

Mar 5, 2022, 10:24am EST | 2,415 views

America's School Accountability System Is Broken. Here Are The Issues That Must Be Addressed To Fix It.



Peter Greene Senior Contributor ⓘ

Education

I look at K-12 policies and practices from the classroom perspective.

Follow

Listen to article 7 minutes



So many wheels, and we need to keep an eye on all of them. GETTY

School accountability has been a dream at least since 1983 and the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, a report not intended to objectively examine the state of education as much as [to jump start an attack on perceived issues](#) with America's schools. In the decades since, various programs and policies have been implemented to measure and examine school and teacher effectiveness.

The foundation of every recent accountability system, from the dawn of No Child Left Behind to the dusk of Common Core, has been the Big Standardized Test. And that foundation has cracked and crumbled. It has produced [no results in the evaluation of teachers](#). It has produced [no progress in student scores](#). Frederick Hess (American Enterprise Institute) has recently detailed how the bipartisan coalition that supported testing [has disintegrated](#), in part because parents have lost faith.

Claims that school accountability will lead to good jobs may resonate at the Chamber of Commerce but not with parents skeptical of politicians, big business, and big donors. Talk about the benefits of large, industrialized testing and accountability systems can ring hollow with parents who tend to like their schools, distrust test manufacturers and tech giants, and don't see any evidence that all these bureaucratic systems are improving what happens in their kid's classroom.

Hess goes on [to encourage](#) testing advocates "to think anew about how to make the case for testing." Any accountability system will have to answer the following questions.

Most importantly this question: **accountable to whom, for what?**

Should the system let parents see their children's strengths and weaknesses? Are results supposed to help teachers adjust instruction? Should the system let policy makers evaluate the effect of policy choices? Should the students be measured against set standards (and, if so, who will set them) or against each other (keeping in mind that in that case, roughly 50% of all students

will be below average)? Should the accountability measure the effectiveness of teachers or schools? Should it provide accountability for teaching, or for learning? Should it measure the state of education on a state or national scale? Should it collect data for academics and bureaucrats to study? Should the focus be on measurement or growth?

MORE FROM [FORBES ADVISOR](#)

Best Travel Insurance Companies

By **Amy Danise** Editor

Best Covid-19 Travel Insurance Plans

By **Amy Danise** Editor

Each question requires a different set of tools, and yet for two decades, we have tried to use one tool to answer all of those questions, like trying to use a ruler to measure height, weight, density, viscosity, opacity, and taste.

What stakes will be attached?

Test advocates have argued for attaching high stakes to the tests, and thereby provided a textbook example of [Goodhart's Law](#)— when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.

High stakes testing has had a [hugely corrosive effect on education](#), pushing to schools to see their goal not as the full education of the whole child, but as preparing students to score well on the big test. It has shifted school resources away from any topics not on the test.

Accountability hawks need to answer not just how high the stakes should be, but what form they should take. Should accountability be organized around punishing failure, rewarding success, or simply providing information? Each goal requires different tools.

Will the system be transparent?

The high stakes system put more emphasis on [protecting the proprietary business property](#) of test manufacturers than providing a transparent process with rich data. Teachers were [forbidden to see the questions](#) on the tests, while parents received “data” that was no more granular than a single letter grade.

Transparency and useful data go hand in hand; if you cannot see where the data comes from, that strips the data of most useful detail. One of the ironies of our last few decades of accountability is that proponents correctly note, “It’s not enough for the school to just say, ‘Your child has a B level of achievement and that’s swell. Don’t ask what that means; just take our word for it’” But then we were told “The testing data says your child is proficient. Don’t ask what that means; just take our word for it.”

Will the system say what it means?

We’ve been using terms like “student achievement” and “teacher effectiveness” when what we actually mean is “score on a single standardized reading and math test.” A useful accountability system cannot confuse proxies for the real thing.

Will the system accept the limitations of an education accountability system?

Education accountability has long had a car keys problem—the old joke about the person searching for their car keys under a streetlight far from where they dropped the keys, because the light is better there.

School systems have many, many stakeholders, with many, many expectations and definitions of success. Students themselves present a widely divergent array of career goals and life objectives, some of which will not pay off for many years after high school graduation. Some educational goals are fuzzy and hard to define, from “well-educated” to “good citizen.” Many features of a school system are far from static and therefore hard to measure in absolute terms; Pat’s favorite “great teacher” on a Monday may be Sam’s detested “terrible teacher” on Thursday.

For twenty-some years policy makers have been pretending that all of these complex and complicated features can be easily assessed by giving students a single standardized math and reading test. A useful accountability system will be rich, robust, and honest about its limitations (if you want an example, read Jack Schneider’s *Beyond Test Scores*).

The pandemic pause of the Big Standardized Test has provided an excellent opportunity to re-examine how education accountability is handled in this country; here’s hoping we have the necessary conversations.

Follow me on [Twitter](#).



Peter Greene

Follow

I spent 39 years as a high school English teacher, looking at how hot new reform policies affect the classroom.

Reprints & Permissions

2022 Academic Accountability System Framework

2022 Overall Accountability System

As part of Senate Bill (SB) 1365, all districts and campuses will receive a label of *A*, *B*, *C*, or *Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365* for 2022. Raw and scaled scores for overall and each domain will be published. Any domain or overall scaled score less than 70 will receive the *Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365* label. The overall design of the accountability system will remain unchanged from 2021. In response to feedback from stakeholders, adjustments to certain indicators and methodologies are necessary for 2022. This document provides a summary of the substantive changes. The *2022 Accountability Manual* will be published in the *Texas Register* for public comment in early April and will incorporate these updates along with additional, less substantive revisions.

Accountability Rating Labels

Districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and campuses will receive a label of *A*, *B*, *C*, or *Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365*.

Local Accountability Systems (LAS)

In 2022, LAS campuses must receive a *C* or higher state overall rating for the state and LAS ratings to be combined.

Student Achievement Domain

The College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) component will add the new version of the Texas Success Initiative assessment (TSIA2) as a means to meet Texas Success Initiative criteria.

School Progress Domain

The Academic Growth calculation will return for 2022 accountability. Districts and campuses will receive credit for STAAR results in English language arts/reading and mathematics that either meet the student-level criteria on the STAAR progress measure or maintain performance (2022 compared to 2021). The methodology will be unchanged from the *2020 Accountability Manual* except for the removal of small numbers analysis.

School Progress, Part B: Relative Performance will be unchanged except for the removal of small numbers analysis.

Closing the Gaps Domain

Academic Growth

The Academic Growth component will return in 2022. The methodology will be unchanged except for the removal of small numbers analysis.

Participation Rate

As part of the federal 1 percent alternate assessment waiver, TEA requested to only report reading and mathematics assessment participation rates for districts and campuses for 2022.

CCMR

The CCMR component will be updated to include TSIA2 as described above.

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

The ELP methodology will be updated to account for the impact of COVID on 2021 and 2020 TELPAS administrations.

- A student is considered having made progress if the student advances by at least one score of the composite rating from the prior year to the current year, or the student's 2022 result is Advanced High or Basic Fluency.

2022 Academic Accountability System Framework

- If the composite rating from 2021 is not available, the 2020 composite rating is compared to the 2022 composite rating. As the completion of TELPAS was optional in 2020, if the 2020 composite rating is available but does not show progress, the 2019 composite rating is compared to the 2022 composite rating.
- If the composite rating from 2020 is not available, the 2019 composite rating is compared to the 2022 composite rating.
- If the composite rating from 2019 is not available, the 2018 composite rating is compared to the 2022 composite rating.

The ELP component will evaluate three years of TELPAS Alternate data in addition to TELPAS data. Current year TELPAS Alternate composite scores will be compared to the 2021, 2020, or 2019 (if 2020 is not available).

Comprehensive, Targeted, and Additional Targeted Support Identification

For 2022, the identification and exit criteria for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) and additional targeted support (ATS) will be updated. The targeted support and improvement (TSI) identification criteria will remain unchanged.

- **CSI Identification Criteria**
 - Previously campuses were identified by rank ordering the Closing the Gaps scaled domain score for all Title I campuses. The lowest five percent of campuses were identified for CSI.
 - Beginning with 2022 accountability, TEA will use both the Closing the Gaps and overall scaled scores to identify CSI campuses. Closing the Gaps scaled scores will be ranked by school type. The overall scaled score will be ranked without regard to campus type. Title I campuses with both the lowest Closing the Gaps and lowest overall scaled scores will be identified for CSI. This will not increase the percentage of Title I campuses identified for CSI.
- **CSI Exit Criteria**
 - Previously campuses had to not rank in the bottom five percent of the Closing the Gaps domain for two consecutive years *and* have increased a letter grade in the Closing the Gaps domain by the end of the second year in order to exit.
 - Beginning with 2022 accountability, campuses that do not rank in their school type's bottom five percent of the Closing the Gaps domain for two consecutive years and have a 2022 overall scaled score that does not fall within the lowest percentile will be exited.
- **ATS Identification Criteria**
 - Previously a Title I or non-Title I campus that was not identified for CSI or TSI was identified as ATS if it had at least one student group that did not meet any of its evaluated targets for that year.
 - Beginning with 2022 accountability, ATS identification will be based on a subset of TSI-identified campuses. Any TSI-identified campus will have its identification escalated to ATS if it has at least one consistently underperforming student group that did not meet any of its evaluated indicators for three consecutive years. TSI and ATS identify both Title I and non-Title I campuses.

2022 Academic Accountability System Framework

- **ATS Exit Criteria**
 - Previously the triggering group(s) had to meet the reading and math targets in Academic Achievement.
 - Beginning with 2022 accountability, ATS will be a yearly identification. If the campus is reidentified as TSI, but has no ATS-triggering student groups, the campus will be TSI and will exit ATS. TSI is a yearly identification.

Distinction Designations

Distinction designations will be awarded for 2022. Campus comparison groups will be generated and distinction data will be published.

Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) Campus Identification

As a result of SB 879, dropout recovery schools (DRS) will be identified by two methods.

1. First, alternative education campuses that meet the statutory DRS definition found in Texas Education Code, §39.0548 will be identified and preregistered for AEA. These campuses provide education services targeted to dropout prevention and recovery of students in grades 9–12, with enrollment consisting of at least 60 percent of the students 16 years of age or older as of September 1, 2021, as reported for the fall semester TSDS PEIMS submission.
2. Campuses that meet the alternative education accountability criteria, but do not meet the age criterion for DRS, may apply for DRS designation. Districts may submit a DRS application and supporting documentation via TEAL Accountability during the AEA registration window. The DRS application must present how the campus is providing dropout prevention and/or recovery services. If the agency approves the DRS application, these campuses will receive a one-year discretionary DRS designation and will be registered for AEA.

All campuses identified on the final list of 2022 AEA campuses will be identified either as residential treatment facilities or DRS.

Determination of Count of Consecutive School Years of Unacceptable Performance Ratings

The “Determination of Multiple Year Unacceptable Status” section of Chapter 9 will be replaced with “Determination of Count of Consecutive School Years of Unacceptable Performance Ratings” and the description will be updated to align with current statute.

Public Education Grant (PEG) Identification

SB 1365 also updated the PEG criteria. A campus will be identified for PEG if it receives an overall unacceptable rating. For 2022, any campus with an overall scaled score less than 60 will be identified for the 2023–24 PEG list.

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

As part of the spring 2022 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan amendment, TEA proposes an update to comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) and additional targeted support (ATS) identification and exit methodologies. This overview and Q&A provides additional detail on the proposal. A public comment period for the amendment proposal runs through April 4, 2022.

Please send all comments by electronic mail addressed to

performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov.

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)

TSI Identification Methodology

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is not proposing any changes to the TSI identification criteria. TSI identifies both Title I and non-Title I campuses.

A student group that misses the targets in at least the same three indicators, for three consecutive years, is considered “consistently underperforming.” Any campus not identified for CSI that has at least one consistently underperforming student group is identified for TSI. Data from 2018, 2019, and 2022 are considered consecutive years for 2022 TSI identification.

TSI is an annual identification with no exit criteria.

TSI Identification Example

The elementary campus below would be identified as TSI based on the White student group. This group missed the same three indicators in 2018, 2019, and 2022.

	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Eco Dis	EL Current and Monitored	SPED Current
A student group that misses the targets in at least the same three indicators, for three consecutive years, is identified for targeted support and improvement.										
Years Missed			3							
Academic Achievement (Percent at Meets Grade Level or Above)										
Reading Target	32%	37%	60%	43%	74%	45%	56%	33%	29%	19%
2018	39%	37%	56%	-	59%	-	-	37%	36%	36%
2019	25%	35%	50%	-	61%	-	-	32%	40%	28%
2022	34%	33%	52%	-	74%	-	-	31%	38%	28%
Mathematics Target	31%	40%	59%	45%	82%	50%	54%	36%	40%	23%
2018	35%	31%	50%	-	76%	-	-	34%	44%	39%
2019	22%	42%	51%	-	73%	-	-	36%	54%	30%
2022	26%	45%	51%	-	83%	-	-	36%	54%	30%
Growth (Academic Growth)										
Reading Target	62	65	69	67	77	67	68	64	64	59
2018	68	71	69	-	76	-	-	68	75	78
2019	68	76	84	-	84	-	-	73	84	-
2022	63	68	82	-	85	-	-	70	81	-
Mathematics Target	67	69	74	71	86	74	73	68	68	61
2018	70	60	62	-	85	-	-	64	74	73
2019	74	78	89	-	90	-	-	80	84	-
2022	72	78	86	-	91	-	-	78	81	-
Student Success (Student Achievement Domain Score (STAAR Component Only))										
Target	36	41	58	46	73	48	55	38	37	23
2018	37	40	50	-	63	-	42	38	45	34
2019	34	41	53	-	62	-	30	40	50	29
2022	36	41	54	-	73	-	56	40	52	25

Additional Targeted Support (ATS)

Proposed ATS Identification Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

ATS identification would be based on the subset of TSI-identified campuses. ATS identifies both Title I and non-Title I campuses. Any TSI-identified campus would have its identification

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

escalated to ATS if it meets both ATS identification criteria. First, the campus would have to meet the identification for TSI by having at least one consistently underperforming student group. Second, the campus would also have at least one consistently underperforming student group that did not meet any of its evaluated indicators for those three consecutive years. The consistently underperforming student group must meet the minimum size in all indicators for all three years in order to be escalated to ATS.

ATS Identification Example

The elementary campus below would be identified as ATS based on the White student group. This group missed all five indicators in 2018, 2019, and 2022.

	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Eco Dis	EL Current and Monitored	SPED Current
If a consistently underperforming student group missed all evaluated indicators for three years, the campus is escalated to ATS.										
Years Missed			3							
Academic Achievement (Percent at Meets Grade Level or Above)										
Reading Target	32%	37%	60%	43%	74%	45%	56%	33%	29%	19%
2018	33%	37%	56%	-	53%	-	-	37%	36%	36%
2019	25%	35%	50%	-	61%	-	-	32%	40%	28%
2022	34%	33%	52%	-	74%	-	-	31%	38%	28%
Mathematics Target	31%	40%	53%	45%	82%	50%	54%	36%	40%	23%
2018	35%	31%	50%	-	76%	-	-	34%	44%	33%
2019	22%	42%	51%	-	73%	-	-	36%	54%	30%
2022	26%	45%	51%	-	83%	-	-	36%	54%	30%
Growth (Academic Growth)										
Reading Target	62	65	69	67	77	67	68	64	64	59
2018	68	71	67	-	76	-	-	68	75	78
2019	68	76	68	-	84	-	-	73	84	-
2022	63	68	68	-	85	-	-	70	81	-
Mathematics Target	67	69	74	71	86	74	73	68	68	61
2018	70	60	62	-	85	-	-	64	74	73
2019	74	78	73	-	90	-	-	80	84	-
2022	72	78	73	-	91	-	-	78	81	-
Student Success (Student Achievement Domain Score (STAAR Component Only))										
Target	36	41	58	46	73	48	55	38	37	23
2018	37	40	50	-	63	-	42	38	45	34
2019	34	41	53	-	62	-	30	40	50	29
2022	36	41	54	-	73	-	56	40	52	25

Proposed ATS Exit Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

To exit ATS, the campus would have to not be reidentified for ATS. A campus would exit ATS to TSI status if the campus continued to meet TSI criteria but did not have at least one student group that did not meet any evaluated indicators for three consecutive years. If the campus had no consistently underperforming student groups, it would exit both ATS and TSI status.

ATS Q&As

- 1. If a campus was identified as ATS in 2018 or 2019, does that campus have to meet the old exit criteria to exit ATS status for 2022?**

No. If a previously identified ATS campus is not identified under the 2022 methodology, it is considered as having successfully exited ATS status.

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

2. Is there a minimum size for ATS identification?

Yes.

For elementary/middle schools the student group must meet minimum size (25 assessments) for all three years in all five indicators

- Academic Achievement Reading
- Academic Achievement Mathematics
- Academic Growth Reading
- Academic Growth Mathematics
- Student Success (STAAR Only)

For high schools/K-12s the student group must meet minimum size (25 assessments or 25 graduates) for all three years in all four indicators

- Academic Achievement Reading
- Academic Achievement Mathematics
- Graduation Rate
- School Quality (CCMR)

If minimum size is not met for all three years, the campus could remain TSI if it missed at least three indicators for three years.

3. What if a student group does not meet minimum size one year, how does that affect the count of consecutive years?

If a student group does not meet minimum size one year, the count of consecutive years is reset for ATS identification purposes.

4. What happens with a high school that does not have a graduation rate?

If a high school does not have a graduation rate, Academic Growth is used with the same five minimum indicators requirement that applies to elementary and middle schools.

5. Can a campus fail to exit ATS status if a different student group than the triggering student group fails to meet its targets for three years?

Yes. For example, a campus may be identified in 2022 based on the special education student group. In 2023, the special education group meets its targets, but then the Asian student group fails to meet its targets for three years. That campus would be identified as ATS Year 2 based on the performance of the Asian student group.

Proposed Escalation of ATS to CSI Timeline

Under the current ESSA plan, any Title I campus identified for ATS for three consecutive years will be identified for CSI the following school year. As part of the ESSA amendment request, TEA is requesting to delay the escalation of ATS campuses until August 2024. If the request is approved, Title I campuses will be escalated for the first time from ATS to CSI in August 2024 based on 2022, 2023, and 2024 accountability rating data. These campuses will be required to implement CSI interventions beginning in the 2024–25 school year.

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

When Identified	SY 2022–23	SY 2023–24	SY 2024–25
August 2022	ATS (Year 1)		
August 2023		ATS (Year 2)	
August 2024			CSI (Third Identification)

ATS Escalation Q&As

1. **If a Title I campus identified in 2018 and 2019 as ATS is reidentified in 2022, is that considered Year 3?**

No. All campuses identified in 2019 were relabeled as Year 1 after Texas dropped the All Students group from TSI and ATS identification.

If the ESSA amendment is approved as proposed, a campus identified in 2022 would be considered ATS Year 1 regardless of prior identifications.

If the ESSA amendment is denied, Title I campuses will be escalated for the first time from ATS to CSI in August 2023 as was detailed in the spring 2021 ESSA amendment.

When Identified ATS	SY 2020–21	SY 2022–23	SY 2023–24
August 2019	ATS (Year 1)		
August 2022		ATS (Year 2)	
August 2023			CSI (Third Identification)

2. **Must the same student group(s) trigger ATS identification for three years for the campus to be escalated to CSI?**

No. A campus may be identified as ATS for three years based on differing student groups. The escalation is based on the campus' ATS status, not on a particular student group.

3. **What if a campus exits ATS to TSI in August 2024 but is reidentified as ATS in August 2025? Would it be escalated to CSI in 2025?**

No. In order to be escalated to CSI, a Title I campus must be identified as ATS for three consecutive years. This campus would be labeled ATS Year 1 in 2025.

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)

Proposed CSI Identification Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

To identify schools for CSI, TEA proposes annually ranking all Title I campuses based on Closing the Gaps scaled scores. Beginning August 2022, TEA proposes also evaluating overall scaled scores to make final CSI determinations. Using a multi-step process, Title I campuses with both the lowest Closing the Gaps and lowest overall scaled scores would be identified for CSI.

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

First, TEA would determine the bottom five percent of Closing the Gaps outcomes by rank ordering the scaled scores of Title I campuses by school type—elementary, middle, high school/K–12, and alternative education accountability. TEA then would determine which campuses fell in the bottom five percent for each school type.

Next, TEA would rank order the overall scaled scores for *all* Title I campuses statewide (without regard to campus type) to determine the scaled score cut point for the bottom five percent. **A Title I campus with a Closing the Gaps scaled score in the bottom five percent and an overall scaled score in the lowest percentile would be identified for CSI.**

Proposed CSI Exit Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

Campuses that did not rank in their school type's bottom five percent of the Closing the Gaps domain for two consecutive years *and* have an overall scaled score that year that does not fall within the lowest percentile to be reidentified for CSI would be considered as having successfully exited.

CSI Identification Example

Using the last year of Closing the Gaps and overall scaled score data available (2019), the bottom five percent Closing the Gaps scaled scores for Title I campuses, by school type, would be:

- Elementary: 47
- Middle: 36
- HS/K–12: 66
- AEA: 30

The 2019 overall lowest percentile scaled score for Title I campuses would be 59.

In order to be identified as CSI under the new methodology, a campus would have to fall within the following ranges. ***Note, these scaled scores are based on 2019 data and will change each year based on statewide campus outcomes.***

- Elementary: Closing the Gaps scaled score ≤ 47 and an overall scaled score ≤ 59 .
- Middle: Closing the Gaps scaled score ≤ 36 and an overall scaled score ≤ 59 .
- HS/K–12: Closing the Gaps scaled score ≤ 66 and an overall scaled score ≤ 59 .
- AEA: Closing the Gaps scaled score ≤ 30 and an overall scaled score ≤ 59 .

CSI Q&As

1. Are campuses that were identified as bottom five percent CSI in 2018 eligible to exit status in 2022?

Yes. First, a campus identified in 2018 must have a 2019 Closing the Gaps scaled score greater than 42 (the bottom 5%). Second, the campus must not rank in the bottom five percent of its school type and not rank in the lowest percentile overall for 2022.

2. Are campuses that were identified or reidentified as bottom five percent CSI in 2019 eligible to exit status in 2022?

No. For 2022, campuses identified/reidentified in 2019 must not rank in the bottom five percent of their school type to be labeled as CSI Progress. Those campuses will be evaluated for exit in 2023.

2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A

3. What if a high school campus was identified as both CSI graduation rate and CSI bottom five percent?

High schools identified as having a low graduation rate must meet or exceed the 67% federal graduation rate for two years to exit CSI graduation rate status. They must also meet both bottom five percent exit criteria to exit CSI five percent status. It is possible to exit one identification while not exiting the other.

Further Information

If you have questions regarding the proposed amendment, please contact the Performance Reporting Division at (512) 463-9704 or performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov.

DATE:	March 3, 2022
SUBJECT:	Amendment to the State's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan
CATEGORY:	Notice
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of the intent of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to submit an amendment to the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan to adjust the methodology used in August 2022 to identify and exit schools for federal support and improvement.

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)

TSI Identification Methodology

TEA is not proposing any changes to the TSI identification criteria. TSI identifies both Title I and non-Title I campuses.

A student group that misses the targets in at least the same three indicators, for three consecutive years, is considered "consistently underperforming." Any campus not identified for CSI that has at least one consistently underperforming student group is identified for TSI. Data from 2018, 2019, and 2022 are considered consecutive years for 2022 TSI identification.

TSI is an annual identification with no exit criteria.

Additional Targeted Support (ATS)

Prior ATS Identification Methodology

A campus that is not identified for CSI or TSI that has at least one student group meets no evaluated targets is identified as ATS. ATS identifies both Title I and non-Title I campuses.

Proposed ATS Identification Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

ATS identification would be based on the subset of TSI-identified campuses. Any TSI-identified campus would have its identification escalated to ATS if it meets both ATS identification criteria. First, the campus would have to meet the identification for TSI by having at least one consistently underperforming student group. Second, the campus would also have at least one consistently underperforming student group that did not meet any of its evaluated indicators for those three consecutive years. The consistently underperforming student group must meet the minimum size in all indicators for all three years in order to be escalated to ATS.

Prior ATS Exit Methodology

In order to exit ATS identification, the campus' triggering group(s) must meet the reading and math targets in Academic Achievement.

Proposed ATS Exit Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

To exit ATS, the campus would have to not be reidentified for ATS. A campus would be able exit ATS to TSI status if the campus continued to meet TSI criteria but did not have at least one consistently underperforming student group that did not meet any evaluated indicators for three consecutive years.

Proposed Escalation of ATS to CSI Timeline

Under the current ESSA plan, any Title I campus identified for ATS for three consecutive years will be identified for CSI the following school year. As part of the ESSA amendment request, TEA is requesting to delay the escalation of ATS campuses until August 2024. If the request is approved, Title I campuses will be escalated for the first time from ATS to CSI in August 2024 based on 2022, 2023, and 2024 accountability rating data. These campuses will be required to implement CSI interventions beginning in the 2024–25 school year.

When Identified	SY 2022–23	SY 2023–24	SY 2024–25
August 2022	ATS (Year 1)		
August 2023		ATS (Year 2)	
August 2024			CSI (Third Identification)

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)

Prior CSI Identification Methodology

Under existing CSI identification methodology, TEA rank orders the scaled domain score for all campuses. The lowest five percent of campuses that receive Title I, Part A funds are identified for comprehensive support and improvement.

Proposed CSI Identification Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

To identify schools for CSI, TEA proposes annually ranking all Title I campuses based on Closing the Gaps scaled scores. Beginning August 2022, TEA proposes also evaluating overall scaled scores to make final CSI determinations. Using a multi-step process, Title I campuses with both the lowest Closing the Gaps and lowest overall scaled scores would be identified for CSI.

First, TEA would determine the bottom five percent of Closing the Gaps outcomes by rank ordering the scaled scores of Title I campuses by school type—elementary, middle, high school/ K–12, and alternative education accountability. TEA then would determine which campuses fell in the bottom five percent for each school type.

Next, TEA would rank order the overall scaled scores for *all* Title I campuses statewide (without regard to campus type) to determine the scaled score cut point for the bottom five percent. **A Title I campus with a Closing the Gaps scaled score in the bottom five percent and an overall scaled score in the lowest percentile would be identified for CSI.**

Prior CSI Exit Methodology

Campuses that do not rank in the bottom five percent of the Closing the Gaps domain for two consecutive years *and* have increased a letter grade (for example, from *F* to *D* or from *D* to *C*) on the Closing the Gaps domain by the end of the second year are considered as having successfully exited comprehensive support and improvement status.

Proposed CSI Exit Methodology for 2022 and Beyond

Campuses that did not rank in their school type’s bottom five percent of the Closing the Gaps domain for two consecutive years *and* have an overall scaled score that year that does not fall within the lowest percentile to be reidentified for CSI would be considered as having successfully exited.

Comment Period

All comments on this proposed amendment are due by April 4, 2022, by electronic mail addressed to performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov.

Once TEA has reviewed any comments received and has made any appropriate modifications to the proposed plan amendment, the comments will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as part of the state's plan amendment request. When, and if, TEA receives USDE approval of the amendment, additional information will be provided to local educational agencies on the impact to August 2022 identification and exit of schools for improvement. These methodology adjustments will not affect student targets or other methodologies used in the 2022 accountability system.

For those who would like greater detail about the proposed changes, the [2022 Federal School Improvement Overview and Q&A](#) is a useful resource.

If you have questions regarding the proposed amendment, please contact the Performance Reporting Division.

Contact Information

Texas Education Agency

Performance Reporting Division

(512) 463-9704

performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov

DATE:	February 24, 2022
SUBJECT:	Application Open for Texas Through-year Assessment Pilot
CATEGORY:	Student Assessment
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

The purpose of this communication is to inform superintendents and district administrators about the opening of the application for the Texas Through-year Assessment Pilot (TTAP). Note: this pilot activity should not be confused with other changes to the [STAAR assessment planned for spring 2023, and announced here](#).

Texas Through-year Assessment Pilot Overview

House Bill 3906, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, among other changes to STAAR, required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop and pilot an innovative, through-year assessment model as a possible replacement for the summative State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®). A through-year assessment model refers to a progress monitoring system that provides students multiple opportunities throughout the school year to demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum standards and to contribute to their summative performance level reported at the end of the year.

In response to this legislation, TEA has developed TTAP in collaboration with Texas educators, administrators, students, and families. The assessment pilot will include three, short testing opportunities—one each in the fall, winter, and spring. For the 2022–23 school year, the following grades and subjects will be piloted:

- Grade 5 science
- Grade 6 math
- Grade 7 math
- Grade 8 social studies

Participate in the Texas Through-year Assessment Pilot

All Texas public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools are encouraged to apply to participate in TTAP. The [district-level application](#) is now available and will close on April 29, 2022. The [TTAP webpage](#) contains details about the pilot's structure and design. In addition, a webinar will be hosted on Tuesday, March 22, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. (CT) to provide more information about the pilot. Districts may [register for the webinar here](#) or on the TTAP webpage.

Please submit any questions regarding TTAP or the application process via the [Student Assessment Help Desk](#).

Could Two Through Year Assessment Designs Provide Both Summative and Instructional Information?

An Exploration of Feasibility for a Through Year Assessment System

Center for Assessment, [Brian Gong](#), March 3, 2021

<https://www.nciea.org/blog/state-testing/could-two-through-year-assessment-designs-provide-both-summative-and>

In a past [post](#), I showed the logical conflict that exists for an assessment to claim to provide both end-of-the-year summative evidence and instructionally-useful evidence intended to improve student learning within the year. The challenge in making both a summative claim about what a student can do at the end of the year and the use of assessment for instructional purposes throughout the year **led me to conclude that a through year assessment system could focus on providing end-of-year summative or instructional information, but not both at the same time with the same assessments.** (Emphasis added.)

Readers of my previous post with an eye for detail may have already noticed how exactly the summative claim was formulated around what a student knows and can do at the end of the year, and wondered, *"Couldn't summative and instructional purposes both be served if the claims were adjusted?"*

In this post, I consider two current through year assessment designs that do adjust the claims in asserting to provide both summative and instructional assessment information from the same through year assessment. While both are clever designs, my conclusion is neither manages to truly provide both end-of-year summative *and* instructional assessment information from the same assessment.

The Grade Book Assessment Model

The "grade book model" is quite similar to many teachers' grading models, in which a summative grade is given for each weekly quiz or biweekly test or each final exam. Then those grades are combined to produce an overall summative grade for the year. The summative claim is not only about the student at the end of the year, but also the student at the times the through year assessments were administered as well as at the end of the year.

For simplicity, my example uses a through year design with four assessments, one in each quarter; although there could be different numbers of assessments at different times of the year. The assessments are intended to be instructional; that is, provide information that can be used to help the students improve their learning after receiving the assessment. The assessments are also counted as contributing toward an end-of-year summative score. If contributing to an end of unit or other grade, the assessments may also count locally as summative at the time of administration.

In our hypothetical example, the scores of the student over the course of the year are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Example of a through year "grade book" approach.

Example of a through year "grade book" approach					
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4 (End of year)	Intended interpretation
Summative	Assmt 1 score = 3	Assmt 2 score = 5	Assmt 3 score = 7	Assmt 4 score = 9	Assessment provides information that can be incorporated into a summative portrayal of the student over the course of the year and at the end of the year

One thing the through year assessment provides in terms of summative information is how the student performed during the year. In particular, the through year assessments provide information on how "on track" the student was to the end of the year, at the points in time the assessments were administered.

A "Grade book" Approach to Through Year Assessment

What does a grade reflect? Not what the student "knows and can do at the end of the year," as the example above shows. A cumulative grade over through year assessments largely marks how well the student did on assessments of intermediate content at times of the teacher's choosing. In many ways, a grade book approach supports the claim or interpretation: "This student learned the content at the pacing set by the teacher, district, or curriculum."

Advocates for a grade book approach will need to show how this claim is relevant, especially for students who do learn, but not at the posited pacing schedule.

A "grade book" through year model also creates the need to specify how the evidence gathered during the year (e.g., the four test scores) will be combined to arrive at a summative determination. Is certain assessment evidence more important and therefore should count more than others? Should more recent evidence count more than evidence gathered earlier in the year? What to do about missing assessments? How should a common scale be constructed to combine the different evidence? These are well-known issues for teachers when constructing grades, and also hold true when creating a grade book model for through year assessment. Valid interpretations of scores based on a grade book approach would most likely require an understanding of what content was assessed when, the weights for each through year assessment, and other important variables.

There may be many good reasons for a grading approach to summative assessment, including providing motivation, accountability, and general feedback during the year. However, as I argued in my previous post, a through year assessment can provide evidence suitable for an interpretation about what the student knows and can do at the end of the year *as long as* the student does not change before the end of the year. It should be clear that the claims about

student performance provided by a through year grade book approach should not be deemed comparable to an end of year summative determination, especially when the instructional assessment is effective.

The Adaptive End of Year Test Model

Another through year assessment model purports to take advantage of the strengths of adaptive multi-stage testing. Essentially, the through year information collected in each assessment event provides an estimate of student ability at the time of that assessment; the most recent estimate of student ability is used to place the student within an adaptive assessment (See Fig. 2). The adaptive end of year test model does not change the traditional end of year summative claim so much as it purports to collect the information to support that claim more efficiently.

Figure 2: Example of through year "multi-stage adaptive" approach.

An example of a through year “multi-stage adaptive” approach				
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4
Summative at the time, <i>and</i> instructional at the time	Provides a student ability score; and provides instructional assessment information	Uses prior to inform CAT; produces student ability score; and provides instructional assessment information	Uses prior to inform CAT; produces student ability score; and provides instructional assessment information	Uses prior to inform CAT end of year assessment; produces student ability score

In this model, the only evidence to inform end of year summative claims is provided by the end of year assessment. The other through year assessments are providing what may be thought of as a “suggestion to improve efficiency” of the end of year assessment. On the surface, it would appear that this model should provide summative information comparable to a traditional end of year summative assessment, and perhaps do so more efficiently.

However, I think the adaptive through year assessment is providing information largely superfluous to the end of year summative determination. Here are the assumptions or conditions that must be in place for the end of year assessment to provide the summative information needed:

- The end of year assessment should be able to make an accurate determination of student ability, regardless of whether a student completed all, some, or none of the through year assessments. In other words, the through year information is not essential.
- The end of year test should be able to make an accurate determination of student ability, regardless of the starting estimate from the through year assessments. In other words, the through year information does not determine anything in the end of year results; it may make it more efficient. An adaptive test that is starting with an estimate of student ability—

especially if that estimate is coming from outside the current test—should have enough adaptive range to “recover” if the starting estimate does not agree with the performance on the adaptive test itself.

- The end of year assessment must assess the grade-level content thoroughly to get a fair and accurate estimate of student ability at the end of the year, no matter the results from the through year assessment. This condition is true anytime, but most obviously when through year results may or may not be based on on-grade level content.

The increase in efficiency afforded by use of the through year assessment results likely is modest. When all of the conditions for content coverage are met, the increase in efficiency might be about 10 minutes in a typical end of year CAT test with good items. The placement prior to starting the end of year assessment into levels such as “high,” “medium,” and “low”—typical for stage adaptive tests—might be equally well done by a teacher rating.

Given the conditions above and the fact that in the adaptive model nothing from the through year assessments is incorporated into the end of year assessment results, one must ask whether the adaptive end of year test model, as described, is in fact a through year design at all.

In summary, the end-of-year assessment is best thought of as a stand-alone assessment, with little to no contribution to summative information from the preceding through year assessments.

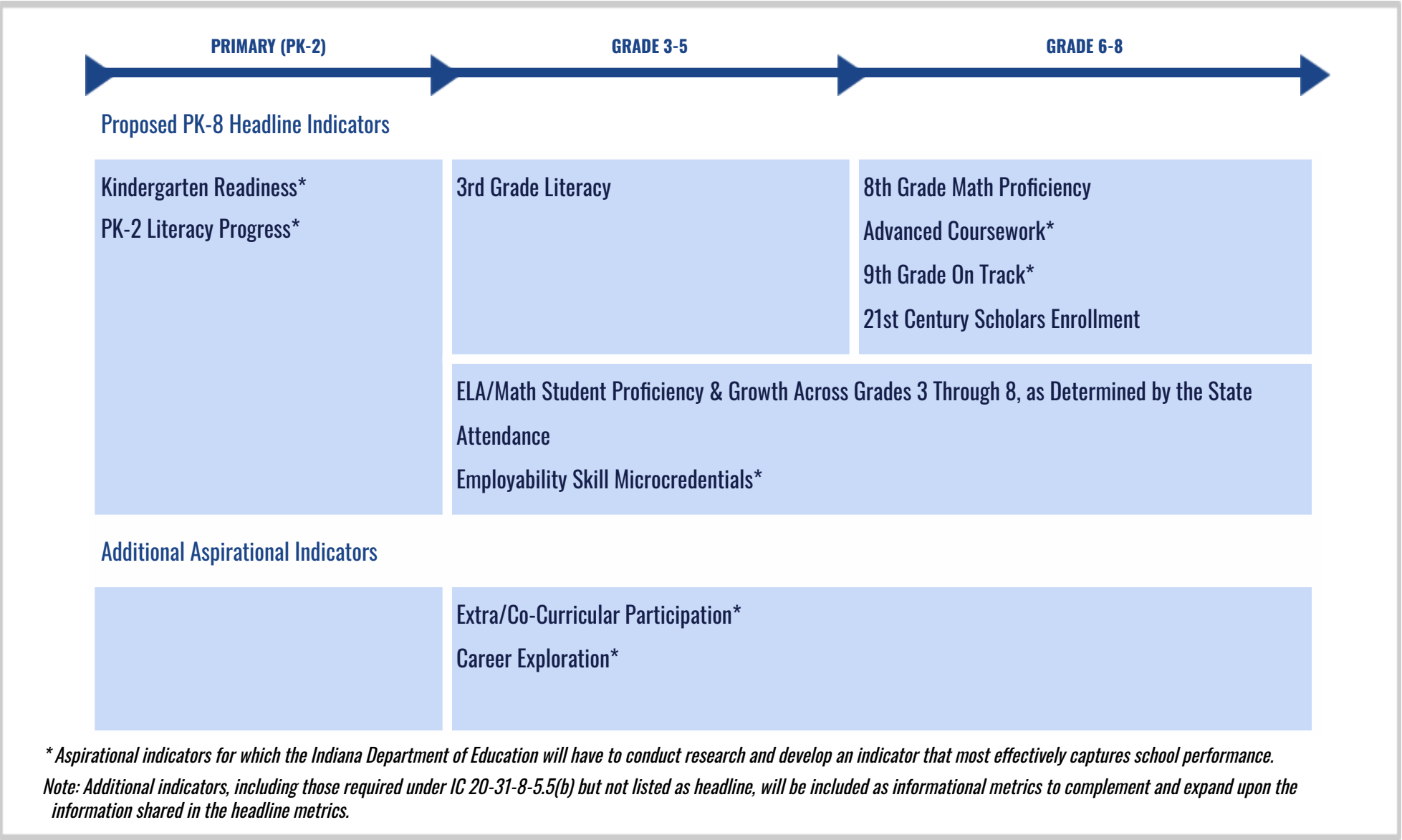
This view frees the through year assessments to focus on providing primarily instructional information. How they can do so will have to be the subject of another post. But this adaptive model *is* a good design of a balanced assessment system: two different types of assessments—end of year and through year—providing two different types of assessment information serving two different purposes: summative and instructional.

Would it Work to Use a Through Year Assessment for Both Instructional and Summative Purposes?

In my previous post, I conclude that providing both instructional and end of year summative information—specifically, summative information about what a student knows and can do at the end of the year— is not possible. In this post, I show that through year assessments can be designed to provide useful information, including information that can be used for summative purposes, if adjustments are made to the summative claim. I believe, however, that through year assessments may most productively be thought of within the context of a balanced assessment system, where different types of assessments serve different assessment purposes, including informing summative and instructional interpretations and actions.

INDIANA GPS: PROPOSED K-8 HEADLINE INDICATORS

Based on comprehensive research, analysis and input from a broad range of stakeholders, the Indiana Department of Education proposes the following headline indicators for schools serving students in grades K-8.



INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF K-8 HEADLINE INDICATORS

What Does This Mean for Students?

These headline indicators signal what matters most in the development of graduates prepared to succeed. By measuring improvement and achievement for each headline indicator, we are affirming the importance of these components as benchmarks that contribute to the lifelong success of each student. For K-8, the headline indicators focus on the establishment of the strong foundational knowledge and skills students need as they prepare for a successful transition to high school.

Headline Indicator	IN GPS Characteristic(s)	Definition	Impact	Availability
PK - 2 Literacy Progress	- Academic Mastery - Career & Postsecondary Readiness	Students demonstrating progress in essential early reading skills from one year to the next, as measured by state-approved literacy assessments	- Align instructional practices to the Science of Reading and use early literacy assessments to inform strategic, early intervention for students needing additional support - Increase prioritization of K-3 foundational learning	Aspirational (Fall 2023)
Kindergarten Readiness	Academic Mastery	The percentage of Kindergarten students demonstrating the skills necessary to be considered ready to start Kindergarten	- Guide instruction and inform early intervention for students needing additional support - Expand access to quality PK to ensure students enter kindergarten ready to learn	Aspirational (Fall 2023)
3rd Grade Literacy	- Academic Mastery - Career & Postsecondary Readiness	Students demonstrating proficiency in essential early reading skills	- Align instructional practices to the Science of Reading - Inform early intervention for students needing additional support - Increase prioritization of K-3 foundational learning	In Development (Fall 2022)
ELA & Math Proficiency & Growth	Academic Mastery	Students meeting or exceeding annual growth expectations toward proficiency of ELA and math standards	Provide effective ELA and math instruction aligned to Indiana content standards to all students, including those most at risk	Currently Available

INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF K-8 HEADLINE INDICATORS

8th Grade Math Proficiency	• Academic Mastery	Students demonstrating proficiency of 8th grade math standards	• Provide effective math instruction aligned to Indiana content standards to all students, including those most at risk • Signals student preparedness for college and career ready math course work	Currently Available
9th Grade On-Track	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Work Ethic	Longitudinal outcome for middle grades; demonstrates students formerly in 8th grade who, at the end of 9th grade, completed the credits to be considered on-track to graduate high school on time	• Effectively prepare students for the transition to high school • Continued monitoring of students to and through their 9th grade year to inform programs and supports in middle school	In Development (Fall 2023)
Student Attendance	• Work Ethic	Students maximize learning opportunities by attending school regularly	• Improve student attendance • Implement effective interventions with students at risk of chronic absenteeism	Currently Available
Employability Microcredentials	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Communication & Collaboration • Work Ethic	Students earning high-value micro-credentialing badges demonstrate mastery of employability standards	• Support students in developing lifelong skills that complement student pathway options • Encourage schools to build out intentional programs and experiences aligned to Indiana Employability Standards.	Aspirational (Fall 2024)
Advanced Coursework	• Academic Mastery • Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Work Ethic	Students completing advanced coursework (e.g., Pre-AP, Algebra I, Biology I, etc.) prior to 9th grade	• Provide effective instruction aligned to Indiana content standards to ensure all students have the knowledge they need to consider enrolling in advanced coursework • Expand access to advanced coursework which may align with future student pathway	Currently Available
21st Century Scholars Enrollment	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Civic, Financial, and Digital Literacy	The percentage of eligible students that fully enroll in Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program	• Promote participation in the 21st Century Scholars program to ensure access to financial support for postsecondary education regardless of a student's current post-graduation plans (NOTE: 21st Century Scholars persistence should be provided as an informational indicator.)	Currently Available

INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF K-8 HEADLINE INDICATORS

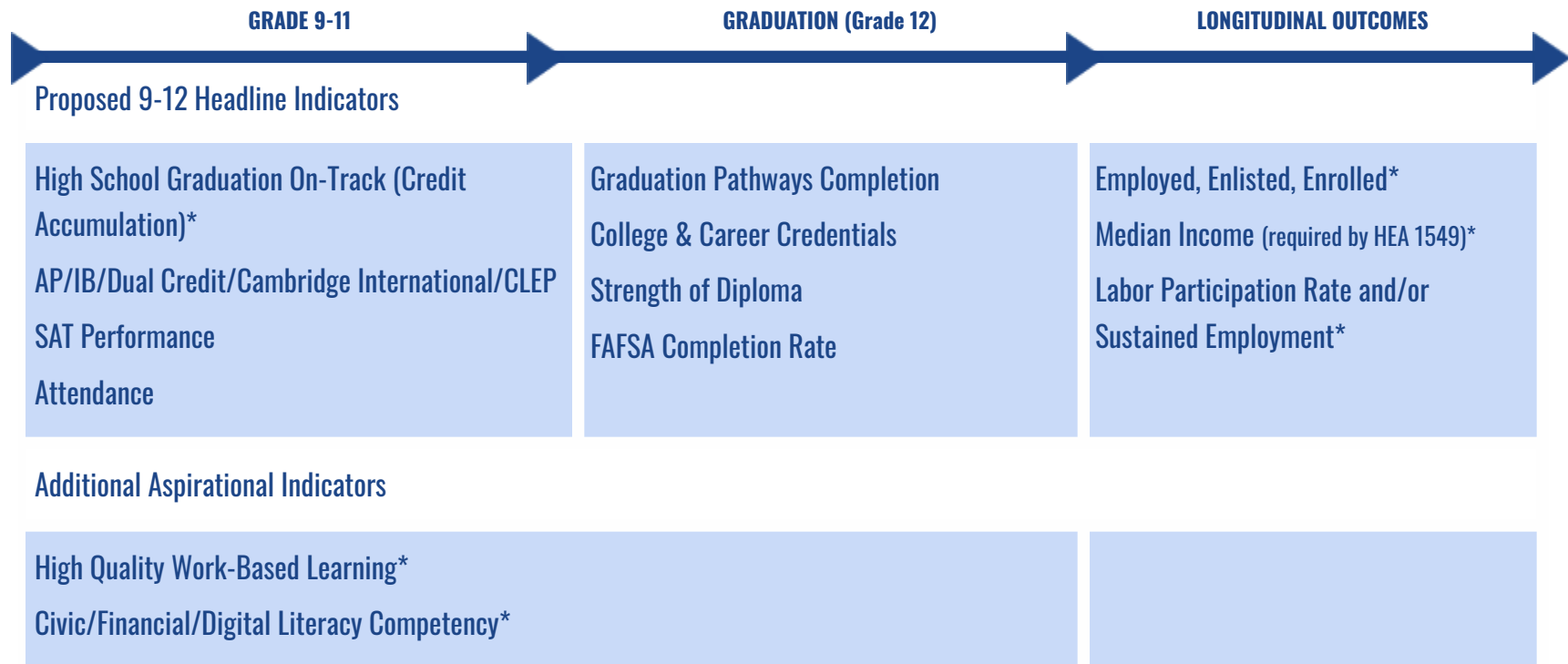
			Promote conversations about each student's post-graduation plan and the resources available to support their college and career aspirations	
--	--	--	---	--

Additional Aspirational Indicator

Extra/Co-Curricular Participation	- Communication & Collaboration - Work Ethic	Percentage of students participating in meaningful extracurricular and cocurricular programming	- Promote participation in and access to programs and activities beyond the traditional school experience - Foster collaboration between schools and community organizations to offer rigorous extracurricular and cocurricular activities for all students	Aspirational (Fall 2024)
Career Exploration	- Career & Postsecondary Readiness - Communication & Collaboration - Work Ethic	Percentage of students participating in rigorous career exploration in grades K-8	Encourage schools to adopt comprehensive programming that affords students the opportunity to explore and engage in career and postsecondary interests	Aspirational (Fall 2024)

INDIANA GPS: PROPOSED 9-12 HEADLINE INDICATORS

Based on comprehensive research and analysis, and input from a broad range of stakeholders, the Indiana Department of Education proposes the following headline indicators for schools serving students in grades 9-12, including longitudinal outcomes.



** Aspirational indicators for which the Indiana Department of Education will have to conduct research and develop an indicator that most effectively captures school performance.*

Note: Additional indicators, including those required under IC 20-31-8-5.5(b) but not listed as headline, will be included as informational metrics to complement and expand upon the information shared in the headline metrics.

INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF 9-12 HEADLINE INDICATORS

What Does This Mean for Students?

These headline indicators signal what matters most in the development of graduates prepared to succeed. By measuring improvement and achievement for each headline indicator, we are affirming the importance of these components as benchmarks that contribute to the lifelong success of each student. For high school, the headline indicators focus on the advancement of individual knowledge, skills, and interests through high quality experiences so students are prepared to achieve their goals after high school.

Headline Indicator	IN GPS Characteristic(s)	Definition	Impact	Availability
High School Graduation On-Track	- Academic Mastery - Career & Postsecondary Readiness - Work Ethic	Percentage of students earning the expected number and type of credits annually in order to graduate on time	Supporting and determining if students are staying on track to earn a high school diploma, including through Individual Graduation Plans	In Development (Winter 2022)
AP/IB/Dual Credit/Cambridge Int'l Course Completion	- Academic Mastery - Career & Postsecondary Readiness - Work Ethic	Students completing advanced coursework (e.g., AP, IB, DC, IC) prior to 12th grade	- Provide effective instruction aligned to Indiana content standards to ensure all students have the knowledge they need to consider enrolling in advanced coursework - Expand access to advanced coursework which may align with future student pathway	Currently Available
Strength of Diploma	- Academic Mastery - Career & Postsecondary Readiness	The percentage of students graduating with each type of Indiana diploma	- Understand and address trends regarding student populations who earn certain diploma types, and improve access and preparation for these student populations - High schools expand course offerings and access to high quality credentials while in high school - High schools strengthen student pathways to ensure rigorous coursework for all students, regardless of student demographics and their aspirations beyond high school	Currently Available

INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF 9-12 HEADLINE INDICATORS

College & Career Credentials	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Work Ethic	Students participating in and earning high-value college or career credentials	• High schools offer high-quality college and career preparatory coursework and experiences that allow students to earn valued credentials that lead to high-wage, in-demand opportunities for students	Currently Available
SAT Performance	• Academic Mastery • Career & Postsecondary Readiness	Students meeting ELA and math performance benchmarks	• Provide effective ELA and math instruction aligned to Indiana content standards to all students • Provide access to SAT testing and test preparation, ensuring more students have access to postsecondary opportunities and funding	Currently Available
Attendance/ Chronic Absenteeism	• Work Ethic	Students maximize learning opportunities by attending school regularly	• Improve student attendance with engaging pathways aligned to student skills and interests • Implement effective interventions with students at risk of chronic absenteeism to re-engage them in their education	Currently Available
FAFSA Completion Rate	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Civic, Financial, and Digital Literacy	The percentage of high school 12th grade students who have successfully completed the FAFSA	• Encourage high schools to make FAFSA completion an expectation for all students to ensure financial aid is available regardless of a student's current post-graduation plan • Promote conversations about the availability of financial aid for students to continue their education beyond high school	Currently Available
Employment, Enlistment, Enrollment	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness • Work Ethic	Students enrolled in higher education, employed, or enlisted in the military following graduation	• Support students to develop Individual Graduation Plans, complete relevant coursework and credentials, and access financial aid • Engage students about their postsecondary plans and continue to track students beyond graduation • Better understand the extent to which K-12 systems have set-up students for long-term success.	In Development (Winter 2022)
Median Income	• Career & Postsecondary Readiness	Measure of median student income by graduation cohort at a specific point following high school completion	• Support students to develop Individual Graduation Plans, complete relevant coursework and credentials, and access financial aid • Engage students about their postsecondary plans and continue to track students beyond graduation NOTE: currently required in HEA 1549	In Development (Winter 2021)

INDIANA GPS: SUMMARY OF 9-12 HEADLINE INDICATORS

Labor Participation Rate and/or Sustained Employment	● Career & Postsecondary Readiness	Measure of what percentage of a cohort is participating in the labor force in any capacity	● Support students to develop Individual Graduation Plans, complete relevant coursework and credentials, and access financial aid ● Better understand the extent to which K-12 systems have set students up for long-term success	In Development (Winter 2021)
---	--	--	--	------------------------------

Additional Aspirational Indicator

High Quality Work-Based Learning	● Career & Postsecondary Readiness ● Communication & Collaboration ● Work Ethic	Percentage of students participating in high quality work-based learning experience as defined by the State	● Encourage partnerships between schools and local employers to create career-embedded learning opportunities for students while they are in high school ● Provide real-world opportunities for students to apply their learning in a career context and develop employability skills	Aspirational (Fall 2024)
Civic/Financial/Digital Literacy Competency	● Civic, Financial, and Digital Literacy	Percentage of graduates demonstrating competency in civic, financial, and/or digital literacy as determined by a rigorous assessment, rubric and/or external validation	● Encourage schools to integrate rigorous programming related to civic, financial, and digital literacy into the curriculum ● Promote schools to partner with high quality extra-curricular and co-curricular programming aligned to civic, financial, and digital literacy	Aspirational (Fall 2024)



OPINION AND COMMENTARY

Editorials and other Opinion content offer perspectives on issues important to our community and are independent from the work of our newsroom reporters.

OPINION

NC superintendent: North Carolina must fix its 'diploma integrity problem'

BY CATHERINE TRUITT

FEBRUARY 13, 2022 5:00 AM



In this file photo, NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt speaks at a March 2021 press conference. At a Feb. 3, 2022 State Board of Education meeting Truitt called for new school accountability metrics and changes in state exams. JULI LEONARD JLEONARD@NEWSOBSERVER.COM



Only have a minute? Listen instead

Powered by **Trinity Audio**

00:00



1.0x

03:28

At a Feb. 3 meeting of the State Board of Education, [State Superintendent Catherine Truitt](#) told board members that North Carolina has a “diploma integrity problem.” During the meeting she gave a report outlining a plan to better align K-12 education with workforce requirements. We asked Truitt to share her thoughts about that [here](#).

Despite the noise over mask mandates, “wokism” in public schools, and lost learning time in the classroom, one thing holds true: The purpose of K-12 public education is to prepare students for the post-secondary plans of their choice.

Our students are our greatest hope for building strong communities and a vibrant North Carolina, but they need to be well-prepared to compete for high-wage, high-demand careers. Data shows us that right now in North Carolina, they are not.

Before and during the pandemic, North Carolina’s average high school [graduation rate](#) hovered around 87%. Yet, only 31% of students attain a credential of marketplace value by the time they are 24, including those who complete a four-year degree. Consequently, half of North Carolinians between the ages of 18 and 44 [have the skills and education they need](#) to fill open jobs.

Education remains the surest route to economic prosperity and is the best strategy for meeting the state’s workforce needs, yet the pandemic has underscored the system’s limitations. The short answer is that reform is needed. This is particularly true with education’s testing and accountability system.

Instead of prioritizing personalized, student-centered learning focused on real-world application, our system requires teachers to focus on teaching students to take a one-and-done, end-of-grade test. Instead, we should have a system that provides flexibility to educators and empowers them to teach project-based learning and provide work-based opportunities.

Now more than ever, K-12 education must evolve to meet the needs of students, as well as the 21st century economy.

One way the Department of Public Instruction is aligning K-12 to meet workforce demands is through the creation of four workforce goals which were built in tandem with leaders in economic development, business and education to ensure we are on the right track.

We spent the last year soliciting feedback designing these goals: To prepare students with skills and experience needed to be successful citizens; ensure all students have access to post-secondary pathways that align with growing, high-wage careers; assist all students and parents in making informed decisions about future opportunities; and ensure all students engage in career exploration and real-world learning experiences well before graduation.

The Department of Public Instruction is also working to ensure that graduates are ready for life beyond high school through the development of a [Portrait of a Graduate](#). Regional focus groups are helping to establish a statewide model that defines what skills and traits all students should possess by the time they graduate high school.

This Portrait will help to measure durable skills like persistence, collaboration, and creativity — all of which are long-term skills we want employees and co-workers to have.

This approach to support and accelerate career and technical education in K-12 takes a shift in mindset and a shift in practice. It will require a new accountability system that measures more than grades, and one that instead prioritizes durable skills needed by employers, credentials earned, advanced learning opportunities, and participation in work-based learning.

Greater economic opportunity begins in K-12, and work is underway to ensure this happens.

Truitt is State Superintendent of Public Instruction in North Carolina.

OPINION

READ NEXT

TRENDING STORIES

Wells Fargo 401(k) plan now under
review by federal agencies **33**

Paul Farmer reshaped public health - and the way I think about Jesus

BY KATE MURPHY

FEBRUARY 24, 2022 10:20 AM



Remembering Paul Farmer, an North Carolina doctor who changed the way the world treats sick people worldwide. |

Opinion

KEEP READING →

review by federal agencies, bank says

UPDATED FEBRUARY 23, 2022 5:48 PM

Vote for the Charlotte Observer boys HS basketball underclassman of the year (03.02.22)

UPDATED FEBRUARY 23, 2022 11:50 PM

Texas couple escapes Ukraine with newly adopted 4-year-old son. 'Racing against time'

UPDATED FEBRUARY 24, 2022 1:12 PM

The Pump House owners will open a new lakefront restaurant in Belmont

UPDATED FEBRUARY 24, 2022 10:20 AM

Vote for the Charlotte Observer girls HS basketball underclassman of the year (03.02.22)

FEBRUARY 24, 2022 12:11 AM

\$2 for 2 months

#ReadLocal

Subscribe for unlimited access to our website, app, eEdition and more

CLAIM OFFER

OPINION

There's election chaos in North Carolina, and one party is to blame

OPINION

New NOAA report finds sea level is rising fast. NC is especially at risk.

UPDATED FEBRUARY 24, 2022 9:45 AM

UPDATED FEBRUARY 23, 2022 4:57 PM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Yes, masks are coming off, but vaccine and mask opponents in NC must beware

FEBRUARY 23, 2022 4:18 PM

OPINION

Kevin Siers cartoon: Russian down the memory hole

FEBRUARY 23, 2022 2:44 PM

OPINION

NC must reject the 'easy money' sports betting would bring

FEBRUARY 23, 2022 4:30 AM

OPINION

Despite Ahmaud Arbery case victory, hate crime law is still a mess

UPDATED FEBRUARY 22, 2022 5:01 PM

Take Us With You

Real-time updates and all local stories you want right in the palm of your hand.

CHARLOTTE OBSERVER APP →

VIEW NEWSLETTERS →

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Start a Subscription

Customer Service

eEdition

Vacation Hold

Pay Your Bill

LEARN MORE

About Us

Contact Us

Newsletters

Archives

Sports Betting

ADVERTISING

Information

Place a Classified

COPYRIGHT

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF SERVICE

NEWS > EDUCATION

Changes to MN school accountability plan would place 'well-rounded education' alongside math, reading

By **JOSH VERGES** | jverges@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: February 2, 2022 at 4:20 p.m. | UPDATED: February 3, 2022 at 11:01 a.m.

Minnesota schools that spend less time on math and reading would be rewarded under a proposed accountability plan that embraces the concept of a “well-rounded education.”

The state education department is taking public comment through Thursday on changes to its North Star system, which it's used since 2018 to recognize high-achieving schools and identify persistent low-achievers that need state support.

Under North Star, schools have been evaluated based on graduation rates, consistent attendance and performance on math, reading and English-language proficiency tests. Now, the state is looking to add more indicators of school quality.

One major change is a “well-rounded education” indicator. For elementary and middle schools, the state would “calculate the share of time spent outside of tested subject areas to promote a well-rounded education experience,” according to a draft of the changes; high schools would get a similar indicator.



Assistant education commissioner Stephanie Graff said the proposal is a response to what Minnesotans say they want from their schools.

“There’s a lot of interest in expanding the types of measures we look at when we consider school success,” she said.

The department has not explained exactly how the new formulas would work, but Graff said a well-rounded education would be weighted less heavily than test performance and graduation rates.

It will be important for the state to get the formula right, said Andrea Roethke, managing director of strategy and operations for EdAllies, a nonprofit advocate for historically underserved students.

“These systems create incentives,” she said. “Just as we don’t want a narrowed curriculum, we also don’t want to downplay the importance of literacy and numeracy. It’s about hitting the right balance.”

Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said the teachers union generally approves of the department’s plan but wants to see details on the well-rounded indicator. The union also objects to using test scores to evaluate schools, but that’s required by federal law.

“Until a more useful and accurate accountability program is developed, we appreciate the department’s recognition of the importance of a well-rounded education by encouraging access and opportunity to lessons outside tested subject areas,” Specht said.

HIGH SCHOOLS

High schools would see the greatest changes under the state’s plan.

Besides the well-rounded indicator, the state wants to incorporate ninth-grade course completion rates and participation in courses that can earn students credit for college, including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate but also career and technical classes.

Graff said studies have found ninth-grade pass rates to be a “very strong predictor of students graduating on-time.”



"There are huge gaps in who has access, and it's something that parents deserve to know," she said.

CREDIT RECOVERY

The state also is tweaking its formulas to differentiate between traditional high schools and those that serve students who are behind on credits.

When the state identified schools for support in 2018, just over half the high schools it named were alternative and credit-recovery schools.

Going forward, credit-recovery and similar schools would be judged on their seven-year graduation rate instead of four. The state also would start identifying traditional high schools that offload lots of their students onto credit recovery schools.

Sherry Carlstrom, Title I director for St. Paul Public Schools, welcomes those changes.

"The whole reason those students are (at alternative schools) is because they need more time," she said of the seven-year graduation rate metric.

Carlstrom said there's a perception that "some high schools were encouraging students to go to alternative schools" in order to prop up their own graduation rates.

That change in the North Star system recognizes that "students have to be successful, and we have to be accountable, wherever they are," she said.

ST. PAUL SCHOOLS

The state also wants to provide only targeted, not comprehensive, support for high schools where a single student group has a graduation rate below 67 percent. The idea is to enable the state to focus its attention on schools that really need it.

In 2018, six of the St. Paul district's high schools – Central, Como Park, Harding, Highland Park, Humboldt and Johnson – made the list for comprehensive support solely because of low graduation rates among special-education



Carlstrom said the district gets \$1.75 million each year to help those schools and the others on the state's list, which include [nine low-income elementary schools](#). St. Paul has spent that money on "learning leads" at several schools, Carlstrom said.

While Minneapolis and St. Paul take state money to pay their own people, other districts rely on the state's school improvement staffers.

TIMELINE

The state is supposed to identify schools for state support every three years. But, because of disruptions related to the coronavirus pandemic, the federal government approved a waiver last year allowing Minnesota to wait till this summer to pick new schools.

The newest school quality indicators – well-rounded education, ninth-grade course completion and career- and college-readiness coursework – won't be ready in time for this year's list, Graff said.

But, pending federal approval, they should start appearing on the state's public school report cards next year and factor into school identification in 2025.

Another planned change would add an eight category for race and ethnicity by separating American Indians from indigenous people from tribes outside of North America.

PANDEMIC CHANGES

Meanwhile, the state is proposing one-time changes to this year's identification process.

Because of the pandemic, Minnesota students did not take state standardized tests in spring 2020, and the 2021 test results were not used for accountability purposes.

This summer, the state does plan to use the spring 2022 tests to identify schools that need support, but they'll be weighted half as heavily as the 2019 tests.

In addition, the state wants to throw out the consistent attendance indicator for



In its place, the state wants to use an “enrollment maintenance indicator,” which measures student retention from spring 2021 to fall 2022. Schools will perform well on the metric if a high percentage of their K-4 students from last school year returned for grades 1-5 this year, relative to that school’s average retention from the previous three years.

TO COMMENT

As of Wednesday afternoon, the education department had received one formal comment on the plan. To comment, email MDE.ESSA@state.mn.us.

Tags: [Education](#), [St. Paul Public Schools](#)



Author

Josh Verges | Education reporter

Josh has written about St. Paul public schools and higher education for the Pioneer Press since 2014, 11 years after the paper first published his byline as a University of Minnesota intern. He did a two-year stint on city government and crime in Austin, Minn., and spent seven years in Sioux Falls, S.D. covering crime and education, as well as editing. Josh was good at baseball once. Now he plays tennis against old men.

jverges@pioneerpress.com

[f](#) Follow Josh Verges <https://www.facebook.com/joshverges> [t](#) Follow Josh Verges [@ua14](#)

As you comment, please be respectful of other commenters and other viewpoints. Our goal with article comments is to provide a space for civil, informative and constructive conversations. We reserve the right to remove any comment we deem to be defamatory, rude, insulting to others, hateful, off-topic or reckless to the community. See our full terms of use [here](#).

[VIEW COMMENTS](#)

