DATE:	**October 31, 2023**
SUBJECT:	**2023 Accountability Manual**
CATEGORY:	**Notice**
NEXT STEPS:	**Share with appropriate staff**

The purpose of this communication is to inform school systems about the publication of the final rule adopting the *2023 Accountability Manual.* A few key points:

- The final Manual, which was filed on Wednesday, October 25th, is now posted online. The manual is the result of two years of stakeholder feedback, a posted framework in January 2023, and feedback collected from the proposed rule posted in May.
- **The issuance of *A-F* ratings under this final rule is pending and subject to change based on judicial rulings or decisions from the 88th Legislature during a special called session.**
- The Manual also covers topics related to designations under the federal accountability system and Results Driven Accountability (RDA), which take effect per the final rule.

As communicated in the TAA on September 12, 2023, the publication of the *2023 Accountability Manual* was delayed to conduct further analyses of growth data. After gathering feedback from stakeholders, the final *2023 Accountability Manual* includes updated STAAR growth goals that were set using a baseline of 2019 rather than the previously proposed baseline of 2019 and 2022. Specifically, cut points for student growth in Domain 2A are lower than what was published originally in January 2023 and included in the proposed rule in May, and some conforming changes were made to Domain 3 growth cut scores. This update ensures that goals will not be influenced by anomalous growth data from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Judicial Impact on Schedule

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is providing this notice to assist school systems in planning for the possible release of *A-F* ratings, given that the language of the final rule identifies November 16th as the date of ratings issuance and the rule was finalized last week before any judicial ruling. However, the dates provided are pending and subject to change based on judicial rulings or decisions from the 88th Legislature during a special called session.

To provide a two-week notice before 2023 ratings would have been released publicly, TEA's planned schedule has been: Ratings are scheduled in the final rule to be issued on November 16, 2023. However, this date only applies to the extent that TEA is able to follow its final rule pending judicial rulings or special session legislation related to accountability.

To provide information to help school systems internally evaluate performance, *What If* ratings for the 2021-22 school year based on the newly final rule's methodology from the *2023 Accountability Manual* will be posted for districts in TEAL on **November 7, 2023**. Statewide summaries of 2021-22 *What If* ratings will also be made available. Additionally, on **November 14, 2023**, underlying data for 2022-23 used to calculate ratings based on the *2023 Accountability Manual* will be posted in TEAL.

This year's *Accountability Manual* also incorporates all information related to RDA, which was previously published in a separate rule. District RDA reports will be published in TEAL on **November 16**. Public publication of RDA with determination level descriptors will come approximately one month later. The RDA report release schedule is not subject to change pending judicial rulings.

Similarly, Comprehensive, Targeted, and Additional Targeted Support designations under federal accountability will be issued on **November 16**, as noted in the final rule. The release of designations under federal accountability is not subject to change pending judicial rulings. Of note: the alignment between federal and state accountability systems that was established in 2017 under the *A-F* system may be impacted by judicial rulings or special session legislation related to accountability. Additional information related to required actions under federal accountability will be provided in subsequent correspondence.

Final *2023 Accountability Manual*
The final *[2023 Accountability Manual](),* which provides the framework and rules for the refreshed accountability system, is available. Chapters 1–12 have been adopted. The public comment period on the proposed rule opened May 19, 2023, and closed June 20, 2023. Six changes were made from the proposed Manual to the final Manual based on public comment and related analysis:
- **School Progress Domain, Part A:** The Score Cut Points table and the Closing the Gaps Domain Score Cut Points table have been changed to align with the update to set School Progress Domain cut points using a baseline of student growth from the 2018–19 school year.
- **Closing the Gaps Performance Targets tables for both Growth: RLA and Growth: Math components:** The targets (2023 Target, Next Interim Target, Long Term Target for each student group, for all campus types) have been updated to align with the update to set baselines using student growth from the 2018–19 school year.
- **Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) STAAR Methodology:** Within Domain 1, the STAAR methodology for AEA campuses has been updated to better reflect the intention of AEA Taskforce recommendations.
- **Minimum Indicators for Student Achievement Domain Score:** STAAR Component Only: Within Domain 3, the minimum number of indicators were reduced from four to three to allow campuses with only one lowest performing racial/ethnic group to be evaluated.
- **English Language Proficiency:** Within Domain 3, progress in TELPAS Writing is now allowed to count towards the current calculation.
- **Identification of Schools for Improvement:** Additional Targeted Support (ATS) campuses will be identified based on student groups' performance relative to the cut point established for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) campus identification (bottom 5% of Title I schools' Closing the Gaps Scale Scores, by school type).

Background on *A–F* Refresh
During the past two years, TEA has engaged in an extensive process to gather input and feedback from thousands of Texas educators, superintendents, school board members, parents, community and business leaders, legislative staff, and other groups from across the state to understand how changes will affect school systems in order to develop an accountability framework that ensures Texas is a national leader in preparing students for postsecondary success.

The Texas *A–F* accountability system was established by House Bill (HB) 22 (85th Regular Session) in 2017, for the purpose of continuously improving student performance toward the goals of eliminating achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and ensuring the state is a national leader in preparing students for postsecondary success. The refreshed *A-F* system will make adjustments to better reflect the three objectives of the system: rigor for students; fairness for school systems and campuses; and transparency for parents and the public. In the *A-F* refresh, ratings will continue to be fair for school systems allowing for schools to be graded on student achievement or student progress, whichever provides the higher grade, while maintaining a focus on the students most in need. Valid, reliable, comparable, and objective measures of student outcomes are also key to ensuring *A–F* ratings are fair, rigorous, and transparent to enable parents and educators to celebrate successes while improving student supports.

Prior to 2017, cut points and indicators in the accountability system were updated annually, preventing school systems from easily comparing year-over-year performance in reaching goals for students across the state. Since the passage of HB 22 in 2017, state law requires cut points and indicators in the accountability system to be updated periodically, not necessarily annually, to achieve the statutory goals of reducing achievement gaps and ensure Texas is a national leader in preparing students for postsecondary success. Given this policy change, cut points and indicators in the *A–F* system have remained largely unchanged since 2017.

This approach of holding cut points and indicators constant for the last five years was maintained even though the agency received consistent feedback about needed changes in the system design, especially with regard to district rating methodology. In addition, the underlying performance of schools across the state would have warranted some annual cut point increases, especially with regard to college, career, and military readiness. Rather than making those changes in prior years, the system remained static, and, instead, changes are being made only once over a five-year period.

Given the statutory shift to periodic, rather than annual, updates, the last five years have provided educators an effective way to discern year-over-year continuous improvement. However, during the refresh year, with a variety of changes being made to the *A–F* system ratings methodology, there is a greater need to communicate about the changes, so the agency has provided communications resources this year, and will continue to do so, designed to help inform educators and the public that year-over-year comparisons are more difficult this year. To help provide a year-over-year comparison, "what if" re-evaluations will also be publicly released using last year's data and this year's cut points and methodology.

For similar reasons stemming from HB 22 statutory changes, indicators and cut points established in the refresh will remain largely unchanged for approximately the next five years, so the refresh establishes a new five-year baseline. Also of note, under more recent statutory changes, *A–F* ratings are required to be issued statewide each year; the commissioner of education is no longer permitted to consider the use of "Not Rated" on a statewide basis, even as part of a transition in the accountability system.

For more information about stakeholder engagement and how the *A–F* Refresh has been developed, visit the [2023 Accountability Development Materials webpage](#). Please direct questions to the Performance Reporting Division at (512) 463-9704 or performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov.