

September 30, 2019

Frank T. Brogan
Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Mr. Brogan:

As part of its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan, Texas is working diligently to ensure that students take appropriate assessments and that the results of those assessments are included in accountability calculations. For successful implementation of this plan, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requested that the Texas Legislature (Legislature) appropriate funds for high school students who completed state testing requirements prior to high school so that these students are administered the ACT or the SAT to fulfill federal testing requirements. The Legislature appropriated these funds in June 2019.

During the 2019–2020 school year, Texas will implement a transition plan (see attachment I) to better align its assessment and accountability systems with ESSA requirements. To that end, the state will adopt additional administrative rules that will require all students to take appropriate assessments for use in federal accountability and will monitor the implementation of those rules as it collects assessment participation data. The final plan will go into effect for the 2020–2021 school year and will ensure that

- all students take the state’s grade-level assessments in reading and mathematics, unless they are in grade 8 and are assessed with English I or Algebra I, respectively;
- all students who complete the state’s high school assessments in middle school are assessed in high school using more advanced assessments; and
- all students are appropriately included in required high school tests and are accounted for in the calculation of reading and mathematics assessment participation rates.

Changes to the Texas ESSA plan will be necessary in the following areas:

- Academic Achievement: Now that funds are appropriated, the state would need to determine appropriate performance levels on the higher-level assessment that are equivalent to the Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level performance standards associated with the statewide assessment. Then, results from the higher-level assessment will be included in accountability calculations in a similar fashion as the statewide assessment;
- School Quality/Student Success—STAAR Student Achievement: The higher-level assessment in mathematics and/or English Language Arts would be included in accountability in the cycle in which the test is taken (e.g., Spring 2021 SAT taken would be applied to 2021 accountability outcomes); and

- Growth: Growth measures will be established once performance levels are put in place for ACT and SAT.

Texas' plan ensures that accelerated students take a higher-level assessment in high school so that the students continue to receive challenging content and high schools are held accountable for improving the achievement of all students.

Please feel free to contact Megan Aghazadian, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, at Megan.Aghazadian@tea.texas.gov, or Jamie Crowe, Director of Performance Reporting, at Jamie.Crowe@tea.texas.gov if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath, Commissioner of Education