

2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee

Summary of Meeting on May 18, 2016

Meeting Objective

The objective for the fourth meeting of the 2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) was to discuss the spring 2016 testing issues and continue to explore options for the construction of the state accountability system prescribed by House Bill (HB) 2804.

Spring 2016 Testing Issues

Texas Education Agency staff opened the meeting by introducing the Educational Testing Service (ETS) representatives and reviewing the previously released agency correspondence regarding testing issues.

Committee members raised a number of concerns about the spring 2016 test administration with the ETS representatives. ETS emphasized they are working with TEA staff to ensure that the data provided in the consolidated accountability file (CAF), which is used for ratings, are valid so students and districts will not be negatively impacted.

ATAC members discussed various options for restoring the integrity of the testing data and the testing process at large. TEA staff reiterated that a special analysis—described in the April 20 and April 29 correspondences to districts—will be conducted to determine whether inclusion of affected results would change a district's or campus's rating from *Improvement Required* to *Met Standard*. Any district or campus for which this is the case will receive a *Met Standard* rating. Furthermore, TEA staff noted that they plan to have additional discussions with ETS in order to ensure that every student who was directly affected is identified before the creation of the final CAF.

HB 2804 Accountability

Commissioner of Education Mike Morath began the discussion on HB 2804 by asking if there were any objections to setting 60 as the threshold for an A in Domain I to be in line with the state's 60 X 30 Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015–2030. There was no objection. The question was raised whether ratings in the A–F model should be norm referenced or criterion referenced. The commissioner expressed his preference for a criterion-referenced accountability system.

The commissioner raised the idea of having three separate standards for STAAR: satisfactory, proficient, and advanced (in place of the current phase-in progression that will ultimately result in only two standards: satisfactory and advanced). The ATAC members were in favor of the idea. It was also mentioned that for each of the EOC substitute assessments, corresponding satisfactory, proficient, and advanced levels should be identified.

Several other topics were also discussed:

- Should high school students be tested each year or just the first and last year of high school?
- Should Domain I measure percentage of tests or percentage of students?
- Should grades 3–8 be measured by student and high school measured by test?
- Should students be expected to reach final level II on both reading and mathematics or on only one of them?

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- Should a “+” be added to an elementary school’s overall grade in recognition of superior outcomes for its third grade students?
- Should a “+” be added to a middle school’s overall grade in recognition of the number of seventh and eighth grade students taking Algebra I?

No conclusions were reached on these questions. The committee also discussed giving high schools credit based on the number of EOCs a student had passed by ninth, 10th, and 11th grade. Members were in favor of the idea, but no final decision was reached.

Designing a Growth Measure for STAAR

Discussion shifted to Domain II and how to define growth. The commissioner put forth three types of growth measures (ranging in complexity from least to greatest): gain score, student growth percentile, and a value-added model (VAM). It was observed that the question of which model to choose is basically a decision between fairness/complexity and simplicity/understandability. Members agreed that while a two-step, value-added model may be appropriate for evaluating teachers, they don’t view it as an appropriate model for accountability because of its complexity and it holds district and campuses to different standards for different students. Members added that the value-added models are difficult to explain to any teachers and members of the community who have no foundation in statistics.

Domain IV Indicator Development

Staff briefly discussed the indicators currently in development for Domain IV. Postsecondary credit hours, AP/IB course completion, and the percentage of seventh and eighth grade students who receive instruction in preparing for success in high school and beyond school among the indicators covered.

Campus Comparison Groups

One ATAC member expressed concern about the way campus comparison groups are constructed. The current formula makes it possible for schools of choice (e.g., magnet schools and early college high schools) to be in the comparison groups of schools that are not able to recruit students, have a higher percentage of students served by special education, and can’t require attendance contracts. This, the member contended, gives the schools of choice an unfair advantage in the competition for distinction designations. The member suggested using other variables in the comparison group formula, such as percentage of students served by special education. Staff responded that the comparison group formula should use only those variables over which districts and campuses do not have control. Staff also agreed to look into to the issue in greater detail for 2017 accountability and beyond.

Concluding Thoughts and Future Plans

The committee agreed to meet again in the fall to continue development work on HB 2804. The date has not yet been set.