



# To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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<b>DATE:</b>	<b>September 12, 2023</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Delay in 2023 A–F Academic Accountability Ratings</b>
<b>CATEGORY:</b>	<b>Notice</b>
<b>NEXT STEPS:</b>	<b>Share with appropriate staff</b>

The purpose of this communication is to inform local educational agencies (LEAs) about a delay in the issuance of the final rule for the accountability manual and a delay in the issuance of 2023 A–F Accountability Ratings.

As communicated previously, issuance of A–F ratings this year was already planned to be delayed from the typical mid-August release date due to the standards-setting process required with the redesign of STAAR. Based on timelines published previously, ratings were to be issued publicly on September 28, 2023.

The A–F accountability system itself is also being refreshed this year, with some changes to cut points and some changes to indicator methodology. For more than a year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) has publicly shared timelines and preliminary frameworks related to the A–F refresh.

As part of the refresh, in January 2023, TEA published proposed cut points and updates to the previously published methodology changes, noting some areas of change and some areas which remain unchanged. Those details included information about changing methods and cut scores to be used in calculating student growth on STAAR. Feedback obtained to that point included recommendations to appropriately account for the impact of COVID-19 in evaluating new baseline data, so the agency proposed setting growth cut scores using a baseline of the average level of student growth for the 2018–19 and 2021–22 school years.

However, since that time, statewide growth data for the 2022–23 school year has become available. Analysis of that growth data shows that the 2021–22 growth was more anomalous than expected, so setting baselines that partially incorporate data from the 2021–22 school year may not adequately take into account the impact of COVID-19.

As a result, the agency **will be delaying the issuance of the final rule for the accountability manual and delaying the issuance of ratings** to conduct further analyses of the growth data to inform cut scores in Domain 2a-Academic Growth, and Domain 3-Closing the Gaps.

Besides changes to growth cut scores, the agency will be incorporating a few additional changes in its final rule based on other feedback gathered during the rulemaking comment period:

- Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) STAAR Methodology: Within Domain 1, update the STAAR methodology for AEA campuses to better reflect the intention of AEA Taskforce recommendations.

- Minimum Indicators for Student Achievement Domain Score: STAAR Component Only: Within Domain 3, reduce minimum number of indicators from four to three to allow campuses with only one lowest performing racial/ethnic group to be evaluated.
- English Language Proficiency: Within Domain 3, allow progress in TELPAS Writing 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).

The agency is not considering other changes for the final rule from what was published in the proposed rule.

TEA anticipates the additional growth analysis will **delay the issuance of final rules and ratings by approximately one month**, and the agency will provide specific dates for 2023 ratings release at least two weeks ahead of the release of public ratings.

### **School Improvement**

Once specific dates for 2023 ratings are available, TEA's School Improvement Division will also be providing revised timelines for targeted improvement plan submissions and grant funding for eligible identified campuses.

### **Results Driven Accountability**

The *2023 Accountability Manual* will also incorporate a chapter on Results Driven Accountability (RDA), which has historically been a standalone manual. The delay in the issuance of the final rule will also cause delays in RDA determinations and the required actions stemming from the determinations.

### **Background on the Periodic Update of A-F Indicators and Cut Points**

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 House Bill (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 ensuring 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. But 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 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 the HB 22 (85R) 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 the *A-F* Refresh, please 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](mailto:performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov).