

Local Accountability System

Frequently Asked Questions



*** Note: Please see the final section of this document for updated options in response to COVID-19.***

Local Accountability System (LAS)

What is the local accountability system?

House Bill (HB) 22 (85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2017) established the Local Accountability System (LAS) to allow districts and open-enrollment charter schools to develop local accountability system plans for their campuses. A district's local accountability plan provides stakeholders with detailed information about school performance and progress over time. Local accountability plans may vary by school type (elementary school, middle school, high school, and K-12) and by school group (magnet schools, early college high schools, etc.), but must apply equally to all campuses selected by the district for inclusion in local accountability as applicable by school type and group. Once approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), it is expected that a plan be operational and relatively unchanged for three to five years.

How does the local accountability system impact a district rating?

The local accountability system campus ratings do not affect the district's state accountability system rating. District ratings are determined by campus state accountability system ratings only; these ratings do not include local accountability system ratings.

How does the local accountability system impact a campus rating?

At the end of each applicable school year, districts and open-enrollment charter schools assign overall and domain-specific letter grade ratings of A-F for each campus selected by the district for inclusion in the local accountability system, according to performance outcomes as outlined in the approved district plan. Campuses with an overall rating of A, B, or C under the state accountability system for the applicable year of the plan may combine state and local accountability ratings with the state rating contributing at least 50% of the combined rating. The final official campus rating produced by the combination of state and local data may be higher or lower than the rating derived solely from the state data. Campuses that are not rated under the state accountability system are not eligible to combine state and local ratings. The local accountability data for paired campuses and other campuses not rated under the state accountability system may, however, be displayed on TEA, district, and campus websites.

Local Accountability Plan

What is a local accountability plan?

A local accountability plan is created at the district-level to measure campus outcomes that are not included in the state accountability system. A local accountability plan is a coherent set of outcomes based on district needs and goals for student achievement. Outcomes are measured through defined components based on valid and reliable data sources. Plan components are organized by domain for reporting purposes.

How does a district create a local accountability plan?

Interested districts are required to participate in TEA-sponsored training and may spend multiple years developing a local accountability system plan. The local accountability plan is the outcome of a district process that may include school board members, district staff, campus personnel, parents, students, and community stakeholders. The local accountability plan represents district priorities based on needs and goals for student outcomes. Districts are required to use baseline data to set campus goals in the local accountability plan unless they are using vetted measures with well-established cut-points.

How many years does a district follow a local accountability plan?

Interested districts should view participation in the local accountability system as a multi-year commitment, usually 3–5 years, to allow adequate time for process development although districts have the option to amend or withdraw annually without penalty.

During the first year, districts participate in training opportunities sponsored by TEA to develop a plan. During this year, districts examine data, identify needs, develop a strategic plan, and determine data sources for measuring outcomes.

At least one year of baseline data is needed for each component for inclusion in the plan for most data sources. If at least one year of baseline data is not available and the data source includes standards based on a nationally or statewide normed sample, that information may be used to set district goals as a substitution for baseline data.

Districts with approved plans move into an initial year of implementation. During the initial implementation year, officially combining local and state ratings for public dissemination is optional. In addition, districts may work with TEA to refine aspects of the plan for re-submission and finalization for the remaining time of the three-year plan approval period.

After the initial year of implementation, the district plan is established, and local accountability ratings are required to be posted for each campus included in the local accountability plan. For campuses receiving a “C” or higher on the state accountability system, the official campus rating is calculated by combining the state and local accountability ratings as outlined in the approved plan.

Participation in Local Accountability

How does a district participate in the local accountability system?

As the first step, district staff should familiarize themselves with local accountability system guidelines and complete a notice of interest. District participation in the local accountability system requires participation in TEA-sponsored training and submission of a local accountability plan that must be approved by TEA and may include review by an external panel.

Can a district participate in the local accountability system and other initiatives at the same time?

Yes. The local accountability system is flexible enough to allow districts to incorporate goals or activities arising from related initiatives into the district local accountability plan.

What if a district decides not to participate for the entire implementation period?

District participation is optional. There is no penalty for ceasing participation in the local accountability system. If a district ceases participation following the official TEA posting of state and local accountability system ratings, the district approved plan will be considered void for the remaining plan approval period. To rejoin the local accountability system process, a district will need to attend training as required by TEA and follow the plan submission and approval process.

How much of a commitment does participation require?

District commitment varies according to the individual characteristics and needs of districts. Interested districts are encouraged to review the LAS guidelines and contact the TEA LAS Team directly for more information.

Does participation in the local accountability system require money?

There is no fee to participate in the local accountability system, however, district expenses vary according to the individual characteristics and needs of districts. Participation requires developing a district-wide local accountability plan for school types/groups according to the district process, including stakeholders in the plan development and refinement process, collecting data from participating campuses, calculating outcomes, and providing TEA with campus-level data in the summer following the applicable school year.

How many staff members do I need to dedicate to this?

The number of staff members dedicated to a local accountability plan varies according to the individual characteristics and needs of districts. Interested districts are encouraged to learn more about the guidelines and requirements of the local accountability system. Many districts have been able to successfully implement the process with existing staff.

Plan Components, Domains, and Measures

What are some examples of plan components?

The *Local Accountability System Guide* provides current information about process guidelines along with exemplars of plan components. In addition to the examples in the guide, other components may be approved if they are consistent with program guidelines. Each component will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the local accountability process will include additional options to provide more flexibility for districts. Please contact the LAS Team directly if you have specific questions about possible components or for more general information about components.

How does a district measure components and outcomes?

As required by statute, local accountability plan measures must contain levels that allow for differentiation (with assigned standards for achieving the differentiated levels) and provide for the assignment of a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. At least one year of baseline data for each data source is needed for inclusion in the plan. If at least one year of baseline data is not available and the data source includes standards based on a nationally normed sample, that information may be used to set district goals as an alternative for local baseline data. If more than one year of baseline data is available, districts may use one or more years of data to determine the current district average for that measure. Current levels of achievement are used when assigning standards for achieving differentiated levels (i.e., campus letter grades) over the course of plan implementation.

What are the standards for reliability and validity?

Measures must also meet standards for reliability and validity. In terms of **specific measures, tests, or ratings**:

A measure is considered **reliable** if it delivers consistent results across administrations.

- ▶ Examples include forms of assessments that have been created and tested to be equivalent to each other and observational ratings conducted by trained and assessed raters who have reached a level of consistency with each other.

A measure is considered **valid** if the resulting outcome represents what the test is designed to measure.

- ▶ Examples include content-specific tests focused on the related content topic, surveys designed to capture beliefs and attitudes about certain topics, and rating protocols with clearly defined observational evidence.

Reliability and **validity** are closely related, and both must be evident for a measure, test, or rating to be included as component outcomes in a local accountability system plan.

In terms of the **overall local accountability system plan**, in addition to including reliable and valid measures:

- ▶ A plan is considered **reliable** if it is applicable over time across campuses.
- ▶ A plan is considered **valid** to the degree that the results measure progress toward meaningful local student outcome goals.

For more information, please reference the following.

Popham, W. James (2018). *Assessment literacy for educators in a hurry*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

How are components and domains weighted?

Components may be weighted from 5% to 60% with a minimum of two to a maximum of ten components per school type plan.

Domains are weighted as the summation of component weights.

- ▶ Ex: a domain with 3 components of 10%, 50%, and 20% would have a weight of 80% of the entire plan. The plan could have from one to four additional components in one or more different domains for the remaining 20%.

What are scaled score conversions?

Districts must use a one-to-one correspondence when converting campus ratings for each component to a 30 to 100 scale for local accountability ratings. The floor of 30 was selected to align with the state accountability system that uses this same scale for the F rating.

Are locally developed measures/surveys allowable?

Districts may elect to include locally developed measures/surveys as part of their district plan with approval from TEA.

Plan Approval Process

Who reviews and approves the district plans?

District plans are reviewed and approved by the TEA LAS Team and may include review by an external panel consisting of staff from participating districts as specified by statute.

Who evaluates the reliability and validity of the measures?

The TEA LAS Team evaluates the reliability and validity of the proposed measures according to the program definitions for reliable and valid.

*A measure is considered **reliable** if it delivers consistent results across administrations.*

*A measure is considered **valid** if the resulting outcome represents what the test is designed to measure.*

Reliability and **validity** are closely related, and both must be evident for a measure, test, or rating to be included as component outcomes in a local accountability system plan.

Can district plans be amended once they are approved?

Yes, Once approved, district plans are expected to remain relatively unchanged for 3–5 years, however, they may be amended with approval from TEA. At the end of each three-year period, the district or open-enrollment charter school has the option to modify and resubmit a local accountability plan. If a significant local change occurs during the three-year period such that a part of the plan is no longer viable, a modification to the approved local accountability plan may be requested.

Ratings

When are ratings submitted?

Districts submit local ratings to TEA at the end of the school year according to the timeline established annually, usually in early July.

What data is submitted to TEA?

Districts submit component, domain, and overall scaled scores for each campus included in an approved district plan.

What happens if a district is unable to submit ratings for one or more campuses for one or more components?

The district is expected to submit ratings for all campuses included in the local accountability plan unless the campus does not meet the minimum-size criteria for the component(s) or there are other extenuating circumstances impacting the campus. If the latter, the district should notify TEA as soon as possible after the impact is known.

Posting Requirements

How are local accountability ratings shared?

TEA posts the combined overall and domain scaled scores and ratings at <https://txschools.gov/>. Other TEA public websites display the separate overall state and local accountability scores and ratings along with the weight assigned to each local accountability system. Statute requires districts to post ratings for all participating campuses along with an explanation of the methodology used to determine the performance ratings; see below for more information.

What is the district responsible for posting?

Districts and open-enrollment charter schools must post local accountability system component, domain, and overall scores and ratings along with rationales for goals and methodologies for calculations on the district website(s).

Additional Flexibility for COVID-19

In response to the impact of COVID-19, the local accountability process will offer expanded flexibility to address two main challenges – incomplete 2019–20 baseline data and potential disruptions to 2020–21 instruction. Possible adaptations could include options such as, but not limited to, the use of beginning-of-year (BOY) or middle-of-year (MOY) data to establish baseline and set targets or establishing pro-rated targets based on factors such as percentage of students engaging in asynchronous instruction or disruptions to instruction due to extended school closings. Plans will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis to allow districts to design innovative options while ensuring the proposed ideas are consistent with program guidelines.