

January 31, 2020

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:

I am writing to submit amendments to the State's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. The amendments proposed seek to increase alignment with the intent of ESSA and, ultimately, improve student outcomes in Texas.

Graduation Rate

Currently, Texas evaluates the four-year graduation rate under ESSA for high schools, K–12s, and districts and requires student groups that are at or above 90 percent to exceed that rate by at least a tenth of a percent in the following year(s).

In order to recognize the challenges faced by alternative education campuses and the potential negative implications for campuses and districts with small numbers, TEA is proposing to update the methodology for the graduation rate indicator to evaluate campuses against the four-year long-term target, the interim target, and against expected growth toward the long-term target.

Federal School Improvement Identification

In order to allow additional time for campuses to capture graduates, rather than using a four-year federal graduation rate to identify any Title I or non-Title I campus that does not attain at least a 67 percent graduation rate, TEA is proposing the use of the six-year federal graduation rate to identify these campuses for comprehensive support and improvement.

Additionally, to align with the intent of ESSA, TEA is proposing the escalation of Title I additional targeted support campuses to comprehensive support and improvement after three consecutive years, rather than escalating Title I targeted support and improvement campuses. In response to public comments, the amendment includes a delay in implementation—an additional targeted support identification in 2020, 2021, and 2022 for a Title I campus would result in comprehensive support and improvement implementation in the 2022–2023 school year.

Eighth Grade Math Exception

Language was updated in this section to clarify that Texas requires students who take the Algebra I end-of-course assessment in middle school to take the SAT or ACT at least once in grades 9–12. The results of these assessments will be included in the accountability performance and participation calculations beginning in August 2021.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided local education agencies (LEAs) in Texas with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the amendment. A To the Administrator Addressed letter was distributed to LEAs and posted to the agency's website on December 18, 2019. TEA received 17 public comments, which are summarized and attached.

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 amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Morath', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education