

Accountability & Assessment

The Texas School Alliance comprises 37 of Texas' largest school districts, serving 40 percent of the state's total pupil enrollment. Our students represent 44 percent of the state's economically disadvantaged student population, 52 percent of its English Language Learners, and 45 percent of all at-risk students in the state. The organization works on issues that will improve educational quality for Texas students, particularly those in large and urban districts. TSA has adopted the following positions for the 85th Texas Legislature.

The Texas School Alliance (TSA) believes that the public education accountability system needs improvement, not abandonment. The system must be predicated upon a clear statement of its purpose. The system should be designed in a way that satisfies federal requirements as it moves all students towards postsecondary readiness. The system must align supports, interventions and sanctions — in that order — to restore credibility and renew general acceptance of accountability. The system also must maintain or improve its fairness, transparency, and utility via improved reporting of results, without the use of letter grades as ratings. The member districts of the Texas School Alliance seek to restore a positive focus on student learning by mitigating overreliance on state assessments and by promoting students' access to higher education.

PRESIDENT

Arlington ISD
Dr. Marcelo Cavazos

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Aldine ISD
Dr. Wanda Bamberg

VICE PRESIDENT

Alief ISD
Mr. HD Chambers

SECRETARY

Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD
Mr. Steve Chapman

TREASURER

Katy ISD
Dr. Lance Hindt

PAST PRESIDENT

Midland ISD
Mr. Rod Schroder

MEMBER DISTRICTS

Abilene*	Irving
Aldine	Katy
Alief	Killeen
Amarillo	Lubbock*
Arlington	McAllen
Austin*	Mesquite
Corpus Christi	Midland
Cypress-	North East*
Fairbanks*	Northside
Dallas*	Pharr-San Juan-
Ector County	Alamo*
El Paso	Richardson
Fort Bend	Round Rock
Fort Worth	San Angelo
Garland	San Antonio
Harlingen	Socorro
Houston*	Spring Branch*
Humble	Tyler*
Hurst-Eules-	United
Bedford	Waco

* Members of TSA Board of Directors

1

Define the purpose(s) of the state accountability system in law.

TSA believes that the purposes of public education accountability are to provide actionable information to improve all students' postsecondary readiness, close gaps in postsecondary readiness among student groups, and sustain continuous system improvement.

- The purpose of the current state accountability system is unknown and/or unclear. Is it to improve teaching and learning? Comply with federal accountability? Identify the lowest performing schools? Verify if public education is adding value? To determine if Texas is among the top 10 states in the nation, in terms of college readiness?
- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has a clear purpose and accountability is understood as informing that purpose: "The purpose of Title 1 of the ESEA is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps."

2

Align the state and federal assessment and accountability systems.

TSA is not alone in this recommendation; see also Recommendation #6 in the final report of the [Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability](#), and Goal #2 of the [Texas Education Agency's Strategic Plan](#).

CONTINUED: Align the state and federal assessment and accountability systems.

Reduce state academic assessments to those required in ESSA: Reading/ELA and Mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 9-12; and Science annually in the specified grade spans. Include the following features:

- Eliminate “double-testing” of students enrolled in middle schools while completing courses for high school credit;
- Allow districts to substitute ‘nationally recognized’ tests for state-developed assessments and consistently give credit in each of the indices / domains for substitute scores; and
- Determine if changes are needed to provisions in SB 149 given changes in the testing program.

3

Align supports, interventions and sanctions — in that order — to restore credibility, promote shared responsibility for outcomes and renew acceptance of the accountability system.

- Provide aligned support and training to public school educators, including professional development, access to instructional resources, and a reduction in the number of TEKS.
- Streamline sanctions, reduce overdependence on state assessment data and provide aligned, targeted supports and interventions for struggling students and campuses, including all of the following:
 - Make the provisions for individual graduation committees (IGCs) in SB 149 permanent until such time as graduation examination requirements may change; extend similar provisions to TAKS graduates, per Recommendation #9 of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability.
 - Include explicit reference to community schools as a turnaround option.
 - Synchronize release of final academic and financial ratings.
 - Require state oversight for a school rated as unacceptable only for the school year following that unacceptable rating.

- Limit the state’s assignment of boards of managers to districts with egregious accountability issues.
- Eliminate high stakes testing for students in grades five and eight; continue to require delivery of accelerated instruction for any students who need it.
- Eliminate requirements for costly, external professional service providers (PSPs) as leaders of school intervention teams; districts should have both control over and accountability for the supports given to struggling schools.

4

Maintain current ratings labels of Met Standard and Improvement Required*, and improve state data reporting to ensure fairness, transparency and especially the utility of accountability system results.

Include weighted demographic / contextual data in campus and district accountability evaluations.

- Redefine the “non-mobile” subset based on individual students’ continuous enrollment and weight results accordingly.
- Employ the use of a Campus Performance Needs Index (CPNI) as a better measure of student need and educational disadvantage, beyond the usual metric of free and reduced-price meals. The CPNI could be used to weight the individual domain scores or the total score.

** TSA member districts oppose the use of single-letter grades as ratings, but understand that a summary rating of some kind may be required by regulations under ESSA. In that case, TSA supports the more balanced approach of reporting ratings separately for each domain, in addition to the summary rating.*