



2023 Accountability Legislative Positions & Priorities

1. Remove the overall summative rating so parents and communities can better understand what is working well and what needs to be improved.
2. Advocate to include non-test based indicators alongside Math and Reading STAAR scores to provide a more holistic view of school effectiveness for elementary and middle schools.
3. Advocate to include a weighted “academic lift” / equity index to recognize the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and that not all students start in the same place academically. **Note: Similar to what HB 3 did for the school finance system by including census block groups to determine weighted comp ed funding, an academic lift / equity index weight would adjust for factors outside the school’s control that impact student learning and achievement.*
4. Require each domain and overall rating to have a weak or little correlation to family income to identify effective schools regardless of where wealthy or poor students are located.
5. Advocate to better align and increase CCMRs with workforce education; eliminate required ‘connectors’ such as only awarding credit for completing a program of study AND receiving an IBC; continue asking if the legislative intent for K-12 is ‘readiness’ or ‘attainment’?
6. Support legislation that increases flexibility and local discretion in implementing accelerated instruction; including the repeal of the mandatory 30 hours of supplementary accelerated instruction that must be administered to every student who fails a STAAR or EOC test. (HB 4545, 87R, 2021)
7. Advocate for a “Hold Harmless” Accountability Rating for 2023 in order to remove negative consequences associated with implementing STAAR Redesign (HB 3906, 86th legislative session) and A-F Accountability Reset changes. This allows educators to focus on understanding the learning needs of their students, while relieving any negative stress associated with school ratings. **Note: no state accountability ratings were assigned in 2003 (TAAS to TAKS) and 2012 (TAKS to STAAR).*
8. Require high school CCMR indicator or methodology changes (that rely on lagging data) to begin with the next incoming 9th grade class to ensure that these types of changes are not applied retroactively. This applies to both statutory and Agency rulemaking changes.

THIS IS MEMBER-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT ⓘ

OPINION

Accountability in Texas education should not be a participation trophy

We must continue to hold our students and schools to high standards,



Students raise their hands as third grade teacher Anjelica Turner teaches about character traits on Monday, Aug. 15, 2022, at Back Elementary in Rowlett, TX. Back Elementary, a Garland ISD school, jumped from a low B before the pandemic to an A this year in the state's academic accountability rating system. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)



By Margaret Spellinas

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Across the board, the [Texas public education system is in crisis](#). Last week's national assessment results are lower than they have been in a generation. But while the pandemic certainly had an impact, Texas' scores have been declining since the early 2010s. As it stands today, 60% of Texas students cannot do math on grade level according to our state test. On national assessments, less than a quarter of Texas 8th graders are proficient in math.

This is an urgent moment that we cannot ignore.

Math achievement in particular is critical because it is closely correlated with success in higher education and employability in critical and fast-growing fields. The Legislature needs to invest billions of dollars more in public education so that we can pay our teachers more, provide resources to higher-need students and schools, and support all students academically.

Texans agree.

Public education was the top priority of Texas voters when asked in [our latest statewide poll](#) how the Texas Legislature should invest the current budget surplus. And by wide margins, Texas voters support paying teachers more, both across the board and based on merit. In return, Texans deserve to know how their public schools are performing, and that their increased investment results in better outcomes for students.

Unfortunately, there is a concerted movement to reduce Texas' ability to monitor how its public schools are performing. A series of proposals have been floated that would reduce Texas' graduation requirements, eliminate all state testing in American history, and reduce the importance of student outcomes in our school accountability system, swapping in non-academic and extracurricular activities.

These proposals do not provide transparency or accountability for parents, taxpayers, or businesses that will employ future graduates. They turn state

education accountability into participation trophies, allowing districts to pick and choose non-academic measures upon which to grade themselves. And they explicitly deemphasize student learning in the fundamentals of reading and math. Employers care more about young people's ability to read and do math than whether they were in chess club or on student council.

Under the guise of capturing what a school contributes to a community, these proposals would include activities like band or lacrosse in the school accountability system that would measure things that many districts pay for with discretionary or outside funding. Instead of focusing on equity, the state would evaluate schools on fundamentally inequitable indicators that are biased toward affluent school districts. Simultaneously, this would deemphasize the current A-F school rating system's focus on closing gaps in academic achievement between students of different racial or income backgrounds.

It is ironic that one of the proposals is the elimination of all state history assessments given that these proposals represent failed ideas that ignore the hard-learned lessons of the past.

In the 1980s, Texas pioneered a rigorous accountability and assessment system that led to the state's first improvement in college entrance exam scores in 30 years and led the nation in using data to improve the educational outcomes of underperforming minority and ethnic groups — a revolutionary concept at the time.

Beginning in the 2000s, our state gave in to demands for less rigorous accountability and assessment systems, planting the seeds for an academic freefall that state leaders have recently begun tackling head-on. Now those proposals are back to water down standards again.

Texas needs to hold the line on recent education reforms, invest more in the public school system, and continue to hold our students and schools to high standards. That's a recipe Texans can rally behind and trust that they'll get a return on their investment.

Margaret Spellings is former U.S. secretary of education and current CEO of Texas 2036, a nonprofit organization building long-term, data-driven strategies to secure Texas' prosperity through our state's bicentennial and beyond. She wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News.

We welcome your thoughts in a letter to the editor. See the guidelines and [submit your letter here](#).

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Margaret Spellings