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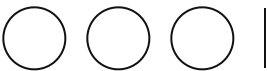
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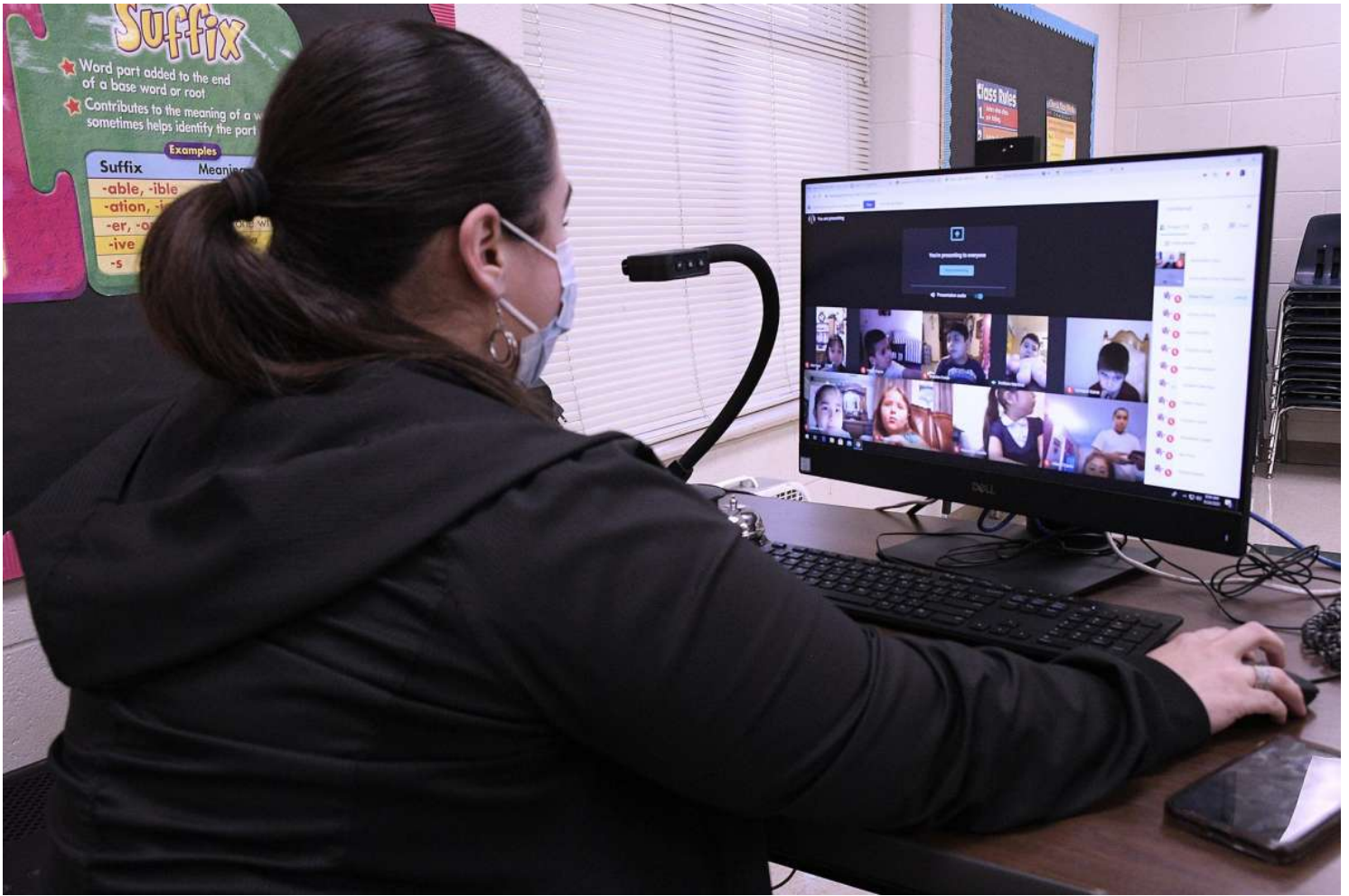
How a handful of school districts improved on STAAR tests despite virtual learning



Hannah Dellinger, Staff writer

Updated: July 26, 2021 8:24 a.m.





A Laredo elementary school teacher greets her students on the first day of virtual learning for the 2020-2021 school year, Monday, August 24, 2020. Most school districts with more than 25 percent of their students online performed worse on this year's State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, particularly in math. Ten small districts, however, bucked the trend, increasing the number of students who met the state standard for math and reading.

Cuate Santos / Laredo Morning Times

The state of Texas released test results for STAAR tests late last month, but it was not until last week that DeAnne Phillips checked to see how her school performed. It turned out to be a nice surprise.

"I didn't realize we did so well," said Phillips, an administrator at Coastal Horizons charter school in Stephenville.

Coastal Horizons, which works with kids with substance abuse issues within the Erath Excels Academy Inc. district, was one of 10 school systems across Texas that achieved gains in reading and math scores on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic

Readiness despite having more than 25 percent of its students learning virtually throughout the 2020-21 year.

Those districts will be studied by a new commission on remote learning in the state legislature to better understand how their students made learning gains despite the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Texas Education Agency.

“It’s important for the state to study those districts and see why they are outliers in the results,” said Commissioner of Education Mike Morath during a media briefing on the STAAR results.

Overall, Texas schools’ dipped to their worst math proficiency levels in six years, with the number of students in grades three through eight who failed to meet state standards rising from 21 percent in 2019 to 37 percent in 2021. The number of students who failed to meet standards in reading grew by 4 percent, around what educators had expected.

The largest declines were seen in districts with higher percentages of students who learned online.

That is where Coastal Horizons likely had an advantage, Phillips said.

The school, which seeks to get students into recovery while also supporting their academic needs, always has taught virtually.

“It went much smoother for teachers and students because of that,” Phillips said.

The districts with positive gains on the STAAR tests are spread throughout the state and include traditional schools and charter schools. The student demographics of the school systems vary, but most have relatively small enrollments, with none serving more than 4,200 students.

Some districts credit their success to having online learning options before the pandemic began and being consistent across all campuses with the kind of technology used. Other districts in communities heavily impacted by the virus said creating a safe environment for students to eventually come back to campus was crucial.

More than 37 percent of the 4,100 students in Somerset ISD, southwest of San Antonio, learned remotely during the the 2020-21 school year. The number of students meeting state standards in math increased by 1.6 percent and by 5.5 percent in reading.

Somerset ISD Superintendent Saul Hinojosa attributed the district's success to several factors, including a partnership with the [National Institute for Excellence in Teaching](#) that provided teachers with [best practices for online learning](#), such as providing support office hours, having students share their work with each other, and encouraging participation in chats or discussion boards.

“We did well because we really dug deep into the data to see where kids were struggling,” he said. “We individualized instruction to fit the needs of students.”

More Information

Texas school districts with more than 25 percent of kids learning virtually and had positive gains in the number of students meeting STAAR math and reading proficiencies in 2021

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An [incentive plan](#) that pays teachers for good performance and to stay in schools in rural or low-income areas also helped the district retain experienced educators

through the pandemic, Hinojosa said.

The primary factor, Hinojosa said, was being able to safely get kids back into the classroom through the year.

“The biggest game-changer for us was partnering with Community Labs and the 80|20 Foundation who agreed to invest and test our students and staff weekly for COVID,” he said. “Testing helped lessen anxiety and gave assurance to teachers and students that they were safe.”

The district was one of the first in the state to offer on-site COVID testing at campuses with results within 24 hours at a time when labs across the nation were heavily backlogged.

The community the district serves, which is about 87 percent economically disadvantaged, was severely impacted by the pandemic, Hinojosa said. The school system made an effort to educate families about the virus and how to stay safe, he added.

Once more kids started coming back to campus and positive cases popped up, Hinojosa said the district performed contact tracing and asked those who tested positive to quarantine. That helped teachers and parents feel better about in-person instruction.

“We started the school year with 38 percent of students in school and ended with 83 percent on campus,” Hinojosa said.

Erath Excels Academy Inc., another outlier, had 48.9 percent of students learning virtually and had a 3.2 percent increase in students meeting math standards and an 11.5 percent increase in reading. The district serves 114 students.

Phillips said the Coastal Horizons students also may have fared better because they were living on campus during the pandemic.

“Everyone else scattered and had to learn at home and had to deal with all kinds of distractions,” she said. “All of those outside factors are taken away in a boarding school environment with a very strict routine.”

South of Fort Worth, Alvarado ISD has 371 students, more than 27 percent of whom spent the year learning remotely. The district recorded a 3.7 percent increase in students who met state math standards, and a 1.1 percent increase in reading.

Spokesman Tommy Brown said the district focused on parent communication throughout the pandemic, with some campuses regularly performing home visits to check in on students.

Teachers assigned to online students did not have to teach in-person at the same time, Brown said.

“It was important that their primary responsibility was focusing on teaching virtually,” he said.

Using consistent online learning platforms helped streamline the process and eliminate confusion, Brown said.

As the school year progressed, Brown said parents became more comfortable sending their kids back to campuses because the district required everyone to wear masks, even after Governor Greg Abbott lifted the statewide mask mandate in March.

In the Houston area, the University of Houston Charter School was another standout. The school, which permanently closed this summer, had 47 percent of its 89 students learning online.

Nonetheless, the number of students meeting state math standards rose by 1.7 percent, while the number that reached the standards for reading increased a whopping 16.7 percent.

The UH board of regents voted last December to close the school because of financial considerations.

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Written By
Hannah Dellinger

Reach Hannah on

“Show me the Data”: How Schools Can Appropriately Utilize Standardized Testing for Improvement

By David DeMatthews, PhD, David S. Knight, PhD, and Sarah Woulfin, PhD

The pandemic had a significant impact not only on the way public schools provided instruction to students, but also on myriad aspects of each child’s life. As schools reopen and begin to make sense of standardized testing data from the 2020-21 school year, principals and teachers should be thoughtful about how they use these data to support students.

Principals and teachers must first recognize the inherent flaws in the testing system, particularly standardized testing from Spring 2021, and be prepared to speak up when policymakers, supervisors or colleagues make decisions based on misinterpretations of data. The prior school year was unique given the impact of

COVID-19 on communities as was the testing environment and sample of students since some families opted out of testing.

For example, if students who chose remote instruction over in-person learning scored lower on standardized tests, that might be related to other factors beyond instructional modality (see <https://bit.ly/ednextart>). Without data on why students chose to stay home, educators should avoid drawing inferences about the impact of online versus face-to-face instruction.

We have already heard of some troubling usages of testing data. For example, some district ► page 5

► “Show me the Data”: How Schools Can Appropriately Utilize Standardized Testing for Improvement from page 1

leaders and principals have deprioritized pre-existing programs such as outdoor learning opportunities or mental health curriculum to focus greater attention towards mathematics and reading. In some districts, principal supervisors are pressuring principals to “catch up” with nearby campuses after test scores declined. Educators should push back on decisions that deny students access to a rich, comprehensive curriculum or create a toxic accountability culture for educators.

Though the 2020-21 testing data is imperfect, schools should not neglect its implications for historically marginalized student groups. Researchers have found evidence that COVID-19 has had a significant negative impact on student achievement (see <https://bit.ly/sageart1>). Students experiencing poverty, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learner (EL) students have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic because they were more likely to be personally affected by COVID-19, lacked access to the internet or devices, and/or because schools struggled to deliver supports and interventions necessary to meet their needs.

Principals and teachers should engage families, working together to prioritize resources, and offering intensive support. Testing data on many campuses will likely confirm national trends, and, therefore, should be used in the school improvement process to support additional academic interventions and guide audits tracking which students with disabilities and EL students did not receive appropriate services during the pandemic.

Principals and teachers could compare their standardized test scores with scores from other benchmark assessments given throughout the prior year, such as NWEA or MAP assessments. They could also compare testing results from prior years. Using multiple data points would provide educators with a clearer—and more accurate—picture of student strengths and areas of growth.

Teachers across grade levels may want to look at standardized testing data as well as other student work to identify any broad trends that can inform the

focus and nature of professional development in the building. For example, a school could use evidence in deciding to target fourth grade reading instruction, and then deliver additional supports (e.g., instructional coaching) to fourth grade teachers on reading.

Testing data may also be reviewed in PLCs and within grade levels or subject areas. If teachers are given the opportunity to discuss multiple types of student data, they will be more likely to improve their instruction. Teachers can draw on these data along with other information to create their own assessments in the 2021-22 school year.

Testing data can be insightful, aiding principals and teachers to plan and prioritize improvement efforts. Yet schools should be cautious to not overly rely on testing data, especially following a year with significant testing implementation challenges that limit the conclusions that can be drawn. Instead, schools need to learn what they can from multiple forms of data, prioritize the students with the greatest needs, and ensure teachers are not overwhelmed with data analysis so that they can have the necessary time to create engaging, inclusive, and culturally responsive classrooms.

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STAAR results came with plenty of caveats. Were the tests worth the effort this pandemic year?



Hannah Dellinger, Staff writer

Updated: Aug. 2, 2021 1:40 p.m.



**1 of 10**

A student is shown during an 8th grade reading class at Yolanda Black Navarro Middle School, 5100 Polk St., Monday, Oct. 19, 2020 in Houston. Monday is the first day of in-person classes in Houston ISD.

Melissa Phillip, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

This year's STAAR test results came with several caveats, missing data and results that reveal largely what had been predicted through other measures. Now, some educators and experts wonder if it was worth administering the tests during a school year upended by the pandemic.

As education leaders parse through State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness test scores from the spring, some warn it is incomplete and does not provide a full picture of how students are faring during the pandemic.

Because the standardized achievement tests were optional for the first time this year for grades 3 through 8, more than 1 million fewer tests were taken across all subject areas and grade levels compared to the last time STAAR was administered in 2019. Only 85 percent of eligible elementary students took the test in the spring and 92 percent of eligible high school students participated in end-of-course assessments.

"A million missing tests is pretty glaring," said Daniel Potter, associate director of regional research for Houston Education Research Consortium at Rice University.

Catherine Horn, chair of the University of Houston's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, said STAAR data already is limited in a normal year.

"Having less information further skews it," she said. "It's flawed data and it's insufficient."

The Texas Education Agency, which compiles standardized testing scores for the state, said enough students took the test to paint “an accurate picture of COVID-19’s impact on students.”

The agency previously announced that schools will not be given an accountability rating this year based on the results due to the impact of the pandemic.

The data released by TEA last month showed that 37 percent of students in grades three through eight did not meet state standards in math, up from 21 percent in 2019, the last time STAAR was administered. The number of students who met state standards in reading fell a modest 4 percent.

Generally speaking, schools with less than 25 percent of students learning virtually fared better than schools with higher rates of remote learning.

“We assumed there would be some decrease (in test scores) that happened over a period of time,” Potter said. “But it’s about understanding which students were disproportionately impacted.”

Knowing the demographics of the students who did not take the test and why they opted out is essential to understanding who will need more support in the upcoming school year, he added.

“Those distinctions are important because they give us critical information about where a student is and how to intervene in the most productive way,” Horn said.

Erin Baumgartner, associate director for Houston ISD research at Houston Education Research Consortium, said that while attendance records generally showed Black and Latino students continued to learn virtually and white students from more financially secure families returned to campuses, the pattern varied widely across districts.

“There may be an overrepresentation (in the test scores) of students experiencing poverty and inequality,” Potter said. “Conversely, if it turned out that we had more economically disadvantaged students missing from the test, the gap observed may actually be smaller than real disparities out there.”

Another factor that could impact the data is the fact that students were required to take the assessments in-person.

Jonathan Kotinek, a parent of a sixth grader and ninth grader in Montgomery ISD, said he opted his kids out of taking the tests because of health and safety concerns.

“We decided they would take the test once they could be vaccinated,” he said. “It wasn’t worth risking their health over.”

Potter said there likely were many other parents across the state like Kotinek whose children learned remotely all year and did not want to risk their kids contracting or spreading the virus by taking the test in person.

Administering the test in person also could have affected the performance of students who did take it, Horn said.

“The environment and conditions of assessments matter,” she said. “If it’s an unfamiliar classroom, it’s likely to influence performance. Having to keep your mask on while you take the test or being concerned about being around a large number of people for the first time in months could have an impact.”

All of those conditions can influence students’ ability to concentrate on the academic task in front of them, she said.

Because the test was not administered in 2020 due to the disruption of the pandemic,

comparisons are more difficult, Potter said.

“That data would allow us to see whether the downward trend was already in motion,” he said. “It would show us the extent of the disruption the early days of the pandemic caused. Without it, we run the risk of over-assigning responsibility to the 20-21 school year for drops and declines.”

Another variable to consider in the testing data is a technical glitch that impacted around 250,000 students in the state while they were taking the test. The glitch caused log-in and test administration problems.

The glitch only impacted students taking grade four and seven writing, as well as English I, according to TEA. Of those students, 96 percent completed the test later that week.

While the STAAR data will help inform how districts target federal relief funds to help struggling students, it is only one of many criteria to be considered.

“We don’t rely solely on STAAR data because it becomes lagging very quickly,” said Todd Davis, chief academic officer at Aldine ISD. “We use other tools, like universal screeners in literacy and math to develop information on how to target those students.”

Measuring the social and emotional needs of students will be the district’s primary focus for providing support, he said.

“We need to understand that many of our students likely experienced significant trauma throughout this pandemic,” he said. “If we’re not providing a safe and secure environment, learning is not going to happen.”

Sherri Simmons, Texas City ISD’s director of curriculum and accountability, said

looking at each students' individual needs will be critical in the fall.

“We need to ... identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop plans to address their needs, watch them closely for progress and adapt, change, or tweak as needed to ensure that each student fulfills their learning potential,” she said.

Districts are in the process of finalizing their plans for millions in federal relief funding to target students who fell behind when they return in the fall. Many will offer tutoring and longer school days.

Houston ISD previously announced it would add 15 extra days, beef up tutoring, bolster wrap-around services and hire additional counselors.

Fort Bend ISD has established teacher “support systems” within schools to address students' academic gaps, emotional needs and trauma experienced during the pandemic. Katy ISD proposed hiring more teachers to reduce class size and giving instructional coaching to teachers, while Spring Branch ISD is planning to extend the school day and year for students who need tutorials and extended summer programming.

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She started in Houston as a Hearst Journalism Fellow writing general assignments and breaking news with a focus on domestic violence. Her fellowship began at Hearst Connecticut, where she published an investigation and database of child sexual abuse tied to Boys & Girls Clubs of America affiliates that won an Investigative Reporters and Editors Award in 2020.

Before starting the fellowship, Hannah worked as a breaking news and crime reporter at the Frederick News Post in Maryland. Prior to that, she worked for large weekly newspapers in

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) proposes new §97.1006, concerning accountability and performance monitoring. The proposed new rule would adopt applicable guidelines for the alternative methods and standards for evaluating performance for the 2020-2021 school year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION: Senate Bill (SB) 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, established alternative methods and standards for evaluating performance for the 2020-2021 school year. The alternative evaluation may be requested by school districts or open-enrollment charter schools with campuses that meet the participation requirements for all students in all subject areas for the annual measurement of achievement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (20 U.S.C. §6311(c)(4)(E)), §1111, and to which the most recent performance rating assigned, other than a "Not Rated" rating, is a D, F, or performance that needs improvement.

Proposed new §97.1006 would adopt the indicators, standards, and procedures used by the commissioner of education to determine alternative accountability ratings for the 2020-2021 school year for campuses that meet the statutory criteria for review and request such review.

FISCAL IMPACT: Jeff Cottrill, deputy commissioner for governance and accountability, has determined that for the first five-year period the proposal is in effect there are no additional costs to state or local government, including school districts and open-enrollment charter schools, required to comply with the proposal.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT IMPACT: The proposal has no effect on local economy; therefore, no local employment impact statement is required under Texas Government Code, §2001.022.

SMALL BUSINESS, MICROBUSINESS, AND RURAL COMMUNITY IMPACT: The proposal has no direct adverse economic impact for small businesses, microbusinesses, or rural communities; therefore, no regulatory flexibility analysis, specified in Texas Government Code, §2006.002, is required.

COST INCREASE TO REGULATED PERSONS: The proposal does not impose a cost on regulated persons, another state agency, a special district, or a local government and, therefore, is not subject to Texas Government Code, §2001.0045.

TAKINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT: The proposal does not impose a burden on private real property and, therefore, does not constitute a taking under Texas Government Code, §2007.043.

GOVERNMENT GROWTH IMPACT: TEA staff prepared a Government Growth Impact Statement assessment for this proposed rulemaking. During the first five years the proposed rulemaking would be in effect, it would create a new regulation by implementing the requirements of SB 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, relating to the special evaluation of campuses for the 2020-2021 school year.

The proposed rulemaking would not create or eliminate a government program; would not require the creation of new employee positions or elimination of existing employee positions; would not require an increase or decrease in future legislative appropriations to the agency; would not require an increase or decrease in fees paid to the agency; would not expand, limit, or repeal an existing regulation; would not increase or decrease the number of individuals subject to its applicability; and would not positively or adversely affect the state's economy.

PUBLIC BENEFIT AND COST TO PERSONS: Mr. Cottrill has determined that for each year of the first five years the proposal is in effect, the public benefit anticipated as a result of enforcing the proposal would be informing the public of the alternative evaluation rating procedures for public schools for the 2020-2021 school year. There is no anticipated economic cost to persons who are required to comply with the proposal.

DATA AND REPORTING IMPACT: The proposal would have no data and reporting impact.

PRINCIPAL AND CLASSROOM TEACHER PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS: TEA has determined that the proposal would not require a written report or other paperwork to be completed by a principal or classroom teacher.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: The public comment period on the proposal begins August 6, 2021, and ends September 7, 2021. A request for a public hearing on the proposal submitted under the Administrative Procedure Act must be received by the commissioner of education not more than 14 calendar days after notice of the proposal has been published in the Texas Register on August 6, 2021. A form for submitting public comments is available on the TEA website at [https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/Commissioner_Rules_\(TAC\)/Proposed_Commissioner_of_Education_Rules/](https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/Commissioner_Rules_(TAC)/Proposed_Commissioner_of_Education_Rules/).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY. The new section is proposed under Texas Education Code (TEC), §39.052(a) and (b)(1)(A), which require the commissioner to evaluate and consider the performance on achievement indicators described in TEC, §39.053(c), when determining the accreditation status of each school district and open-enrollment charter school; TEC, §39.053, as amended by House Bill (HB) 773 and HB 1147, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which requires the commissioner to adopt a set of performance indicators related to the quality of learning and achievement in order to measure and evaluate school districts and campuses; TEC, §39.054, as amended by Senate Bill (SB) 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which requires the commissioner to adopt rules to evaluate school district and campus performance and to assign a performance rating; TEC, §39.0541, which allows the commissioner to adopt indicators and standards under TEC, Subchapter C, at any time during a school year before the evaluation of a school district or campus; TEC, §39.0543, as added by SB 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which defines the performance ratings requiring intervention or other action; TEC, §39.0545, as added by SB 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which allows the commissioner to adopt alternative methods and standards for evaluating performance for the 2020-2021 school year for campuses that meet participation and performance rating requirements for 2020-2021; TEC, §39.0548, as amended by SB 879, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which requires the commissioner to designate campuses that meet specific criteria as dropout recovery schools and to use specific indicators to evaluate them; TEC, §39.055, which prohibits the use of assessment results and other performance indicators of students in a residential facility in state accountability; TEC, §39.151, as amended by SB 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which provides a process for a school district or an open-enrollment charter school to challenge an academic or financial accountability rating; TEC, §29.081(e), (e-1), and (e-2), which define criteria for alternative education programs for students at risk of dropping out of school and subjects those campuses to the performance indicators and accountability standards adopted for alternative education programs; and TEC, §12.104(b)(3)(L) as amended by SB 1365, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which subjects open-enrollment charter schools to the rules adopted under public school accountability in TEC, Chapter 39.

CROSS REFERENCE TO STATUTE. The new section implements Texas Education Code (TEC), §§39.052(a) and (b)(1)(A); 39.053; 39.054; 39.0541; 39.0543; 39.0545; 39.0548; 39.055; 39.151; 29.081(e), (e-1), and (e-2); and 12.104(b)(3)(L).

<rule>

§97.1006. Alternative Methods and Standards for Evaluating Performance for 2020-2021 School Year.

- (a) A school district or an open-enrollment charter school may request no later than October 15, 2021, an accountability special evaluation for the 2020-2021 school year for a campus:
 - (1) that meets a 95% assessment participation rate threshold for the all students group for all subjects combined for the 2020-2021 school year; and
 - (2) to which the most recent overall performance rating assigned, other than a rating of Not Rated, is a D, F, or performance that needs improvement.
- (b) Upon request, as provided in subsection (a) of this section, the commissioner of education shall evaluate a campus that meets the requirements of subsection (a)(1) and (2) of this section in:
 - (1) the Student Achievement domain of Texas Education Code (TEC), §39.053(c)(1); and
 - (2) the School Progress, Part B: Relative Performance domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(2).

- (c) The component scores for the Student Achievement domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(1), and School Progress, Part B: Relative Performance domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(2), shall be calculated using scaling methodologies as were adopted in the 2020 Accountability Manual under §97.1001 of this title (relating to Accountability Rating System).
- (d) One of the following performance ratings shall be assigned according to the results of the evaluation requested under subsection (b) of this section.
 - (1) If the evaluation results in an outcome of A, B, or C by averaging the scaled score of the Student Achievement domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(1), and the scaled score of the School Progress, Part B: Relative Performance domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(2), the campus shall be assigned a performance rating of Acceptable for the 2020-2021 school year.
 - (2) If the evaluation results in an outcome of D or F by averaging the scaled score of the Student Achievement domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(1), and the scaled score of the School Progress, Part B: Relative Performance domain of TEC, §39.053(c)(2), the campus shall be assigned a performance rating of Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster for the 2020-2021 school year.
- (e) An Acceptable performance rating assigned under subsection (d)(1) of this section is considered a break in consecutive school years of unacceptable performance ratings under TEC, §39.054.
- (f) A school district or an open-enrollment charter school may appeal a rating issued under subsection (d)(2) of this section in accordance with TEC, §39.151, and the determination of consecutive school years of unacceptable performance ratings in accordance with TEC, §39.054. For the 2020-2021 school year, such an appeal must be filed with the Texas Education Agency by October 15, 2021.
- (g) This section does not apply to an intervention ordered on the basis of consecutive school years of unacceptable performance ratings accrued before the effective date of this section.
- (h) This section expires September 1, 2027.

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 27, 2021

The objective of the July 27, 2021, Accountability Technical and Policy Advisory Committee meeting was to discuss the impact of the 87th Texas legislative session as well as the potential inclusion of chronic absenteeism and a revised growth model in future accountability systems. TEA responses to questions and concerns are provided in *italics*. Some questions require staff research and are yet to be answered. The following is a summary of the meeting.

- TEA welcomed the committee members to the virtual meeting.
- The committee reviewed accountability-related bills from the 87th Texas legislative session.
 - Questions
 - The Senate Bill (SB) 1365 alternative evaluation option must be requested by the district, correct? *Correct.*
 - For SB 1365, will eligible districts be notified by the Agency? *Yes, and we will share this information with ESC support staff.*
- The committee reviewed Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) and transition table growth models for potential future use in accountability.
 - Questions
 - With student growth percentile, is it a sort of norm-referencing of the standards-based assessment? Does this show true growth or group growth? *It shows growth relative to prior-year performance.*
 - When you determine percentile, what is the group? State, comparison group, district, campus? *Students would be compared statewide to students who had the same or very similar scores in the prior year.*
 - Are there many campuses in 2019 that got an A on School Progress, Part A but a B or lower in Student Achievement? *No, there were only 156 campuses statewide.*
 - Are we looking at using one growth model in 2022 and then a different one for reset? *Our thinking is we will continue use the gain score model for 2022 and make any changes in 2023 for the accountability reset.*
 - Comments/Concerns
 - Campuses and teachers need to know the target beforehand. It cannot change each year.
 - When setting growth distributions and scaled scores, account for outlier campuses and districts.
 - Some campuses serve a high population of students who had a prior-year Masters Grade Level outcome. These campuses have an advantage in the current system.
 - Districts and campuses should still earn a point if for students who maintain performance.
 - The transition model may be the easiest to understand, but it may not be the best route. The sacrifice of simplicity may be worth it to gain a more precise measure with the SGP method.
 - For districts that give MAP Growth, Conditional Growth Percentile is pretty much the same as SGP. Hundreds of districts and a lot of large districts will be very familiar with the concept.

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 27, 2021

- A campus that has high performing students should still get credit for maintaining high performance and credit for growth, but those campuses shouldn't affect the scaling/cut points.
- We can run historical data on SGPs, define what adequate growth is, and build scaling and cut points on "adequate growth."
- The committee reviewed a 0–4 methodology for future use in the Closing the Gaps domain.
 - Questions
 - When you modeled the data, how did 1,246 campuses shift down in a letter grade? Did they not get the full 4 points if they earn a Y in the current system? *No. In order to get the full 4 points, the student group must have met the long-term target. This model shows granularity and is based off the current standards. However, if we choose to implement it, we will need to reset scaling.*
 - Can we redefine what on grade level means? *The TAKS was designed to measure mastery of content, STAAR was put in to place to measure post-secondary readiness, which is why the vertical scale is set to align the Meets Grade Level standard.*
 - How is "baseline" set? *Baseline was actual statewide performance for that student group in 2016–17.*
 - How do we reevaluate the accuracy and reliability of the long-term targets for Closing the Gaps? *As part of the reset, we will reevaluate data and targets. We want AEA-specific student group targets and potentially school-type specific targets.*
 - Comments/Concerns
 - Why are we using the long-term target for a 4 in the modeling? *To provide top-end differentiation and to align with ESSA goal-setting.*
 - The accuracy and reliability of the long-term targets for Closing the Gaps should be revisited.
 - This kind of granularity could help with School Improvement focus on the neediest areas.
 - Targets and scaling need to be revisited so that they are fair and reasonable yet challenging.
 - This approach would definitely help dropout recovery schools and school improvement identifications.

The committee reviewed chronic absenteeism for potential future use in the Closing the Gaps domain.

- Questions
 - How would medical absences be accounted for? *We can flag students identified as medically fragile in PEIMS, but we cannot distinguish excused and unexcused absences.*
- Comments/Concerns
 - The federal definition would not work for us.
 - It should be report-only before being included in accountability.

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 27, 2021

The committee reviewed the inclusion of career and technical education (CTE) programs of study for future use in accountability.

- Questions
 - Will there be a tracker tool released for students enrolled in programs of study?
Not that we will produce, but you will be able to view auto-coding information through course completion records annually in PEIMS.
- Comments/Concerns
 - If the student did not complete a program of study but did earn an IBC, we may want to consider giving them a full point.
 - The proposal is not in alignment with the spirit of House Bill 773 because it makes it more difficult to earn credit.
 - It should be an either-or option—one point for an IBC or one point for a program of study.

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 29, 2021

The objective of the July 29, 2021, Accountability Technical and Policy Advisory Committee meeting was to discuss the impact of the 87th Texas legislative session as well as the potential inclusion of chronic absenteeism and a revised growth model in future accountability systems. TEA responses to questions and concerns are provided in *italics*. Some questions require staff research and are yet to be answered. The following is a summary of the meeting.

- TEA welcomed the committee members to the virtual meeting.
- The committee reviewed accountability-related bills from the 87th Texas legislative session.
- The committee reviewed Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) and transition table growth models for potential future use in accountability.
 - Questions
 - How would SGPs work for accelerated testers? *An SGP could be assigned to an accelerated tester. They would be compared to other accelerated testers.*
 - Could we consider including various characteristics (e.g., homeless, economically disadvantaged, etc.) when establishing peer groups? *We can research whether other states incorporate these characteristics in SGPs.*
 - Would SGPs remedy the exclusion of students taking Spanish reading in the prior year then English reading in current year by looking at prior year Spanish testers? *Yes.*
 - Would this also allow for a measure between 8th grade reading STAAR and English I end-of-course (EOC)? *Yes.*
 - Is it possible to combine SGPs with another model? *Yes.*
 - Are you thinking that SGPs are valuable on a parent basis or more for overall campus/district/state data? *It's valuable information for administrators and parents.*
 - Why are we thinking about changing the growth measure? *The gain score model is not suited for use with the implementation of the reading/language arts assessment redesign or other substantial changes to the STAAR design.*
 - Comments/Concerns
 - In the SGP model, the only commonality the students may have from year to year is their test scores. The student's academic peers may have a significantly different life situation.
 - SGP is used to sort kids, which is more valuable in a sales force than a school.
 - We would like to see modeled data for each of the growth measure models to evaluate the impact on schools performing at various levels with varying circumstances.
- The committee reviewed a 0–4 methodology for future use in the Closing the Gaps domain.
 - Questions
 - Can we consider sliding scale targets that adjust for low and high economically disadvantaged? *The USDE has not approved a state plan with targets such as this.*
 - Can the total possible points be 3 so that if a campus/district earns a 4, they receive a bonus point?

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 29, 2021

- Is the student group design also up for discussion? Specifically, breaking each student group into economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged? *This has not been well-received by the U.S. Department of Education.*
- Comments/Concerns
 - The targets seem to be too difficult. A relatively high-performance outcome should be recognized.
 - The long-term goals as they are set are not realistic for many in the shorter term.
 - A campus/district should earn credit if they maintain performance, even if it's less than the interim target.
 - The requirement for the full 4 points should be no different from what currently awards points. If they meet the interim target, they should earn a 4. If we are increasing the difficulty with the gradation, the scaling will need to significantly be adjusted.
 - We need to differentiate the lower performing campuses/districts, not the higher performing.
 - Adding complexities to the system makes it more difficult for smaller school systems that don't have accountability support staff.

The committee reviewed chronic absenteeism for potential future use in the Closing the Gaps domain.

- Questions
 - Could medical exemptions be considered for exclusion? *Yes.*
- Comments/Concerns
 - Mental health is a big contributor to chronic absenteeism. With COVID being an issue, now might not be the time to evaluate chronic absenteeism.
 - Without the ability to file truancy charges, our resources are limited.
 - We should consider social and emotional learning, fine arts, and other non-assessment indicators.
 - We need to demonstrate that this indicator is tied to achievement.
 - A standardized learning/climate survey should be revisited. It's a non-assessment indicator, and it could provide validity we're looking for.

The committee reviewed the inclusion of career and technical education (CTE) programs of study for future use in accountability.

- Questions
 - Why would we not award a full point to those that earn an industry-based certification (IBC) without completing a program of study? *This option is up for discussion.*
 - Could it be half a point for completing the program of study and a full point for the IBC? *This option is up for discussion.*
- Comments/Concerns
 - This proposal makes it even more difficult. It goes against the essence of the bill and the intent of the law. Do not take away IBCs as a full point.

2022 Accountability Advisory Committees

Summary of Meeting on July 29, 2021

- If you are talented enough to earn an IBC by taking the test, you should receive credit for the IBC.
- Do not link program completion to certification. Life happens and may inhibit the student from earning the IBC.
- A student can earn a full point by completing a college prep course, which requires far less effort than an IBC.
- Students can earn a full point by simply testing for AP/IB. If we require the program of study *and* an IBC, that is inconsistent.
- A student should earn the district/campus a full point if they either complete the program of study or earn an IBC.