

Accountability & Assessment



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The Texas School Alliance comprises 37 of Texas' largest school districts, serving 40 percent of the state's total pupil enrollment (or nearly 2.2 million children). 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 86th Texas Legislature.

The Texas School Alliance (TSA) believes that the public education accountability system needs improvement, not abandonment. 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 improve its fairness, transparency, and utility via improved reporting of results. Finally, the member districts of the Texas School Alliance seek to restore a positive focus on student learning by mitigating overreliance on state assessments and eliminate the use of letter grades as ratings.

1 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](#).

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:

- Allow districts to substitute 'nationally recognized' tests for state-developed assessments and award credit equally and consistently in the accountability systems for the substitute assessment scores;
- Determine if changes are needed to IGC provisions given changes in the testing program;
- Weight graduation rates, CCMR indicators, and STAAR results equally in each of the domain calculations for high schools and districts;
- Award CCMR credit for **any** (1) dual enrollment / OnRamps course; and
- Award CCMR credit for **any** industry certification; and/or formalize the certification approval process.
- Require the state to pay for the SAT/ACT assessments required by the USDE approved Texas' ESSA Plan.

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

- 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) and TAKS graduation committees permanent, per Recommendation #9 of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability.
 - Publish the accountability rules and related manual by November 30 of the current school year.
 - Eliminate TEA's 'Forced Failure' Rule.
 - Eliminate PEG.
 - Limit the state's assignment of boards of managers to districts with egregious accountability issues; e.g. more than 10% of schools identified as 'Unacceptable'.
 - 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.

3 Improve state data reporting to ensure fairness, transparency and especially the utility of accountability system results.

- Limit STAAR results to no more than 50% of any domain calculation by including non-test based indicators such as: graduation plan endorsement rates, 9th gr. credit accumulation – on-track to graduate with cohort, Fine Arts course sequence completion, enrichment course completion rates for fine arts, P.E., and second language acquisition, extra-curricular participation rates (including UIL academics and clubs) full day Pre-K participation rates, elementary literacy and math academy participation rates, health and wellness indicators, school safety, etc.
- Advocate for redefining Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) campus performance targets in the Closing the Gaps Domain – including the use of extended graduation rates.
- Advocate for P-Tech high schools to use a 5-year graduation rate, rather than the 4-year rate that is currently required in the Closing the Gaps Domain.
- Advocate for the use of challenge points / bonus points / weights to each domain based on the extent to which educationally disadvantaged student groups make progress towards or meet performance targets.

