

---

# March 23, 2016 Working Session Notes

---

Texas Commission on  
Next Generation  
Assessments and  
Accountability

---

Created by Juli Fellows, Ph.D.

---

## Contents

Process Summary .....	3
Group 1: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment .....	3
Group 2: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment .....	4
Group 3: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment .....	4
Common Elements among Groups in Purposes of Student Assessment .....	4
Common Elements among Groups in the Roles of Student Assessment .....	4
Group 1: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System .....	5
Group 2: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System .....	5
Group 3: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System .....	5
Common Elements among Groups in the Purposes of State Accountability System .....	5
Common Elements among Groups in the Roles of State Accountability System .....	5
Group 1: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	6
Group 1: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	6
Group 2: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	6
Group 2: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	6
Group 3: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	6
Group 3: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems .....	7
Other Gaps Noted During Discussion .....	7
Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in Student Assessment .....	8
Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in Student Assessment in Order of Number of Dots .....	9
Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in State Accountability .....	10
Diagram illustrating Idea U .....	11
Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in the State Accountability System in Order of Number of Dots .....	12
Attachment A: Detailed Process Agenda .....	13
Attachment B: Commission Group Seating .....	15

## Process Summary

Members of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability participated in a three-and-a-half hour facilitated work session on March 23, 2016. Their first task was to work in groups to explore the purposes and roles of both the student assessment and state accountability systems. After each group reported their findings, the group identified elements they shared in common.

Members then worked in groups to identify both the strengths and the gaps in the current student assessment and accountability systems. Their work was displayed on charts and both members and the audience were invited to view these charts.

As a large group, they brainstormed ideas to reduce the gaps in the student assessment system. They were encouraged to be creative. All ideas were recorded. They produced 24 ideas for improving student assessment. Each of the participating Commission members was given five dots to indicate which ideas he or she felt were the most important, meaningful, or impactful. Sixteen ideas received at least one dot. The ideas which received at least three dots are listed below.

- Student growth and progress should be the basis for performance measurement. (11 dots)
- Have multiple assessments in real time (i.e. not all on one day). Spread it out and have more timely feedback. (11 dots)
- Data should be actionable for both educators and students in real time. (6 dots)
- Take advantage of technology to use formative assessments regularly to draw summative conclusions (use some money now spent on testing to buy the technology.) (4 dots)
- Present the data so it is understandable to parents of all education or socio-economic status (SES) levels, so they understand where their child is. (3 dots)

The same process was used to brainstorm 24 ideas to reduce the gaps in the state accountability system. Fourteen ideas received at least one dot. The ideas receiving three or more dots are shown below.

- The accountability system should NOT be a mirror of SES of the community. Capture the growth component in a simple way. Don't fail just because you're in an economically poor community. Align resources to fit needs. (8 dots)
- Use a matrix of growth and achievement (see diagram below) for both state accountability and student assessment. Maintain achievement status in all reports we create. (8 dots)
- Better align federal and state assessments. (5 dots)
- Include non-test measures, for example, community engagement or college readiness. (5 dots)
- Make student **growth** an important measure of the accountability system. (4 dots)
- Ensure that high levels of accountability have strategic resources and supports to improve academic outcomes in struggling schools. (4 dots)
- Be clear about what we measure – just a few things that are the best measures. (4 dots)
- Increase the clarity for parents and educators about what the results mean. (3 dots)

Commission members appreciated the opportunity explore their commonalities and similarities, including collectively identifying concrete steps that can be taken to improve existing systems of assessment and accountability. Members noted that there was more agreement than disagreement, including consensus around the concepts of holding adults accountable more than children, using growth in addition to achievement status as a measure of success, using the data to identify best practices and enhance collaboration, and having fair, timely, meaningful assessments that don't all happen on one day.

Commissioner members also agreed that the current assessment program should take better advantage of technology, there should be greater alignment of state and federal accountability requirements, and resources should be targeted to improve struggling schools. One important aspect of improving existing systems is to be clear about what is measured so that parents and educators truly know what the assessment and accountability results mean.

### Group 1: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment

Purpose: To help guide teacher instruction to obtain feedback in order to adjust instruction to achieve grade level expectation.

- How is my child doing?
- Are resources being effectively/efficiently used?
- To evaluate whether students are ready after K–12.

### Group 2: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment

1. We want to know if students grow in terms of what they knew when the course began, versus what they know at the end of a course.
2. We want to know if students are achieving at grade level.
3. We should use formative assessment to draw summative conclusions so we can differentiate instruction to address learning deficiencies.
4. We currently use student assessment to hold school districts accountable.

### Group 3: Purpose(s) and Roles of Student Assessment

- To know how students are doing academically.
- Looking at data at the student level so that students use it for growth.
- Results need to be timely.
- Help decision makers make good decisions about allocation of financial resources.
- Aggregating individual data helps accomplish resource allocation.

### Common Elements among Groups in Purposes of Student Assessment

- Student growth.
- Tool for educators – timely feedback.
- To inform parents.
- To figure out if students are ready post preK–12.
- A tool for decision makers in schools and the broader community to see if they are getting the “bang for their buck.”
- A way to inform instruction.

### Common Elements among Groups in the Roles of Student Assessment

- A tool for comparison (from the individual student level to the state level).
- Related to above, help identify gaps and populations with needs and allocate resources to help them.
- Determine if we are being successful.
- Data on whether we are achieving our outcomes (though there is a lack of consensus on what the outcomes are or should be.)
- Inform and drive instruction through differentiation (use data formatively so students can improve before it’s “a done deal”).
- Open doors to collaboration among educators, to share best practices.
- Help universities and colleges of education to better prepare teachers to be successful, have them ready to succeed.

### Group 1: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System

- Accountability is the responsibility of the ADULTS.
  - U.S. versus International
  - State versus state
  - District versus district
  - Campus versus campus

### Group 2: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System

1. We want to determine if schools are accomplishing goals.
2. It is used to penalize poor performance.
3. It is used to remedy poor performance.
4. It could be used to mentor poor performance with great performance.
5. Are we assessing the right things?

### Group 3: Purpose(s) and Roles of State Accountability System

Purposes (WHY we do it)

- To make sure students are mastering basic skills.
- To hold districts accountable.
- To ensure the school system is meeting the needs of all students.
- To incentivize “good behavior.”

Roles (HOW we use it)

- By using information/data to improve.
- Use to compare across districts.

### Common Elements among Groups in the Purposes of State Accountability System

- Hold adults responsible more than children.
- Hold “bad actors” accountable. It’s reality that there are some.
- By comparison, identify best practices, what creates success, learn from these.
- Break down barriers to collaboration, to learn from each other.
- There are different purposes for the different levels of institution, i.e. international, state, district, campus.

### Common Elements among Groups in the Roles of State Accountability System

- Would like to see a measure of gains to incentivize good teaching.
- The Legislature sets the direction and holds districts accountable for following the law and the direction set.
- There’s a continuum of roles from punitive to collaborative.



- To identify where we are not being effective.
- To form a narrative about how our state, schools and students are doing. To paint a story.
- Could be used to scale greater student outcomes and opportunities.
- Could be used to identify best practices.
- Could be used to identify ways to better allocate resources. Be pragmatic about what’s not having the desired impact and course correct.
- We’d like it to be a system where this information could tell us precisely which districts are reaching outcomes to influence resource allocation to help those below the line and keep those above the line on target.

### Group 1: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

- Disaggregation of data.
- Every child.
- Familiar.
- Sorts by sub-populations.

### Group 1: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

- Lack of public clarity.
- Tests every child.
- Not developmentally appropriate.
- Spread component – random versus cut score.
- Lots of time.
- Drives curriculum.
- Not a growth measure.
- Appropriateness of questions.
- Too much emphasis on test as a tool.

### Group 2: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

Student Assessment System	State Accountability System
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Much data.</li> <li>2. Emphasis on readiness standards.</li> <li>3. Alignment.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Subpopulation progress.</li> <li>2. Exposes district deficiencies.</li> </ol>

### Group 2: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

Student Assessment System	State Accountability System
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redundancy.</li> <li>2. Assessment of what?</li> <li>3. Lack of efficiency.</li> <li>4. Untimely results.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of clarity of what readiness really is.</li> <li>2. Not competency-based.</li> <li>3. Untimely results.</li> <li>4. Rewards socio-economic status.</li> </ol>

### Group 3: Strengths of the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

Student Assessment System	State Accountability System
Massive amounts of data.	Domains increased emphasis on student growth.
System is very thoughtful, various iterations.	Disaggregation of data.
IS a standardized, objective measure.	Cannot hide/ignore struggling subgroups.
Highlighted areas of weakness focus has allowed for improvement.	
Higher expectations – raising the bar.	
	Attempts to provide transparency for parents.

### Group 3: Gaps in the Student Assessment and State Accountability Systems

Student Assessment System	State Accountability System
Not timely.	Creates stress and pressure.
Not used for instruction.	
Takes too long.	
"One size fits all."	
Too much time preparing for it.	
Boils down to multiple choice – not accurate reflection of knowledge.	Teaching to the test.
No measure of social emotional learning.	Punitive and high stakes.
Does not help individual, is used globally.	Relies on one snapshot.
Parents do not have access to data in user friendly way.	Narrows the curriculum. "An inch deep and a mile wide."
Does not measure growth of individual.	Lack of focus on preK-grade 2.
Test is so long it's a measure of student tolerance.	Focuses on outputs.
Measuring or testing on just one day, perhaps it was not a good day!	

### Other Gaps Noted During Discussion

- The least experienced teachers go into the high-risk schools.
- What if we're getting really good at measuring the wrong things?

## Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in Student Assessment

(The number in the right column is the number of dots given to that idea. Members participated in this exercise and members were allowed to put more than one dot on an item.)

Brainstormed Idea	No. of Dots
A. Reassess what it is we are assessing, to make it more meaningful to the work force.	1
B. Make the data more available to educators to inform instruction.	0
C. Data should be actionable for both educators and students in real time.	6
D. Student growth and progress should be the basis for performance measurement.	11
E. Present the data so it is understandable to parents of all education or SES levels, so they understand where their child is.	3
F. Consider student's other body of work in evaluating their depth of learning (not all multiple choice).	0
G. Make sure assessment is developmentally appropriate at the grade level.	1
H. Remove high stakes from the test. Take it off the students so that it's not punitive to students. We've been testing for 30 years and haven't seen the needle move.	0
I. Make it highly technological, so that get real-time, immediate feedback.	1
J. Have multiple assessments in real time (i.e. not all on one day). Spread it out and have more timely feedback.	11
K. Have more clarity, awareness for the public to understand these assessments.	1
L. Use computer-adaptive testing to test the depth of learning and tailor instruction.	2
M. Take advantage of technology to use formative assessments regularly to draw summative conclusions (use some money now spent on testing to buy the technology).	4
N. Be more efficient in remediation, use data to remediate only the weak areas, not the whole course.	0
O. Include in assessment a measure of inputs, e.g. community resources to support learning.	1
P. Regarding idea A (reassess what we are assessing), don't think of it as a standards question but as a BIGGER question.	0
Q. Align the assessment to what students need in college and workforce 10 years out.	2
R. Include holistic, multiple indicators from academic, social-emotional and cultural climate domains. (Cultural climate means campus culture, measured through qualitative measures like student surveys).	1
S. See more depth in instruction and assessment to emphasize critical thinking over memorizing facts.	2
T. Add a component on critical thinking at the H.S. level (questions that don't have just one right answer).	0
U. Fewer requirements on security and more on adaptability.	0
V. Be thoughtful about the purpose of assessment. It can't serve ALL purposes. It's only one component of our educational system.	2
W. Streamline the standards.	1
X. Reduce, as much as possible, reliance on standardized testing to free up resources for more meaningful assessment.	0



## Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in Student Assessment in Order of Number of Dots

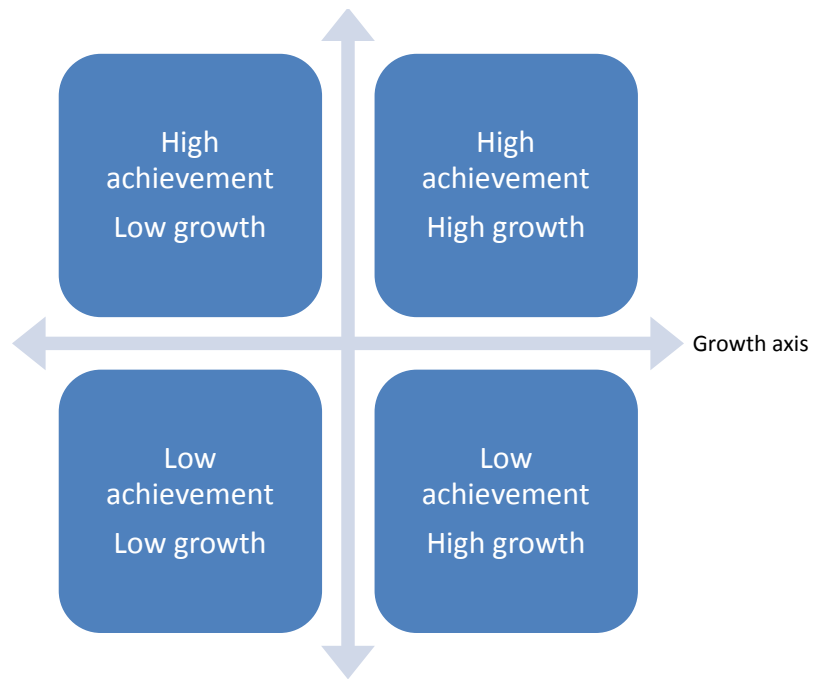
Brainstormed Idea	No. of Dots
D. Student growth and progress should be the basis for performance measurement.	11
J. Have multiple assessments in real time (i.e. not all on one day). Spread it out and have more timely feedback.	11
C. Data should be actionable for both educators and students in real time.	6
M. Take advantage of technology to use formative assessments regularly to draw summative conclusions (use some money now spent on testing to buy the technology).	4
E. Present the data so it is understandable to parents of all education or SES levels, so they understand where their child is.	3
L. Use computer-adaptive testing to test the depth of learning and tailor instruction.	2
Q. Align the assessment to what students need in college and workforce 10 years out.	2
S. See more depth in instruction and assessment to emphasize critical thinking over memorizing facts.	2
V. Be thoughtful about the purpose of assessment. It can't serve ALL purposes. It's only one component of our educational system.	2
A. Reassess what it is we are assessing, to make it more meaningful to the work force.	1
G. Make sure assessment is developmentally appropriate at the grade level.	1
I. Make it highly technological, so that get real-time, immediate feedback.	1
K. Have more clarity, awareness for the public to understand these assessments.	1
O. Include in assessment a measure of inputs, e.g. community resources to support learning.	1
R. Include holistic, multiple indicators from academic, social-emotional and cultural climate domains. (Cultural climate means campus culture, measured through qualitative measures like student surveys).	1
W. Streamline the standards.	1
B. Make the data more available to educators to inform instruction.	0
F. Consider student's other body of work in evaluating their depth of learning (not all multiple choice).	0
H. Remove high stakes from the test. Take it off the students so that it's not punitive to students. We've been testing for 30 years and haven't seen the needle move.	0
N. Be more efficient in remediation, use data to remediate only the weak areas, not the whole course.	0
P. Regarding idea A (reassess what we are assessing), don't think of it as a standards question but as a BIGGER question.	0
T. Add a component on critical thinking at the H.S. level (questions that don't have just one right answer).	0
U. Fewer requirements on security and more on adaptability.	0
X. Reduce, as much as possible, reliance on standardized testing to free up resources for more meaningful assessment.	0

## Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in State Accountability

(The number in the right column is the number of dots given to that idea. Members participated in this exercise and members were allowed to put more than one dot on an item.)

Brainstormed Idea	# Dots
A. Make student <b>growth</b> an important measure of the accountability system.	4
B. Make accountability the responsibility of the adults, not the children.	2
C. Consider a way to take technology to do more “peer tutoring” for failing schools. Improvement over punishment.	0
D. Ensure that high levels of accountability have strategic resources and supports to improve academic outcomes in struggling schools.	4
E. Increase the clarity for parents and educators about what the results mean.	3
F. Establish a common language to define outcomes.	1
G. Better align federal and state assessments.	5
H. Continue having data disaggregated to highlight struggling groups.	1
I. Include non-test measures, for example, community engagement or college readiness.	5
J. Be clear about what we measure – just a few things that are the best measures.	4
K. Give greater reward for completion of difficult things (e.g. degrees, certifications).	2
L. Make sure teachers have resources and systems of professional development to help them succeed.	0
M. The accountability system should NOT be a mirror of SES of the community. Capture the growth component in a simple way. Don’t fail just because you’re in an economically poor community. Align resources to fit needs.	8
N. Much better coordination between districts and teacher preparation programs.	0
O. Let parents and the community know how they stand up against other communities. Have similar comparisons for the state and national levels.	0
P. Clarify the Commissioner of Education’s actions, i.e. specify what “must do” rather than “may do”.	0
Q. Create a Performance Review Center to analyze the data, produce unbiased reports for districts to use.	1
R. This is a question, not an answer. How could we meld credit for growth and workforce needs for students who are ready?	0
S. As long as the growth trajectory is towards fair, precise and clear outcomes, stay hands-off. When the trajectory is downward and crosses a threshold, it would trigger a response and a method of offering support and keeping district accountable.	2
T. Create a clear standard – credit for maintaining achievement of that standard. Move from creating a floor to a ceiling, e.g. move to college credit hours, associate degrees, levels of diplomas. <b>Everyone</b> needs room to grow.	0
U. Use a matrix of growth and achievement (see diagram) for both state accountability and student assessment. Maintain achievement status in all reports we create.	8
V. Make the accountability criteria clear to districts in a timely manner. Share status clearly before releasing to the community. Where are you in the trajectory?	0
W. The definition of college or career readiness varies tremendously by college or business group. Building backwards on the basis of this means our accountability system is not built “on firm rock” – it’s a moving target.	0
X. Our K-12 system is a dinosaur. System alignment between college and K-12. Increase college reach, make it more seamless between the two systems.	0

Diagram illustrating Idea U.



## Brainstormed Ideas for How to Reduce the Gaps in the State Accountability System in Order of Number of Dots

Brainstormed Idea	# Dots
M. The accountability system should NOT be a mirror of SES of the community. Capture the growth component in a simple way. Don't fail just because you're in an economically poor community. Align resources to fit needs.	8
U. Use a matrix of growth and achievement (see diagram) for both state accountability and student assessment. Maintain achievement status in all reports we create.	8
G. Better align federal and state assessments.	5
I. Include non-test measures, for example, community engagement or college readiness.	5
A. Make student <b>growth</b> an important measure of the accountability system.	4
D. Ensure that high levels of accountability have strategic resources and supports to improve academic outcomes in struggling schools.	4
J. Be clear about what we measure – just a few things that are the best measures.	4
E. Increase the clarity for parents and educators about what the results mean.	3
B. Make accountability the responsibility of the adults, not the children.	2
K. Give greater reward for completion of difficult things (e.g. degrees, certifications).	2
S. As long as the growth trajectory is towards fair, precise and clear outcomes, stay hands-off. When the trajectory is downward and crosses a threshold, it would trigger a response and a method of offering support and keeping district accountable.	2
F. Establish a common language to define outcomes.	1
H. Continue having data disaggregated to highlight struggling groups.	1
Q. Create a Performance Review Center to analyze the data, produce unbiased reports for districts to use.	1
C. Consider a way to take technology to do more “peer tutoring” for failing schools. Improvement over punishment.	0
L. Make sure teachers have resources and systems of professional development to help them succeed.	0
N. Much better coordination between districts and teacher preparation programs.	0
O. Let parents and the community know how they stand up against other communities. Have similar comparisons for the state and national levels.	0
P. Clarify the Commissioner of Education's actions, i.e. specify what “must do” rather than “may do”.	0
R. This is a question, not an answer. How could we meld credit for growth and workforce needs for students who are ready?	0
T. Create a clear standard – credit for maintaining achievement of that standard. Move from creating a floor to a ceiling, e.g. move to college credit hours, associate degrees, levels of diplomas. <b>Everyone</b> needs room to grow.	0
V. Make the accountability criteria clear to districts in a timely manner. Share status clearly before releasing to the community. Where are you in the trajectory?	0
W. The definition of college or career readiness varies tremendously by college or business group. Building backwards on the basis of this means our accountability system is not built “on firm rock” – it's a moving target.	0
X. Our K-12 system is a dinosaur. System alignment between college and K-12. Increase college reach, make it more seamless between the two systems.	0

## Attachment A: Detailed Process Agenda

### Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability

#### March 23, 2016 Work Session Agenda

##### Work Session Goal

- Begin to provide guidance about direction of recommendations for the final report.

##### Work Session Objectives

1. Seek agreement on the purpose(s) and roles of a state accountability system and the purpose(s) and roles of student assessment.
2. Begin to identify perceived strengths and gaps in the current student assessment system and the current state accountability system.
3. Brainstorm ideas for removing or reducing the gaps in the student assessment system and the state accountability system. Get input on which ideas have the greatest support among the members.

##### Work Session Agenda

- 1:00 Introduce Juli.  
*Dr. Fellows is an independent meeting facilitator and mediator who has been in private practice since 1993. She specializes in helping diverse groups agree on public policy recommendations.*  
Juli reviews and gets agreement to the session goal, objectives, agenda and discussion guidelines.
- 1:05 Move to small groups (assigned).  
Brainstorm the PURPOSE of a student assessment system (WHY we do it) and the roles it serves (HOW it is used.)
- 1:20 Back to full group.  
Report out. (2 minutes per group)  
Are there any ideas common to at least two groups? Find ideas or principles that the majority of members support.
- 1:40 Move to small groups.  
Brainstorm the PURPOSE of a state accountability system (WHY we do it) and the roles it serves (HOW it is used.)
- 1:55 Back to full group.  
Report out. (2 minutes per group).  
Are there any ideas common to at least two groups? Find ideas or principles that the majority of members support.
- 2:10 Move to small groups.  
Brainstorm perceived strengths of the current assessment system and (separate list) of the current accountability system.

- 2:30 Brainstorm perceived gaps in the current assessment system and (separate list) of the current accountability system.
- 3:00 Break
- 3:10 Large group discussion.  
Brainstorm options to meet overcome perceived gaps in the assessment system. (Large group - round robin. One idea per person, go around at least twice. Anyone may pass. Juli records.
- 3:30 Large group discussion.  
Brainstorm options to meet overcome perceived gaps in the accountability system. (Large group - round robin. One idea per person, go around at least twice. Anyone may pass. Juli records.
- 3:50 Dot voting on both lists. Each person gets five dots for each list (separate colors.).
- 4:05 Look at results of dot voting. Where is the greatest support?
- 4:30 Closing remarks.

**Attachment B: Commission Group Seating****March 23, 2016 Commission Meeting****GROUP SEATING ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>GROUP 1</b>	<b>GROUP 2</b>	<b>GROUP 3</b>
Aycock	Alexander (S)	Beltran (P)
Kim (S)	Castro (P)	Dow (S)
Trevino (P)	Hernandez Ferrier	Susser
Zerwas	Seliger	Taylor

P – Presenter

S – Scribe