Readiness Standards; assessment and accountability system; accountability intervention system; and teacher certification and principal accountability systems, I am requesting a waiver of the following statutory provisions to reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on TEA and LEAs:

1. Title I School Improvement Funds at LEA Level

Section 1003(a) requiring TEA to reserve 4% of its Title I, Part A allocation for school improvement activities and to distribute 95% to LEAs for use in Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, and restructuring.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to distribute 95%, of the 4% reservation, to Title I schools identified as priority, focus, or support schools and for systemic improvement at the LEA level to support the identified schools. Current regulations prohibit the use of any Title I School Improvement Program funds at the LEA level.

2. Accountability System

Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(E-H) defining the calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), establishing of annual measurable objectives (performance targets) for AYP, 100% proficiency by the end of 2013-2014, and implementation of the respective requirements specified in Sections 1111 and 1116 and Section 1116(a)(1)(A-B) requiring the LEAs to make AYP determinations for schools.

Specifically, I am requesting a waiver of the federal Accountability Performance Targets/Standards Setting Procedures to allow TEA to replace the current AYP calculations and performance targets with the state's robust accountability rating system. Our system meets the intent and purposes of the ESEA statute which would allow the state's existing systems of reform and interventions to guide the support and improvement of teaching and learning.

3. Support and Intervention

Section 1116(b) requiring the LEA to identify schools for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring with corresponding requirements for implementation.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to identify schools for graduated levels of support and intervention based on the state accountability system rather than using the current AYP regulations.

4. Implementation of a Single Intervention System

Section 1116(b)(1)(E) and (e) and all corresponding provisions requiring the LEA to offer, in a federally prescriptive manner, school choice for schools for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring with corresponding requirements for implementation, and Section 1116(e) requiring the federally prescriptive implementation of supplemental educational services under Section 1116(b)(5, 7, and 8).

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to use improvement activities better aligned to the state's accountability and intervention systems.

5. State Accountability System

Section 1116(c) requiring TEA to make determinations of AYP for LEAs and identify LEAs for improvement and corrective action with corresponding requirements for implementation.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver so that TEA may identify LEAs based upon school performance using the state accountability system rather than current AYP regulations.

6. Statewide System of Support

Section 1117 requiring TEA to establish a single statewide system of support.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver so that TEA may continue to support schools through our state's system of intervention without the duplicative work required under the current federal statutory regulations.

7. Teacher Certification

Section 1119 requiring TEA and LEAs to determine highly qualified teacher (HQT) determinations and reporting, and Section 2141(a, b, and c) requiring improvement planning and intervention requirements.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to rely solely on the state's rigorous teacher certification standards, which are supported by the state's educator evaluation system.

8. Small, Rural and Low-Income Schools

Sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) requiring TEA to limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds to use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA meets state accountability targets.

9. Intervention Regardless of Poverty Percentage

Section 1114(a)(1) requiring that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a schoolwide program.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow an LEA to implement schoolwide interventions in any of its support, focus, or priority schools, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.

10. Reward Schools

Section 1117(c)(2)(A) allowing TEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to use funds reserved under this section for any school that the state determines to be a reward school.

11. Funding Transferability

Section 6123 that limits the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs under the Funding Transferability provision.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA and LEAs to transfer up to 100 percent of authorized program funds between those funds and into Title I, Part A.

12. School Improvement Grant

Section 1003(g)(4) and the definition of a Tier I school in Section I.A.3 of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) final requirements.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow TEA to award TTIPS SIG funds to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any of the schools that the state determines are priority schools.

13. 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow 21st CCLC funds to be used to support learning time during the school day to meet the identified needs of students, in addition to activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.

14. Rank Ordering of Priority Schools

Section 1113(a)(3-4) and (c)(1) requiring an LEA to serve eligible schools under Title I, Part A in rank order of poverty and to allocate Title I, Part A funds based on that rank ordering.

Specifically, I am requesting this waiver to allow LEAs to serve a Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent that TEA has identified as a priority school even if that school does not otherwise rank sufficiently high to be served under section 1113.

We appreciate your consideration of our requests and look forward to working with you. If you have any questions or want further information, please contact Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds, Chief Deputy Commissioner, at Lizzette.Reynolds@tea.state.tx.us or (512) 463-9451.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".

Michael L. Williams
Commissioner of Education

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Notice of Intent to Apply for Waiver Under Section 9401
2. Committee of Practitioners Agenda and Comments received from LEAs and Other Stakeholders
3. Texas Register Notice
4. Texas College and Career Readiness Standards
5. Project Share
6. Graduation Credit Requirements for Student Entering Ninth Grade Beginning in 2012-2013
7. 2013 Accountability System Development Process
8. Accountability Workbook
9. Campus Intervention Matrix
10. Creating Sustainable Transformation
11. Teacher Appraisal Advisory Committee Members

Consultation and Public Input

Because the Texas Education Agency is requesting these waivers based on educational reform efforts already completed and currently implemented, the agency was, and/or still is, consulting and seeking meaningful input throughout the design/implementation process. Reference to educator, diverse community, and other stakeholder input are embedded throughout this document and attachments. Additional supporting documentation regarding all public and stakeholder input can be made available upon request of the Department/reviewers.

Texas assures that it has provided all LEAs in the State with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on this request. Texas provided such notice through a letter to all LEAs posted on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website and disseminated through the TEA "To the Administrator Addressed" electronic mail list server (See Attachment 1) on September 6, 2012. Agency personnel presented and discussed the Intent to Apply for Waivers under Section 9401 with the Committee of Practitioners on September 18, 2012 (See Attachment 2). Texas is also submitting copies of all comments it received from LEAs and other stakeholders from the comment period that closed on September 27, 2012. (See Attachment 2)

Texas has also provided notice and information regarding this waiver request to the public in the manner in which TEA customarily provides such notice and information to the public by posting to the TEA web site and by publishing a notice in the *Texas Register* on September 21, 2012. (See Attachment 3)

Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students

1.A. Adopt college- and career-ready standards

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards

Texas' state education agency (SEA), -- the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the state agency for higher education (SAHE) -- the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board (THECB) have already adopted the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). These Standards have been incorporated into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum content standards. These standards have been fully implemented in Texas LEAs. (See Attachment 4)

The THECB adopted the college readiness standards in January, 2008. The commissioner of education approved the college readiness standards, and the State Board of Education (SBOE) incorporated the CCRS into the English language arts and reading TEKS (2008), the mathematics TEKS (2009), the science TEKS (2009), and the social studies TEKS (2010).

Recognizing the level of rigor of the new curriculum requirements and the need to support the state's new, more rigorous student graduation requirements (which required four years of math, science, social studies and English language arts as the default graduation plan), the Texas Legislature also committed significant funding toward professional development for the new TEKS. As a result, the agency developed and continues to deploy professional development to support the use of diagnostics, data, and technology; CCRS correlations; and student-centered strategies, such as Response to Intervention, Gifted and Talented, as well as the use of English language learner strategies to build student academic language.

During 2011-2012, the cycle of review and revision of TEKS continued with the comprehensive revision of the K-12 mathematics TEKS, which once again raised the bar to ensure the necessary rigor for college and career readiness. The SBOE adopted these new math TEKS in April 2012.

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

The TEKS, codified in Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapters 110-130, became effective in all content areas and grade levels on September 1, 1998. Statute required that the TEKS be used for instruction in the foundation areas of English language arts and reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. TEKS in the enrichment subjects, (including health education, physical education, fine arts, career and technical education, technology applications, and languages other than English) served as guidelines, rather than requirements. In 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature added enrichment subjects to the list of subject areas required to use the TEKS. The state continues to promote rigorous and high standards by:

- facilitating review and revision of the TEKS;
- providing leadership to the regional education service centers (ESCs) as they help LEAs implement the TEKS;
- supporting SBOE adoption of textbooks aligned to the TEKS;
- aligning the statewide assessment, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and now the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), to the TEKS;
- incorporating college readiness standards into the TEKS; and

- providing professional development training for educators that demonstrates alignment between TEKS and CCRS.

1.B: Transition to college- and career-ready standards

In 2006, the 79th Texas Legislature (3rd Called Session) passed House Bill (HB) 1, which became Section 28.008 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) under the title, "Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum." This legislation required that TEA and THECB work collaboratively toward the creation of college and career readiness standards (CCRS). The CCRS reflect what students should know and be able to demonstrate in order to be successful in entry-level college courses.

The statute required the formation of vertical teams (VTs) comprised of secondary and postsecondary faculty from four subject-specific content areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The work of the VTs was organized in three phases. The first phase entailed a number of team meetings to create the CCRS for all four subject areas. The remaining two phases of the project required the four subject-specific VTs to evaluate the high school content standards in relation to the CCRS. Phase two required the VTs to recommend how public school content standards could be aligned with the CCRS, while phase three required the VTs to develop or establish instructional strategies, professional development materials, and online support materials for students who need additional assistance in preparing to successfully perform college-level work.

Online support materials provided through TEA's online portal for Texas teachers (known as Project Share) have been made available to all Texas LEAs. These lessons are aligned to the TEKS and CCRS, are designed to supplement classroom instruction, and provide additional practice for students during and beyond traditional school hours. TEA's online portal (See Project Share - www.projectsharetexas.org and Attachment 5) also provides engaging online resources and support materials for students.

As the state has worked toward college and career readiness, literacy has remained a top priority. The Texas Adolescent Literacy Project was introduced and funded in the 2005 legislative appropriations to develop materials and classroom resources for evaluation, assessment, and intervention with middle school students struggling with reading. Since then, the Texas Legislature has continued to commit significant resources toward the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) to support grades 6-8 teachers in the use of diagnostic instruments and intensive instructional strategies to support proficiency in reading and comprehension for all middle school students. While completing these academies, English language arts teachers received additional training in how to administer and interpret the results of the Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment (TMSFA), an instrument designed to measure key reading skills in middle school students. TMSFA materials and training are available at no cost to LEAs and open-enrollment charter schools that serve middle school students. In addition to the face-to-face trainings, TALA and TMSFA professional development courses are also available through Project Share.

In addition, the agency took the initiative to develop the *Middle-School Students in Texas: Algebra Ready (MSTAR) and Texas Response to Curriculum Focal Points (Grades K-8)* to provide specific guidance to teachers during their mathematics' professional development academies on key "focal points" contained within the mathematics TEKS that target algebra readiness for grades K-8. Beginning in June 2010, professional development academies and resources in mathematics were available in both face-to-face and online environments.

1.C: Develop and administer annual, statewide, aligned, high-quality assessment that measure student growth

State Student Assessment Program

Assessment Transition and Change

In 1979, Texas launched a statewide student assessment program to bring common standards to the measurement of students' academic achievement. From the early Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) to the current STAAR, Texas has steadily increased the rigor, expanded the scope, and raised the performance standards measured on its assessments.

In response to changes in federal and state legislation, the Texas assessment program has also broadened in recent years to better assess the state's diverse student population. Since the inception of TAKS in 2003, the assessment program has evolved to include linguistically accommodated testing for eligible English language learners, English language proficiency measures through the K–12 Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), and two separate assessments for students receiving special education services. The Texas student assessment program includes as many students as possible in the general assessments STAAR while also providing options for alternate assessments for eligible students receiving special education services whose academic achievement and progress cannot be measured appropriately with the general assessments. The alternate assessments for eligible students who receive special education services include STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate and reflect the general STAAR program. TEA has developed Spanish versions of STAAR in grades 3–5 in accordance with state statute. In addition, TEA has developed online versions of STAAR with built-in, standardized linguistic accommodations for eligible ELLs in grades 3–8 and high school.

Starting with operational testing in the 2011–2012 school year, the state's newest assessment program, STAAR, once again raised the bar for Texas education. STAAR represents a more unified, comprehensive assessment program that incorporates more rigorous college and career readiness standards. With the creation of the STAAR assessment program, the Texas Legislature continued its efforts to improve the state's education system using statewide assessments. House Bill 3, as passed by the 81st Texas Legislature in 2009, established one of the most aggressive, and important, education goals for the state by the 2019–2020 school year, Texas is to become one of the top 10 states for graduating college-ready students.

Toward this end, TEA set broad goals for the STAAR assessment program that include the following:

- The performance expectations on STAAR were established such that they raise the bar on student performance to a level where graduating students are postsecondary ready.
- The focus of student performance at high school shifted to end-of-course (EOC) assessments in twelve courses, and those assessments, where appropriate, will be linked to college and career readiness.
- In reading and mathematics, the grades 3–8 tests are linked from grade to grade to the college- and career-readiness performance standards for the Algebra II and English III assessments.
- Individual student reports provide comprehensive, concise results that are easily understood by students and parents. Assessment results will be available to a wide variety of individuals (as appropriate) through the data portal mandated by HB 3.

The most significant changes that TEA implemented under the STAAR program are summarized below:

General Changes

- High school, grade-based testing represented by TAKS was replaced with course-based EOC assessments in Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, world geography, world history, U.S. history, biology, chemistry, physics, and English I, II, and III under STAAR.
- A data portal was implemented to give students, parents, and educators access to authorized information on student achievement.

Rigor

- Content standards for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which is the source for the state's K–12 instructional curricula as well as the basis for the state assessment program, have been strengthened to include college- and career-readiness content standards.
- New test blueprints (the number of items on the test for each reporting category) emphasize the assessment of the content standards that best prepare students for the next grade or course.
- Assessments increased in length at most grades and subjects, and overall test difficulty increased by including more rigorous items.
- The rigor of items increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity. In this way, the tests are better able to measure the growth of higher-achieving students.
- In science and mathematics, the number of open-ended (griddable) items on most tests increased to allow students more opportunity to derive an answer independently without being influenced by answer choices provided with the questions.
- Performance standards were set so that they require a higher level of student performance than was required on the TAKS assessments.
- To validate the level of rigor, student performance on STAAR assessments was compared with results on standardized national and international assessments.
- In order to graduate, a student must achieve a cumulative score that is at least equal to the product of the number of STAAR EOC assessments taken in each foundation content area (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) and a scale score that indicates satisfactory performance.

Postsecondary Readiness

- College- and career-readiness content standards have been fully incorporated into the TEKS, and these TEKS are assessed on the STAAR EOC assessments. This helps ensure students are prepared for their freshman year of college without the need for remediation, prepared to enter the workforce, or prepared to serve in our nation's military.
- Performance standards on assessments were vertically aligned to ensure college readiness, using empirical data gathered from studies that linked performance in grades three through 12 from year to year. . Performance standards will be reviewed at least

once every three years and, if necessary, adjusted so that the assessments maintain a high level of rigor.

- Texas law defines college readiness as “the level of preparation a student must attain in English language arts and mathematics courses to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in an entry-level general education course for credit in that same content area for a baccalaureate degree or associate degree program.”

Measures of Progress

- Measures of student progress will be developed and implemented for STAAR. Progress measures will be based on the more rigorous standards for STAAR assessments. Progress measures will be phased in over several years as data for the new program become available.
- Progress measures will be designed to provide an early-warning indicator for students who are not on track to meet the passing standard, may not be successful in the next grade or course, may not be ready for advanced courses in mathematics and English in high school, or may not be postsecondary ready in mathematics and English.

TEA has and will continue to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the STAAR program. TEA is confident that the changes to the Texas assessment program will serve as an effective tool for assessing increased college and career readiness of students graduating with a high school diploma. As with any assessment program, especially one the size of the Texas program, making significant changes poses a wide range of challenges.

STAAR Test Design and Standard Setting

STAAR Standard Setting

Following the development of the new STAAR test design, standard-setting advisory panels composed of diverse groups of stakeholders (i.e. business leaders, superintendents, and regional service center representatives) made recommendations regarding where the performance standards should be set in each subject area. These panels provided TEA, the commissioner of education, and the commissioner of higher education with recommendations (for English III and Algebra II) for establishing cut scores and for matching the cut scores with the policy definitions that relate to performance on each assessment. The performance standards were developed to comply with legislative requirements, including those in HB 3, for setting several performance standards for each STAAR EOC assessment. In addition, the validity of the STAAR assessments is integral to meeting the long-range educational goals of the state as well as for the overall defensibility of the assessment program. To provide evidence of the validity of the STAAR assessments, empirical studies were conducted in various stages of the standard-setting process.

Process for Setting College- and Career-Readiness Standards

The College- and Career-Readiness Standards (CCRS) adopted by the state of Texas have been incorporated into the K–12 content standards, the TEKS. In the time since the CCRS were adopted, TEA and THECB have worked closely to develop a plan for the college- and career-readiness component of STAAR EOC assessments.

One part of the college- and career-readiness component is the establishment of performance standards for STAAR Algebra II and English III assessments. TEA and THECB have conducted validity studies and convened committees to recommend cut scores.

TEA conducted extensive research to support the standard-setting process. Studies focused on creating links between STAAR assessments and other measures of students' knowledge and skills. Some studies linked students' scores on STAAR assessments to corresponding course grades. Another set of studies linked STAAR assessments to established national and international assessments, such as SAT, ACT, NAEP, and PISA. Additional studies linked STAAR assessments to other assessments (THEA and ACCUPLACER) used by Texas colleges and universities to place students in credit-bearing courses. Finally, research was conducted to link STAAR scores to corresponding grades in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. To support reliable and meaningful score interpretations, links between two assessments were based on the same students taking STAAR and one of the assessments listed above.

TEA and THECB have agreed on the performance standards for college- and career-readiness on the Algebra II and English III EOC assessments. In addition, TEA and THECB will periodically review the performance standards and will make adjustments if data indicates this is appropriate. The thoroughness of the studies and research, as well as the checks and balances incorporated into the process, will provide a reliable and objective measure of college and career readiness. TEA and THECB will continue to collaborate to improve the assessment of the college and career readiness of graduating high school students.

STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate

The Texas student assessment program includes as many students as possible in the general assessments while providing alternate assessments for eligible students receiving special education services whose academic achievement and progress cannot be measured appropriately with the general assessment areas. The alternate assessments for eligible students who receive special education services include STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate and reflect the general STAAR program. STAAR Modified assessments have been developed for all content areas for grades 3–8 that are part of the general STAAR program and for nine of the STAAR EOC assessments (English I, II, and III, Algebra I, geometry, biology, world geography, world history, and U.S. history). Modified assessments are not being developed for Algebra II, chemistry, or physics as these courses are not required in order for students to graduate on the Minimum High School Program (MHSP) and all students taking STAAR Modified assessments are automatically on the MHSP because they are receiving modified instruction.

The STAAR Modified assessments cover the same content as the general STAAR assessments but have been modified in format and test design. The modified assessments are designed for eligible students receiving special education services who can make academic progress even though they may not reach grade-level achievement standards in the same time frame as their non-disabled peers. Performance standards were set so that they require a higher level of student performance than was required on TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M) assessments. Each STAAR Modified assessment consists primarily of multiple-choice questions addressing the content of the assessed curriculum for the grade-level subject. Item modification guidelines specify how to modify test questions from the general assessment in a way that preserves the integrity of the knowledge or skill being assessed.

STAAR Alternate is based on alternate academic achievement standards and is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who meet the

participation requirements for the program. This assessment is not a traditional paper or multiple-choice test. Instead, it requires teachers to observe students as they complete state-developed assessment tasks linked to the grade-level TEKS. Teachers then evaluate student performance based on the dimensions of the STAAR Alternate rubric and submit results through an online instrument. The STAAR Alternate assessments reflect the same increased rigor and focus of the general and modified assessments.

English Language Learners and the STAAR Program

The number of English language learners (ELLs) in Texas public schools has risen steadily during the past decade from about 570,000 in 2000–2001 to more than 838,000 (or about 1 in 6 students) by the 2011–2012 school year. ELLs are a diverse group of students who know English to varying degrees when they enter U.S. schools and have widely differing educational and sociocultural backgrounds. Both state and federal regulations require ELLs to be taught and tested over the same grade-level academic skills as other students.

TEA developed Spanish versions of STAAR in grades 3–5 in accordance with state statute. In addition, TEA has developed online versions of STAAR with built-in, standardized linguistic accommodations for eligible ELLs in grades 3–8 and high school. TELPAS will continue to measure the progress ELLs make in learning English language.

Plan for Measurement of Student Progress

In 2006, Texas expanded its reporting of student performance to include a measure of student progress when legislation from HB 1 (79th Texas Legislature, Third Called Session, 2005) required the commissioner of education to determine a method for measuring annual improvement in student achievement. Additionally, HB 3 (81st Texas Legislature, 2009) required that performance standards be tied to a measure of college readiness.

With the implementation of the STAAR program, Texas is considering growth measures to determine if students (1) are on-track to meet performance standards in a subsequent year, (2) are prepared for advanced courses, and (3) are projected to meet college- and career-readiness performance standards.

The following table outlines the general steps and time-line for implementing and reporting measures of student progress for the STAAR program. A number of different types of growth measures will be considered to meet state and federal requirements for STAAR reporting and for using a growth measure for state and federal accountability. Also under consideration is a measure of expected academic performance for ELLs that sets challenging but achievable goals to meet grade-level academic content standards for ELL students in accordance with a timeline based on their years in U.S. schools.

Timeline for Implementing and Reporting Measures of Student Progress for STAAR Assessments Step	Timeline
Identify the most appropriate student progress measures for the STAAR program	November 2010–May 2011
Empirically evaluate the identified measures	June 2011–October 2011
Obtain advisory group and expert advice	November 2011–August 2012

Timeline for Implementing and Reporting Measures of Student Progress for STAAR Assessments Step	Timeline
Reevaluate plans for measures of student progress after spring 2012 and spring 2013 STAAR administrations (review of proposed measures and empirical data; additional advisory group and expert advice may also be gathered at this time)	Summer 2012 and Summer 2013
Approval of the new measures of student progress	Summer 2013
Implement and report new measures of student progress for the STAAR program	Initial implementation no later than Fall 2013

Principle 2: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

2.A: Develop and implement a State-based system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support

State Accountability System

The 2011 school ratings were the last ratings assigned under the previous academic accountability system. A new accountability system based on STAAR grades 3–8 and STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments is in the final stages of development and will be implemented in 2013. The focus of HB 3 is the state-defined academic accountability ratings and distinction designations. However, state-defined accountability is part of an integrated accountability system for Texas public schools and LEAs. Changes to the state assessment program and accountability ratings will be reflected throughout the larger system of public school accountability. Three major components of the integrated accountability system will use STAAR assessment results to evaluate campuses and/or LEAs. State accountability ratings and federal accountability status feed into multiple other processes that identify campuses and/or LEAs for interventions, sanctions, or rewards. Consequently, decisions made during the state accountability development process will extend beyond the state accountability ratings. The following goals have guided development of the new, state-defined accountability system:

1. Focus of LEA/school performance changes from minimum standards to standards based on postsecondary readiness
2. Rigor of college readiness standards increasing incrementally to ensure that Texas performs among the top ten states in postsecondary readiness by 2020
3. Recognized and exemplary distinction ratings based on higher levels of student performance on college readiness standards rather than higher percentages of students performing at the satisfactory level
4. Schools earning distinctions for achieving the top quartile in terms of overall individual student progress and closing performance gaps among student groups
5. Schools earning distinctions on broader indicators of excellence beyond results on state assessments
6. Aggregate reports providing detailed academic and financial information that is relevant, meaningful, and easily accessible to the public
7. State and federal accountability requirements aligned to the greatest extent possible

1993 through 2011

Texas led the nation in the introduction of a statewide accountability system as a foundation for public education reform. In 1993, the Texas Legislature enacted statutes that mandated the creation of the Texas public school accountability system to rate LEAs and evaluate schools. A viable and effective accountability system could be developed in Texas because the state already had the necessary supporting infrastructure in place comprised of a student-level data collection system; a state-mandated curriculum; and a statewide assessment tied to the curriculum, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

A new accountability system was designed in 2004 following introduction of a new state assessment program, the TAKS. This change coincided with the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which extended federal accountability requirements that previously applied only to Title I schools and LEAs to all schools and LEAs. Designing a future accountability system that met the demands of implementing the new TAKS system; reporting TAKS results and a longitudinal completion rate; meeting other state requirements; and adhering to the new federal regulations presented new challenges. One of the challenges was keeping the performance improvement of low-performing students a priority while improving the performance of top-performing students who compete with top-performing students in the nation. Additionally, new state accountability requirements expanded the system in one direction with more subjects and grades while federal accountability requirements expanded the system in another direction with more student groups.

Increasing Rigor

A primary feature of the state-defined rating system from 1993 through 2011 was annually increasing rigor by raising the standards progressively over time, including new assessments as they become available, and incorporating more students in the LEA and school evaluations. HB 3 made significant changes to parts of the Texas Education Code (TEC) relating to public school accountability that will continue the trend toward greater rigor. These changes will shift the focus of the state accountability system from meeting satisfactory standards on the state assessments to meeting both satisfactory and college-ready standards on new STAAR assessments that are linked to postsecondary readiness.

Accountability System for 2013 and Beyond

While, the accountability provisions in TEC are much more detailed than previous statute, they do not prescribe the overall framework of the new accountability system or the number of rating levels and labels.

Statute specifies the following indicators be used in determining accountability ratings:

- Student performance on the STAAR grades 3–8 and EOC assessments, both achievement and growth, measured against both student passing standards and college-readiness standards;
- Dropout rates (including LEA completion rates) for grades 9 through 12;
- High school graduation rates; and,
- Other indicators of postsecondary readiness, i.e. percent of graduates achieving the Recommended or Advanced High School Program plan. (See Attachment 6)

Accountability Development

TEA is far along in the process of developing a new state accountability system based on the structure outlined in HB 3. Accountability ratings were suspended for 2012 while student performance standards were set on the new STAAR assessments and the new accountability system was being developed. During the development of the new accountability system, the commissioner of education has relied extensively on the detailed review, study, and advice of educators, parents, and business and community leaders in establishing accountability criteria and setting standards. The intent of the accountability development process is to design a new accountability system rather than modify the previous system. As part of this process, advisory committees are reevaluating every aspect of the accountability system. (See Attachment 7)

Accountability System Overall Design

The overall design of the accountability system is determined by the way performance indicators are defined and how performance on those indicators is evaluated for ratings. An “all or nothing” design requires LEAs and schools to meet accountability standards on each performance measure. Failure to meet one standard results in a lower rating, targeting the lowest-performing subject, student group, or other measure.

Alternatively, an index design, which is currently under consideration by the accountability advisory committees, weights measures to reflect the state’s goals. The resulting rating reflects overall performance. Decisions about combining performance results, evaluating student groups, and alignment with federal accountability requirements will determine the number of measures on which LEAs and schools must meet accountability standards.

Underlying the performance index framework are disaggregated performance results. The disaggregated performance results will serve as the basis of safeguards for the accountability rating system to ensure that poor performance in one area or one student group is not masked in the performance index.

2.B: Set ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives

Assessments Used for Accountability

The following STAAR assessments will be used to determine the acceptable and unacceptable performance ratings that will be assigned beginning in 2013 and the recognized and exemplary ratings that will be assigned in 2014 and beyond:

- STAAR Grades 3-8 English and Spanish
- STAAR EOC assessments administered in the spring and the previous fall and summer
- STAAR Grades 3-8 and EOC Modified and Alternate

In 2011, the ELL Progress Measure was incorporated in the state accountability system to evaluate progress towards reading proficiency in English for current and monitored limited English proficient (LEP) students. The ELL Progress Measure that is under development by the state assessment program sets challenging but achievable goals to meet grade-level academic content standards for ELL students in accordance with a timeline based on their years in U.S. schools. When fully implemented, the proposed performance index framework will include the performance of English Language Learners (ELL) in all four indexes of the accountability system over the course of their first four years in U.S. public schools. The commissioner will determine how the STAAR and TELPAS assessment results for ELLs will be used to determine ratings in the new accountability system.

Dropout and Graduation Rates

State and federal statute require TEA to use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition for both state and federal accountability.

Assignment of Rating Standards

TEC §39.053(f) requires that the commissioner annually define the current year's state accountability target for student achievement indicators and project each indicator's state target for the following two years. This section of statute also directs the commissioner to raise the target for the percent college-ready indicator so that Texas ranks in the top ten among states nationally by 2019–2020 on two measures—the percent college-ready and the percent graduating under the recommended or advanced high school program, with no significant gaps by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Student Groups

Evaluation of student group performance has been a constant in the Texas accountability system since its inception and is credited with driving the comparatively high performance of Texas minority and economically disadvantaged students on national assessments. The new accountability system must include evaluation of student groups based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Student groups in the new accountability rating system will be based on the new federal race/ethnicity definitions that were collected in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) for the first time in the 2009–2010 school year.

Rating Labels and Distinction Designations

To meet statutory requirements, the basic accountability ratings must identify satisfactory and unsatisfactory schools and LEAs and describe conditions that trigger state monitoring and interventions. In addition to the basic accountability ratings, LEAs and schools are eligible for distinction designation ratings for recognized or exemplary performance. The labels that will be assigned to the rating levels in the new system are yet to be determined.

Texas has a long history of recognizing high performance by students in academics beyond those required to receive an acceptable accountability rating and this will continue with campus distinction designations for schools in the top 25% in annual improvement, schools in the top 25% of those demonstrating ability to close performance gaps, and schools that meet criteria for academic performance in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies. Academic achievement distinction designations in reading/English language arts and mathematics will be assigned to campuses in August 2013 concurrent with the release of the accountability ratings. These distinctions will include indicators based on performance at the Advanced standard on STAAR, attendance rates, completion of advanced/dual enrollment courses, and SAT and ACT performance and participation.

Under HB 3, schools will also be awarded distinctions in four new areas: fine arts, physical education, 21st Century Workforce Development programs, and second language acquisition programs. The criteria and standards for distinctions will depend on advice and guidance from committees comprised of individuals who practice as professionals in the content area relevant to the distinction designation; educators and other individuals with subject matter expertise in the content area; and community leaders, including leaders from the business community.

Other Accountability Requirements

Schools with Additional Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) Requirements

HB 3 continues to require identification of schools meeting current year standards for acceptable performance that do not meet accountability standards for the subsequent year. These schools are subject to additional campus improvement plan (CIP) requirements.

Public Education Grant (PEG) Campuses

TEC, Chapter 29, Subchapter G, §§29.201 – 29.205, requires that TEA identify schools at which 50% or more of the students did not pass the state assessments in any two of the preceding three years or did not meet standards for acceptable performance in any of the three preceding years. Students on these schools are eligible to transfer to another school. Parents must be notified of their students' eligibility to transfer no later than February 1 for the upcoming school year. Annual identification of PEG campuses has continued uninterrupted through the transition to the new assessment program and accountability system. Although PEG requirements do not align with either state or federal accountability interventions, the program provides students and parents an alternative to their assigned school if its performance is subpar.

Alternative Education Campuses

In the previous state accountability system, Texas annually evaluated approximately 450 alternative education campuses (AECs) under alternative education accountability (AEA) procedures. These AECs provide non-traditional learning environments and offer options to enhance the achievement of at-risk students by ensuring they demonstrate satisfactory performance on the state assessments and meet graduation requirements. Some characteristics of AECs affect many components of the accountability system. They are smaller on average than regular schools, have higher student mobility rates, and some provide education services to students in residential programs which complicate the evaluation of AEC performance data. The new state accountability system will not include a separate set of procedures for these schools. Instead, AECs will be evaluated using the same framework evaluation.

Alignment of State and Federal Accountability Systems

Development of a new state accountability system presents an ideal opportunity to align state and federal accountability provisions that Texas LEAs and schools must meet. Most federal requirements, that differ from state requirements, such as evaluating performance of ELL and special education student groups, may be accomplished under state statute.

Timeline

The new accountability rating system will be implemented in phases. The first ratings issued in 2013 will be based on satisfactory performance on the STAAR assessments. The 2014 ratings are to be based on both college-ready and satisfactory performance on the STAAR Distinction designations for which performance on the college-ready indicator is an eligibility requirement will be introduced in 2014. Distinction designations in new areas may be phased in as new data are collected.

Performance Reports

HB 3 modified and reorganized all performance reporting requirements into Chapter 39, Subchapter J. Parent and Educator Reports. While HB 3 did not significantly change the

reporting requirements that existed in prior statute, the new aggregate reports will be designed to provide detailed academic and financial information that is relevant, meaningful, and easily accessible to the public. Statute specifies the following regarding reports.

- **Report to District: Comparisons for Annual Performance Assessment (§39.302).** The agency shall provide annual improvement information on assessments to LEAs.
- **Report to Parents (§39.303).** Each parent or guardian shall be provided student-level assessment information such as is currently reported on the Confidential Student Reports.
- **Teacher Report Card (§39.304).** LEAs are required to use Comparisons for Annual Performance Assessments (§39.302) to prepare a report for teachers at the beginning of the school year informing them of their students performed on assessments.
- **Campus Report Card (§39.305).** The language in statute describing this report is similar to the language used in prior statute to describe the current school/campus report cards. This report card includes indicators used in the rating system evaluation, graduation rates, performance on SAT and ACT assessments, and the percentage of students provided accelerated instruction, as well as average class size and instructional and administrative costs per student.
- **Performance Report (§39.306).** The language in statute describing performance reports is similar to the language used in prior statute to describe the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports, which required the reporting of performance results for each LEA and school compared to prior year performance and to state-established standards. Additional indicators for the performance report are stipulated in §39.301 and §39.306, including references to indicators that are described in sections elsewhere in statute. The agency will produce and disseminate these reports annually at the school, LEA, region, and state-level aggregations. The possibility of consolidating the school report cards and/or the performance reports with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Report Card will be considered for the 2012–2013 school year and beyond.

As new indicators or additional assessments are planned for inclusion in the current state accountability rating system, the AEIS reports have included “preview indicators” that provide current year results reformulated to reflect the future indicator. During the development of the new performance reports, options will be explored to address how best to “preview” performance on future indicators that are based on higher student performance standards or include additional assessments.

Federal Adequate Yearly Progress

At the beginning of the accountability development process, a federal accountability transition plan for the 2011-2012 school year was submitted to USDE for approval. USDE approved a proposal for use of STAAR results at the TAKS equivalency standard for grades 3-8 so that federal accountability ratings could be released before the beginning of the school year. A larger proposal for approval of federal accountability determinations for 2013 and beyond under the STAAR assessment program is being submitted through the annual accountability workbook submission process. (See Attachment 8)

Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System

The Performance-Based Monitoring system is a complementary system to the state and federal accountability ratings, and it can be used as a system safeguard for those two systems. Approaches to greater integration and coordination across the systems are being considered

including using Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) and data validation results in the determination of LEA accreditation statuses; greater use of accountability rating changes based on PBMAS and data validation findings; incorporating review of PBMAS and data validation findings into the initial assignment of accountability ratings, including selected safeguard indicators (e.g., test participation data) in the accountability system; and defining accountability indicators in ways that incorporate more safeguards.

Texas Accountability Intervention System

For some time, Texas schools and LEAs have been held accountable under two systems: the state accountability system, mandated by the Texas Legislature, and the federal system, created by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Although the state system has been in place since 1993, the accountability provisions in the federal NCLB Act were not applied to Texas public schools until 2003. Under the provisions of Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 39, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I School Improvement Program (SIP), the state is required to provide interventions to improve low-performing schools.

TEC, Chapter 39, establishes a related system of interventions and sanctions for LEAs and schools, including charter schools. Interventions may include the appointment of campus intervention teams, monitors, conservators, management teams, and boards of managers and also may include required hearings, public notifications, and the development of improvement or corrective action plans. School-level interventions required in state statute include the appointment of an intervention team to any school that fails to meet established performance standards, with escalated interventions imposed as a result of continuing low performance. Those graduated interventions include school reconstitution, the possible appointment of a monitor or conservator to provide LEA-level oversight, and a potential order of campus repurposing, alternative management, or closure. (See Attachment 9 -- Campus Intervention Matrix.) The statute also establishes certain sanctions for LEA-level underperformance, including, but not limited to, LEA closure.

Similarly, the framework of support implemented by Texas under the federal accountability system includes the appointment of external technical assistance providers to support low-performing schools, with escalated interventions imposed as a result of continuing low performance. Those interventions may include student-level supports, corrective actions, school restructuring, and alternative governance.

A coordinated, effective statewide system of support for struggling schools and LEAs was deemed essential for creating optimal learning environments and sustainable increases in student achievement. In an effort to address the similar, but, at times, inconsistent aspects of both intervention systems, Texas has engaged in evolving efforts to align the systems. Those efforts have included the establishment of the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS), a state-level entity created to coordinate, in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), system-level leadership, for school improvement efforts under both the federal and state systems. The latest initiative, aimed at alignment of the systems of state support, has resulted in the development of the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS), which is described in more detail below.

Despite the best efforts of all parties, the implementation of two systems often results in a confusing mix of requirements that detract attention from the overall goal—improved performance for all students.

In an effort to maximize resources and minimize confusion, TEA took steps to align, to the extent possible, the interventions implemented under both the state and federal accountability systems.

Current System

As noted above, the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS) has evolved to support LEAs and schools around school improvement and interventions. Initial coordination efforts to align the two systems focused on similar intervention requirements for schools that were identified as academically unacceptable in the state accountability system and were subject to the school improvement program under federal accountability requirements. Evolving out of the pilot was the creation of the TAIS, which built upon the best aspects of both the state and federal systems. TEA determined that the fundamental issues for underperforming campuses are the same in both systems, and students with academic needs are often the same regardless of the identification process. Therefore, the TAIS was designed to LEAs and schools to focus on engaging in the improvement process as opposed to completing and checking off state and federal requirements.

The comprehensive Texas system has continued to evolve, with an ongoing investment in improving the initial system. Along these lines, partnerships have been built between TEA, ESCs, Texas LEAs and schools. Those partnerships have resulted in diverse participants in the intervention and improvement process, including:

- Professional Service Provider (PSP) - this individual is a TEA-approved member of the PSP Network, and is responsible for assuring implementation of all intervention requirements and reporting progress to the agency;
- District Coordinator of School Improvement (DCSI) - this individual, assigned by the LEA and approved by TEA, is an LEA-level, leadership employee in school improvement, curriculum and instruction, or another position with responsibility for student performance and is responsible for ensuring district support for the academic achievement of the school; and



- Campus Leadership Team (CLT) – this team is composed of key school leaders and membership is determined by the principal and/or the LEA. The CLT is responsible for development, implementation, and monitoring of the improvement plan, monitoring of student performance, and determination of student interventions and support services.

Under the provisions of TEC, Chapter 39, and the ESEA Title I School Improvement Program (SIP), each LEA or school required to engage in the TAIS must collect and analyze data,

conduct a needs assessment to determine factors contributing to low performance, develop an improvement plan that addresses all areas (state assessment results, completion/graduation rate, attendance rate, dropout rate, and/or participation rate) not meeting the required performance standard, and monitor the implementation of the improvement plan. The TAIS is a continuous improvement process driven by the ongoing collection and analysis of data.

The TAIS is supported by multiple research-based resources/documents that guide schools and LEAs through school improvement. As the state transitions from parallel state and federal accountability intervention requirements, the focus shifts to a more integrated process for continuous, sustained improvement.

Despite the efforts to coordinate requirements, working under two separate accountability systems can be confusing and frustrating for the schools and LEAs. Rather than dedicating valuable time and resources to the process of improvement, LEAs and schools must focus on the duplicative burden of state and federal requirements and interventions. With the approval of the proposed waiver, schools and LEAs can focus on the improvement initiatives detailed in the following section.

Proposed System

2.C – 2G

TEA is proposing to implement a single accountability system with tiered interventions beginning in school year 2013-2014. With USDE approval, a waiver will allow the TAIS to become one integrated system built on a strong foundation of both federal and state interventions.

A single system would foster the coordination of technical assistance and interventions to facilitate systemic change. One robust intervention system would allow for a focus on LEA involvement and sustainability for struggling schools through graduated levels of intervention. Furthermore, tiered interventions based on individual school needs that consider multiple variables will target and streamline interventions.

This streamlined process would promote parent involvement in critical educational decisions targeted at improving student performance.

Full implementation of the TAIS would allow LEAs to focus on creating accelerated sustainable and systemic transformation in Texas schools to significantly increase student achievement. This conceptual approach moves beyond the classification of schools. It requires LEAs to clearly articulate commitments and provide for necessary support to implement improvement strategies for low-performing schools. This provides LEAs with the opportunity to target key components of successful schools including:

- Academic performance
- Use of quality data to drive instruction
- Leadership effectiveness
- Increased learning time
- Family and community engagement
- School climate

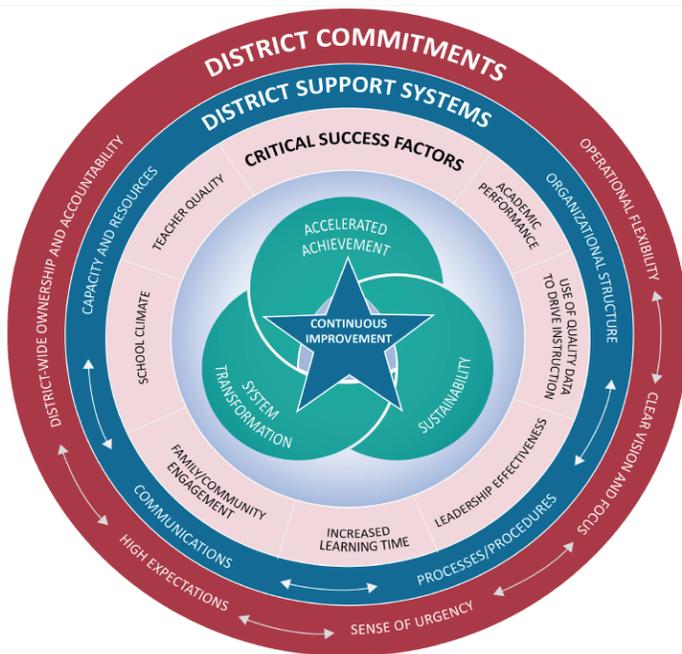
- Teacher quality

The TAIS relies on decades of school improvement research to identify critical success factors that, elevate expectations and lead schools on a path of continuous improvement. Success will require purposeful actions and thoughtful planning by analyzing data, determining needs, developing focused plans for improvement, and monitoring the impact of those plans.

Texas School Support System

The Texas School Support System categorizes schools into increasing levels of assistance and interventions based on indentified school needs. The TEA, TCDSS and ESCs provide scaffolding levels of support to the LEA as the LEAs works to transform its schools.

Texas Framework for Continuous District and School Improvement



Under this system, the agency believes the state can accelerate achievement and reduce performance gaps through an intense and urgent focus on identified areas of need while building a system of intervention where all components work together to focus on sustainable academic progress for all students. (See Attachment 10)

Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

Since 2009, Texas has made significant strides to improve the quality of our educator preparation programs (EPPs). At the same time, the state has improved the quality of individual teacher evaluations so teachers and administrators have more meaningful feedback on student learning and growth.

3.A: Develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems

As research has routinely emphasized, the number one in-school factor for increasing student achievement is the effectiveness of the teacher. In acknowledgment of those findings, TEA is currently revising the State's approved instrument for evaluating teachers. The Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) is currently used by 86 percent of LEAs in Texas and has been in place since 1997. Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, Texas is piloting a new system that includes an updated observation rubric and a campus and individual teacher value-add metric of student growth.

The initial pilot includes two nationally-recognized observation rubrics by Teachscape and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. These two frameworks offer more robust and timely feedback to teachers on their practice through more frequent, targeted observations and timely input of results. The initial pilot of these two rubrics in the 2012-2013 school year focuses on 100 campuses and will continue with a phase two pilot in the 2013-2014 school year. TEA's goal is to roll out a new rubric statewide, based on an evaluation of the pilot results, in the 2015-2016 school year.

In an effort to capture the impact of a teacher on their students' learning over the course of the year, TEA has contracted with the American Institute of Research (AIR) to develop both a campus-wide and individual teacher value-add metric. In May 2013, we will share initial results of the value-add metric with campus leaders and teachers in our 100 pilot schools. During phase two of the pilot, we will make refinements to the metric with the goal of incorporating those changes into the updated evaluation system during the 2015-2016 school year. (See Attachment 11)

By the 2015-2016 school year, Texas will have established a more robust teacher evaluation system based on multiple measures, including student growth. With this new system in place, TEA and LEAs will be able to provide more targeted, and differentiated, supports to teachers and principals.

Additionally, TEA has recently contacted to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) regarding their State Collaborative on Educator Effectiveness (SCEE). Given the work the Agency is undertaking, we view this collaborative as an important opportunity to engage other state leaders on the lessons learned from building the state systems for evaluating and supporting all teachers.

School Leadership

Texas has recognized that school leadership is critical to the success of recruiting and retaining top teachers and fostering an environment where student learning flourishes. To that end, Senate Bill 1383 was enacted by the 82nd Texas Legislature and codified in Section 21.3541 of TEC. This statute directs the Agency to accomplish the following initiatives:

- Establish and administer a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for public school principals
- Establish a consortium of nationally recognized experts on educational leadership and policy to assist in developing the system and make recommendations about the training, appraisal, professional development, and compensation of principals
- Establish school leadership standards and a set of indicators of successful school leadership to align with such training, appraisal, and professional development

We expect to complete the new school-leadership standards by the end of 2013. Pending the availability of additional resources, we plan to begin the development and pilot of the principal evaluation system during the 2014-2015 school year.

Holding Educator Preparation Accountable for the Quality of their Graduates

The 81st Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 174, which amended sections of the TEC related to accountability for educator preparation programs. The purpose of the accountability system for educator preparation is to assure that each EPP is held accountable for the effectiveness of graduates from their program. Moving forward, the accreditation status of an EPP will be determined based on the following performance standards:

1. The passing rate on certification examinations taken by EPP candidates
2. The results of beginning teacher appraisals by principals
3. The improvement in student achievement of students taught by a beginning teacher for the first three years following certification
4. The frequency, duration, and quality of field supervision of beginning teachers

Aside from basing accreditation on these performance standards, the Agency plans to provide data to EPPs that will help identify areas that will increase the effectiveness of their programs. Ultimately, TEA plans to see an increase in the quality of educator preparation based on multiple measures of accountability that will lead to increased student achievement in Texas.

3.B: Ensure LEAs implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems

Current Texas Education Code (TEC 21.352) requires LEAs to use the state developed evaluation system or a locally developed system that contains the same components of the state system.