Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) Taskforce

October 12, 2021 Zoom Meeting Notes
Attendees

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Welcome/Introductions/Updates

- SB 15 – Will virtual programs be rated like a regular campus and count for the district and campus?
  - Virtual students will be counted in August accountability like all other students. We cannot differentiate between in person and virtual in August. In late September we receive attendance data, and we will then calculate and publish a virtual program "rating". These virtual program ratings will be released in November (most likely). This will allow us time to process the data for virtual students. Students must have attended virtually for 50.0% or more of the school year to be considered full-time virtual. Large districts will have a lot of students to evaluate; some smaller districts may not meet minimum size in certain indicators. We may have to revisit accountability subset for these virtual ratings due to the late issuance of county-district-campus numbers (CDCNs) for grandfathered programs.
  - Will the 95 percent participation rule apply in Closing the Gaps for virtual ratings?
    - We are not sure if 95 percent participation rule will apply. We can make that decision for SB 15 data as it is not federally required data.
  - Do non-funded students get included in the virtual ratings?
    - Yes, we will identify and include students independent of funding. If students take a STAAR test, without regard to funding eligibility, they will be included in August accountability and in the virtual ratings.
  - What happens with campus pairing and SB 15?
    - We believe we will run one virtual program rating per district. We will not differentiate between school type.
  - Recommendation: Consider providing to districts a direct in-person versus virtual performance data comparison. Normally our in-person students performed better, so it would be interesting to see that.

2022 AEA Registration

- SB 879 updated dropout recovery enrollment requirements from 50 percent at age 17 to 60 percent at age 16. It also updated the criteria to permit the commissioner to designate as a dropout recovery school a campus or district that applies for and receives the designation.
- HB 572 added enrollment in dropout recovery schools as an at-risk indicator for students.
- Campuses must meet either the current year 75% at-risk criterion or the prior-year at-risk safeguard provision to be eligible.
- Campuses must also have at least 90% of their students enrolled in grades 6-12, as verified through 2021–22 PEIMS fall enrollment data.
- What will those campuses that serve younger students become?
  - They will just be under regular accountability. AEA is specifically for dropout prevention/recovery.
- Campuses that do not meet the dropout recovery school (DRS) statutory definition, but do meet the AEA criteria, may apply for a discretionary DRS identification.
- Is this system also appropriate for exceptional campuses/programs to use to request a waiver for a *Not Rated* label prior to ratings? These would be campuses that serve a targeted special population for which the accountability system is not an accurate measure of performance.
  - Feedback: Yes.

- They will not be required to have the 75% at-risk as this does not fall under AEA. We could pre-register those that submitted an appeal for this reason in the past.

Student Achievement Indicators and Weighting
- D1A – add performance level weights (1, 2 and 3 points for Approaches, Meets, Masters)
- All DRS campuses had higher scores with this model
- Average raw score went from 29-40.
- On this measure, with respect to the reset, once we have the component score, will the scaled score be adjusted as well?
  - Yes, whatever the new measure is, we will scale it as well. All the changes we propose will result in scaling adjustments to ensure a range of differentiation.
- Completion Rate and College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR)
  - Previously we had discussed moving CCMR and graduation rate to Closing the Gaps.
  - We want to have a system where districts are not penalized for getting previous dropouts back into school. We could include previous dropout students in the numerator only for CCMR and completion rates if they are successful. These students are less likely to earn a CCMR point, so by only including them in the numerator we will incentivize dropout recovery.
  - Do you see this idea gaining more traction with the formation of this committee? I think this is the right direction to move to drive adult behavior by removing a perceived penalty. We will see if we can get this accomplished for our AEAs.
    - The idea of how we regain dropouts has taken off and figuring out how we can further incentivize CCMR. The number one thing that backs up our recommendation is the data. It is hard to get a previous dropout to graduate and it is hard for a previous dropout to meet a CCMR indicator.
  - We need to have a discussion around the COVID impact on our dropouts. We need to see what adjustments need to be made.
    - Do you see this more with the Class of 2021 or 2022?
      - Class of 2021.
      - We will access that data this February and include adjustments in the reset as needed.
  - Would D1 components weighting remain the same?
    - It is hard to say how we should adjust the weighting until we see STAAR outcomes with the updated methodology. If we can adjust our STAAR methodology, then we will need to reevaluate the weighting.
  - When a student enrolls, there is not a way to know if that student was a dropout. There are hundreds of kids that come in that have already dropped out, but there is not a code to tell us that because they were not officially coded a dropout in the leaver record.
    - That is data TEA would have to run and flag those students. It would be a backend data lookup on our end. We would need to look at attendance patterns for those students for the previous years before they graduated.
  - Recommendation: Legally, we have access to previous discipline records when students enroll with us. Students that come back may get the same treatment that made them leave previously because we were not aware of their academic history. If we can get a historical data set for these students (with attendance, discipline, etc.), that will help us better understand these students. Submitting a PEIMS data request in the same fashion

we currently submit a STAAR history request could help resolve this issue. There is not enough data in TREX.

- o When it comes to incentivizing for DRS, what is the expectation/role of the home campus with regards to these dropouts? Do we want to incentivize for the home campus to take these dropout students back?
  - ▪ We will put that on our long-range proposal list. How do we encourage positive adult behavior around students who are at risk of dropping out?
- o Is it possible the student's diploma can have their home campus printed instead of the DRS if the student chooses that?
  - ▪ TEA Curriculum Response: There are no state requirements/restrictions on what the diploma looks like, so campus name would be a district-level decision. The only requirement is that it must be a standard, undifferentiated diploma (meaning it can't indicate SPED or things of that nature).
- o Previously we were able to have the hold-harmless for the inclusion of the dropout rate, will that still hold for the reset?
  - ▪ Yes. For DRS if they do not have a graduation rate, we will only pull in the annual dropout rate if it helps.

School Progress: Academic Growth Indicators and Weighting

- Use the current STAAR AEA bonus points methodology: rate of retests from prior years, Approaches grade level or higher in current year.
- We could keep D2A to give them credit for the growth and use the above methodology for D2B. This would provide DRS with a better of methodology in D2. This would keep in the growth for campuses/districts that love the growth aspect.
- Typically bonus points were treated as the icing on the cake. But now, with this proposal it would be in D2 as a separate domain, correct?
  - o We want to redo the system so that bonus points are not necessary.
- What if we put a limit on the number of times a student fails an EOC and is included in accountability? Maybe after the 3rd retest attempt (cycle), they are excluded from the denominator?
  - o We will look into this.
- I am assuming we will have scales that would match this proposal.
  - o Yes, we will not run this for non-DRS. We have existing bonus points methodology we can use to set scaling and cut points.
- Point to come back to: How to credit advanced graduation plans without bonus points
- Closing the Gaps – Overarching Ideas
  - o Develop DRS-specific indicators that measure outcomes for previous dropouts, completion rates, and CCMR along with indicators that meet Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. We must keep four-year graduation rate, but we can weight it differently for DRS and include a completion rate.
  - o Reset weighting and targets for DRS.
  - o Propose student group targets that are unique for DRS.
  - o Pull DRS out and identify the bottom five percent separately for comprehensive support.
  - o Additional ideas being discussed as part of the reset:
    - ▪ Award partial points based on distance from target instead of a Y/N (example: 0-4 possible points)
    - ▪ Rework school improvement identification/exit to align with any updates

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Next Steps/Accountability Reset

- Next Steps: Focus on Closing the Gaps
  - Model Closing the Gaps data
    - Student group targets
    - Weighting
    - Differentiated outcomes
  - Updates to school improvement (we will produce recommendations for other parts of the agency in the spring)
    - Consider DRS-specific interventions
    - Develop an intervention framework specifically for DRS
  - Align school improvement and overall grade more closely
  - Evaluate minimum size requirements for DRS-specific indicators
  - One of our recommendations that we have thought about is how to provide front end support for opening brand new AEAs or for people newly hired to run an AEA, etc.
  - One thing to be mindful of is the need for a data validation piece around this data.
  - When looking at minimum size we should look at percentage of population versus a straight count. We could come up with a minimum size that is statistically significant and representative of the campus. We should approach it in a thoughtful way.
    - It is easy for us to use this smaller, specific group of campuses to help inform a larger decisions about minimum size requirements.
- 2023 Accountability Reset
  - The DRS system is a large portion that we will present to the commissioner. Our goal is to release the framework for the reset at the end of May 2022. Because of COVID we will not have the data to set targets/cut points until we get 2022 data, so we will wait until fall 2022 to finalize and publish those.
  - Is there any talk about resetting 2022 cut points?
    - The issue with just using 2021 data to reset targets for 2022, is we had low participation with our lower performing student groups (ELs, Hispanic, African American, etc.). We will not reset targets in 2022.
  - Current discussion topics for all campuses (not just AEA)
    - Scaling/target adjustments as needed
    - Growth methodology revision
    - Adjustments to Closing the Gaps
      - 0-4 methodology instead of Y/N for each indicator
      - Addition of non-STAAR indicators such as chronic absenteeism for elementaries/middle schools.
      - ELP targets by school type
    - Alignment of district rating with its campuses' ratings
    - Closer alignment with federal label and overall grade
  - Comments/Questions:
    - Wouldn't scaled score comparisons put AEAs in jeopardy? You are reducing the number of students that can be in the pool for Closing the Gaps.
      - Students must have a test score in 2021 and in 2022 to receive a growth measure, but we will see an increase in EOCs this year over last year. A group of states have been working with USDE about our concerns over lack of data.

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- For Closing the Gaps for traditional campuses, the economic disadvantaged status is indicative of their performance.
- Will we keep Academic Achievement at the Meets Grade Level for DRS?
  - The Academic Achievement name will stand because it is federally required, but we will change/adjust to evaluate the data used in D1A for DRS.
- Can you walk me through growth methodology again?
  - With the current STAAR progress measure, the tests need to be comparable and use the same scale. When the reading/language arts redesign is implemented, a change to the growth measure would allow a measurement across the redesign. With the existing STAAR progress measure, we will not be able to have a growth measure for 2023 because of the significant adjustments to the test. We have been modeling a lot of data to allow for a new growth measure that will allow for us to continue calculating growth even through any redesigns with assessments. It will allow more students to be included in the growth calculation to provide growth across grade 8 to English I, etc.
- For 2021 Optional Alternative Evaluation, can AEAs be considered without the 95 percent STAAR participation?
  - Those decisions are set to be final on November 3rd. They have been passed up the chain to the commissioner and Governor's office.
  - The 95 percent participation rate was set in the SB 1365 statute, based on ESSA guidelines for calculating participation.

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Running Notes: Accountability Suggestions and Concerns

- We need clear definitions of previous dropout for accountability purposes. Previous dropouts need to be identified based off data other than the PEIMS code.
- Need access to historical PEIMS data for students who transfer in.
- COVID impact on graduation rates and dropout rates.
- Is there a possibility to limit the number of accountability years a retester is included?
- Ensuring we close any loopholes in the system that a district/campus may try to exploit.

Other Suggestions
School Improvement/Interventions

- Consider AEA specific interventions.
- Develop an intervention framework specifically for AECs.
- Streamline interventions between Results Driven Accountability (RDA) and SI to reduce time and paperwork burdens.
- Create data validations for the new indicators.

AEA Distinction Designations Ideas

- Award points for individual graduation committee (IGC) reduction because of improved STAAR outcomes.
- Award points for retester outcomes based on DRS averages.
- Recognize SAT/ACT participation/performance and/or TSIA performance.
- Recognize rates of advanced diploma plans.

Misc.

- Partner with research institution/university to finalize AEA taskforce recommendations.
- How do we better support AECs?
    - Alternative instruction unit at TEA to support AECs
    - Guidebook for opening/operating an AEC
    - Mentoring program
    - Exemplar AEA campuses list
- AECs and their districts need better access to their data, and the ability to make comparisons to non-AEA, for example.
    - TEA is producing a new data dashboard product and we will be sure to include the functionality to filter to non-AEA and AEA.

Ideas from previous meetings to revisit

- Evaluate minimum size criteria (minimum number required to receive a rating).
- See embedded notes from this meeting about statistically significant.
    - Need to research
        - Based on student count. Minimum number of tests versus minimum number of students *(research the original reasoning for tests vs. students).*
        - Or adjust minimum number of tests (*research other states' ESSA plan minimum numbers for evaluation*).
        - Look back at previous minimum sizes (*10% rule*).
    - Research notes: Tests vs. students – back when creating the Index accountability system in 2012, this topic was analyzed, and the conclusion was that the difference was negligible. Since the current system uses tests, agency staff does not recommend DRS

changing to students and recommends DRS process using the regular system's data sources.