

2017-2018

December 14, 2017

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Hurricane Harvey Related Elimination of Certain Retesting Requirements for the Student Success Initiative in Grades 5 and 8, Update on Testing Schedules and Accountability Waiver Request

Given the impact of Hurricane Harvey, I am removing the requirement to conduct grade placement committees and any related June 2018 retests in 5th and 8th grade for all districts in the 47 county Presidential Disaster Declaration. The decisions outlined in this communication are based on TEA's commitment to our districts and students, with the priority of ensuring that those affected by the storm can make instructional decisions that are in the best interest of students.

Grade Placement Committee & June Retesting Requirements Waived

I have engaged in numerous conversations with district leaders, parents, and teachers to determine whether adjustments should be made this year related to the Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade advancement requirements for STAAR. Due to the impact of Hurricane Harvey, I am waiving the requirement for the creation of a Grade Placement Committee (composed of a principal, teacher, and the student's parents) for districts in the Presidential Disaster Declaration area due to Harvey. Specifically: if a student fails the second test administration, districts will not be required to administer a 3rd test and will have local discretion on whether that student should advance to the next grade. However, districts will be able to continue to administer the 3rd test in June 2018 if they believe it to be in the best interest of the students. For more information on procedures involved, please see this [link](#).

District Accountability

The Agency has not made any decisions related to district & campus accountability ratings. However, I have taken steps to collect information on the number of students impacted by the storm as well as information on facility damages. We will soon ask for information about staff who have been impacted by the storm. We will use all of this data to inform decisions as we adopt accountability rules in the spring. In the meantime, we will be asking for a waiver from certain federal accountability/school improvement requirements to ensure the state has maximum flexibility as any decisions are made. I am continuing to explore all options and more information will be shared once it is made available.

Testing Timelines

To be responsive to requests from multiple stakeholders the Agency released a survey on October 2nd to gauge the interest of districts to delay the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) May testing window in the impacted regions by two weeks.

Of the 309 districts surveyed there was a 59 percent response rate. Of those districts responding 69 percent, representing almost one million students, requested that the Agency maintain the current testing windows published on September 11, 2017. A summary of that information can be found [here](#). Based on this input the Agency will not be making any schedule changes for this school year's test administrations. Districts should continue to plan for administration of end-of-course exams on May 7-11 and for grades 3-8 math and reading, grade 5 science, grade 8 science and social studies, Algebra II, and English III on May 14-18.

For additional information related to the 2017-2018 testing calendar and SSI requirements please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner