

2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on March 1, 2016

Meeting Objective

The objective for the third meeting of the 2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) was to discuss options for the construction of the state accountability system prescribed by HB 2804.

Discussion with Commissioner of Education Mike Morath

Texas Education Agency Commissioner Mike Morath opened the meeting with an invitation to discuss accountability design decisions in response to HB 2804. Discussion focused primarily on Domain I.

Committee members discussed what percentage of students should be expected to meet the Final Level II standard in Domain I in order for a district or campus to be eligible to earn an A for that domain. The commissioner asked the committee what percentage of students in a typical school should be able to reach the Final Level II passing standard. About half of the members agreed that a large majority of students, perhaps approaching 100 percent, should be expected to meet the Final Level II standard. The commissioner commented that he asked the same question to a group of superintendents. While a great majority of superintendents responded that most students should be able to reach the Final Level II passing standard, they indicated that expecting a smaller percentage of student to reach Final Level II (between 60 and 80) was reasonable. Commissioner Morath added that 60 percent of students at the Final Level II passing standard is in line with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX plan. This plan calls for 60 percent of Texans between the ages of 25 and 34 to hold some type of degree or postsecondary credential by the year 2030. The committee discussed whether a 60 percent goal would be an appropriate standard for the postsecondary readiness portion of Domain I. ATAC members who favored a lower percentage cited language barriers, student disabilities, and student mobility challenges that will keep some students from meeting Final Level II despite excellent instruction.

While recognizing the appeal of coordinating education accountability goals with other goals at the state level, ATAC members raised a number of concerns. Research on the relationship between achieving the Final Level II passing standard and post-secondary success was not universally accepted. With respect to fairness and comparability, it was noted that the challenges of educating special populations often fall unequally on campuses serving diverse student populations. Several members also commented that smaller and more rural districts have limited resources. The accountability system must respect these campuses that are at a disadvantage. Other members noted that the term "college-readiness" in Domain I is not well-defined, nor is success in college simply dependent upon academic skills. Character skills, such as perseverance, grit, optimism, are also crucial, but these skills are not evaluated on the STAAR. Some of these concerns can be addressed in Domain IV.

The committee also considered which assessments and how many should meet a given standard for a student to count toward a district's or campus's Domain I score. ATAC members recommended that the average of all of a student's tests should meet the STAAR satisfactory standard for a student to count toward the STAAR satisfactory standard portion of the Domain I score. In a separate vote, 12 members voted to recommend that a student should count

2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on March 1, 2016

toward the STAAR college-readiness standard portion of the Domain I score if he or she meets that standard on any one test. ATAC requested more data from TEA that could help determine targets for both portions of Domain I. Members discussed how to combine the two portions of Domain I to calculate an overall score. The committee made no final recommendation for this calculation.

Designing a Growth Measure for STAAR

The committee turned to Domain II, Student Progress, and the task of defining student growth. Domain II has two growth standards similar to the current Index 2, but the higher standard in HB 2804 is aimed more specifically toward college-readiness. Members commented that the system needs to define that goal and then plot a reasonable course toward attainment. The committee expressed a desire to make this system transparent and understandable to parents. The system should also respect that the path to success for a given student is dependent upon the student's starting point.

The committee acknowledged there will be challenges in Domain II. ATAC members discussed the use of transition tables and the benefits of rolling averages to address the challenge of determining the amount of growth expected for each student. HB 2804 doesn't specify whether students re-taking a test can be included in Domain II. The committee discussed whether Domain II could include the performance of students who took but did not pass a STAAR assessment the previous year. This could be used for only those courses with an EOC assessment for which there is no progress measure.

Domain Models

TEA staff presented domain models based on discussions from earlier ATAC and APAC meetings. In Domain I the model uses campus comparison groups in assigning grades. Members pointed out the importance of considering the pool of students from which the campus is drawing when forming comparison groups. A member voiced a concern that some campuses have admission requirements that allow them to selectively maintain academically superior student bodies predisposed to better outcomes. For the sake of fairness and clarity, the member recommended that the system be structured to identify these campuses and group them appropriately. It was suggested that this information can be added to PEIMS and/or AskTED.

TEA staff presented an option for Domain III which uses a 60 percent goal and measures performance gaps from that standard. ATAC members suggested taking a two- or three-year average to see how the groups performed. The committee reviewed the list of indicators for Domain IV proposed at previous advisory committee meetings. The challenge of finding valid indicators for campuses other than high schools remains. There were questions as to what constitutes a semester and whether IB credit should count in a similar fashion as AP. With respect to certifications, ATAC said that a set list would be helpful. Members discussed whether all post-secondary certifications should be equally eligible for credit in this system.

2016 Accountability Technical Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on March 1, 2016

TEA staff reminded ATAC members that distinction designations remain in statute and will continue under the HB 2804 accountability system.

Possible Use of Survey Data in Domain IV

The committee reviewed a survey that was distributed to education service centers. The survey seeks feedback on the feasibility of using surveys to collect additional non-academic outcomes for use in the accountability system. The committee recommended that any survey used in Domain IV should focus questions on student preparedness for postsecondary success. Members also discussed the difficulty of deriving a letter grade from the results of a survey.

Concluding Thoughts and Future Plans

With the commissioner's recent final 2016 accountability decisions, the accountability system for 2016 is set. Except for revisiting the index targets, few changes are anticipated at this time for 2017 accountability. To continue development work on HB 2804, the committee agreed to meet again on Wednesday, May 18, 2016.