

Background

Senate Bill (SB) 15 provided funding for remote learning beginning with the 2021–22 school year and established a requirement for the agency to [rate remote learning programs](#).

Texas Education Code, Sec. 39.0549. EVALUATING VIRTUAL AND LOCAL REMOTE PROGRAMS. (a) In evaluating under Section [39.054](#) the performance of a school district or open-enrollment charter school that operates a full-time local remote learning program, the commissioner shall assign the program separate overall and domain performance ratings as if the program were a campus of the district or school. For purposes of assigning performance ratings under this subsection, students who spend at least half of the students' instructional time receiving virtual or remote instruction are considered enrolled in the program.

A 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Rating is not subject to assignment of consecutive years of unacceptable performance under Section 39.054(a-3) or 39.0546. A 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Rating performance rating may not be used determining eligibility for participation in a local accountability system plan or for determining whether to impose any intervention or sanction authorized by Chapter 39A.

Methodology

- Due to variations in when students enrolled in virtual programs, the updated 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Ratings data sets [have the accountability subset applied](#). The remote ratings released in December reflected outcomes where students were attributed to the district enrolled on October 2021 Snapshot. To learn more about the accountability subset, please refer to Chapter 1 of the [2022 Accountability Manual](#).
- The 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Ratings were processed for districts and open-enrollment charters schools with students who were reported in either PEIMS attendance records or with PEIMS crisis codes indicating these students spent at least 50% of the 2021–22 instructional year enrolled in the virtual program.
- The 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Ratings include the STAAR performance and growth outcomes for these students.
- Only Student Achievement and School Progress, Part A: Academic Growth domain data were processed. The overall rating reflects the better outcome of these two domains.
- As graduation rates and College, Career, and Military Readiness indicators lag a year, these data are not available for 2021–22 students in 2021–22 Remote Learning Program Ratings.
- A remote learning rating for a district or open-enrollment charter school was processed if the outcomes from remote learners met the minimum size for evaluation.
- Under SB 1365, any performance level that did not meet the performance target to earn at least a C was assigned a *Not Rated: SB 1365* label.
- For additional information on accountability processing, please refer to the [2022 Accountability Manual](#).

2022 Statewide Summary (By Accountability Subset District)

Overall Rating	District Count	Percentage
A	26	40.0
B	14	21.5
C	9	13.8
<i>Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365</i>	16	24.6
<i>Total</i>	65	

Student Achievement (STAAR) Domain	District Count	Percentage
A	20	30.8
B	16	24.6
C	10	15.4
<i>Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365</i>	19	29.2
<i>Total</i>	65	

Academic Growth Domain	District Count	Percentage
A	18	41.9
B	9	20.9
C	4	9.3
<i>Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365</i>	12	27.9
<i>Total</i>	43	

2021–22 Local Remote Learning Program Ratings (By Accountability Subset District)

February 2023

Overall Summary										
CDN	District Name	ESC Region	Total STAAR Tests Scored for Achievement	Student Achievement Score	Student Achievement Rating	Total Tests Scored for Growth	Academic Growth Score	Academic Growth Rating	Overall Score	Overall Rating
227901	AUSTIN ISD	13	50	88	B				88	B
015834	BASIS TEXAS	20	68	95	A	29	94	A	95	A
057903	CARROLLTON-FARMERS	10	12	99	A				99	A
084910	CLEAR CREEK ISD	04	50	86	B	22	89	B	89	B
101907	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD	04	29	94	A	12	93	A	94	A
057905	DALLAS ISD	10	729	58	NR: SB 1365	316	57	NR: SB 1365	58	NR: SB 1365
061901	DENTON ISD	11	326	87	B	92	90	A	90	A
108902	DONNA ISD	01	49	87	B	15	100	A	100	A
068901	ECTOR COUNTY ISD	18	18	90	A				90	A
108903	EDCOUCH-ELSA ISD	01	56	74	C				74	C
108904	EDINBURG CISD	01	266	76	C	97	91	A	91	A
220905	FORT WORTH ISD	11	159	46	NR: SB 1365	89	60	NR: SB 1365	60	NR: SB 1365
043905	FRISCO ISD	10	1405	96	A	641	96	A	96	A
057909	GARLAND ISD	10	110	76	C	50	58	NR: SB 1365	76	C
246904	GEORGETOWN ISD	13	34	59	NR: SB 1365				59	NR: SB 1365
101911	GOOSE CREEK CISD	04	15	75	C				75	C
015904	HARLANDALE ISD	20	36	91	A	20	58	NR: SB 1365	91	A
031903	HARLINGEN CISD	01	57	75	C	11	53	NR: SB 1365	75	C
227816	HARMONY PUBLIC	13	85	91	A	32	98	A	98	A
101858	HARMONY PUBLIC	04	86	91	A	30	80	B	91	A
101846	HARMONY PUBLIC	04	57	74	C	15	80	B	80	B
101862	HARMONY PUBLIC	04	75	92	A	33	94	A	94	A
161807	HARMONY PUBLIC	12	113	93	A	50	93	A	93	A
015828	HARMONY PUBLIC	20	75	69	NR: SB 1365	21	82	B	82	B
071806	HARMONY PUBLIC	19	48	82	B	12	40	NR: SB 1365	82	B
105906	HAYS CISD	13	21	50	NR: SB 1365				50	NR: SB 1365
108802	HORIZON MONTESSORI	01	13	71	C				71	C
101912	HOUSTON ISD	04	18	87	B				87	B
101913	HUMBLE ISD	04	1424	73	C	287	59	NR: SB 1365	73	C
108807	IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	01	87	91	A	20	93	A	93	A
057848	INTERNATIONAL	10	28	56	NR: SB 1365				56	NR: SB 1365

2021–22 Local Remote Learning Program Ratings (By Accountability Subset District)

February 2023

Overall Summary										
CDN	District Name	ESC Region	Total STAAR Tests Scored for Achievement	Student Achievement Score	Student Achievement Rating	Total Tests Scored for Growth	Academic Growth Score	Academic Growth Rating	Overall Score	Overall Rating
015916	JUDSON ISD	20	17	58	NR: SB 1365				58	NR: SB 1365
108912	LA JOYA ISD	01	197	88	B	65	91	A	91	A
057913	LANCASTER ISD	10	88	48	NR: SB 1365	16	56	NR: SB 1365	56	NR: SB 1365
246913	LEANDER ISD	13	318	91	A	33	90	A	91	A
108906	MCALLEN ISD	01	176	85	B	31	76	C	85	B
043908	MELISSA ISD	10	19	60	NR: SB 1365				60	NR: SB 1365
108907	MERCEDES ISD	01	16	46	NR: SB 1365				46	NR: SB 1365
165901	MIDLAND ISD	18	57	56	NR: SB 1365	11	76	C	76	C
070908	MIDLOTHIAN ISD	10	13	67	NR: SB 1365				67	NR: SB 1365
161903	MIDWAY ISD	12	70	84	B	33	69	NR: SB 1365	84	B
108908	MISSION CISD	01	243	65	NR: SB 1365	40	80	B	80	B
014804	ORENDA CHARTER	12	24	87	B				87	B
101917	PASADENA ISD	04	106	84	B	29	87	B	87	B
227904	PFLUGERVILLE ISD	13	185	82	B	35	58	NR: SB 1365	82	B
072801	PREMIER HIGH SCHOOLS	11	1949	87	B	180	74	C	87	B
043912	PROSPER ISD	10	107	92	A	37	93	A	93	A
057916	RICHARDSON ISD	10	40	88	B				88	B
177901	ROSCOE COLLEGIATE ISD	14	1616	48	NR: SB 1365	642	53	NR: SB 1365	53	NR: SB 1365
246909	ROUND ROCK ISD	13	116	94	A	16	99	A	99	A
015907	SAN ANTONIO ISD	20	18	47	NR: SB 1365				47	NR: SB 1365
105902	SAN MARCOS CISD	13	48	84	B	28	95	A	95	A
108911	SHARYLAND ISD	01	46	91	A	12	93	A	93	A
015912	SOUTHWEST ISD	20	26	91	A	16	89	B	91	A
205907	TAFT ISD	02	10	50	NR: SB 1365				50	NR: SB 1365
221801	TEXAS COLLEGE	14	402	92	A	84	84	B	92	A
227827	THE EXCEL CENTER - FOR	13	65	67	NR: SB 1365				67	NR: SB 1365
057803	UPLIFT EDUCATION	10	92	93	A	46	80	B	93	A
108916	VALLEY VIEW ISD	01	15	62	NR: SB 1365				62	NR: SB 1365
108808	VANGUARD ACADEMY	01	18	74	C				74	C
235902	VICTORIA ISD	03	564	79	C	317	76	C	79	C
108913	WESLACO ISD	01	234	80	B	14	91	A	91	A
220920	WHITE SETTLEMENT ISD	11	177	92	A	46	91	A	92	A
043914	WYLIE ISD	10	20	93	A	12	57	NR: SB 1365	93	A
071905	YSLETA ISD	19	11	53	NR: SB 1365				53	NR: SB 1365

DATE:	February 23, 2023
SUBJECT:	Amendment to the State's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan
CATEGORY:	Notice
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

This letter is to notify you of updates to the amendment of the state's ESSA plan to adjust the methodology within the Closing the Gaps domain. These updates have been made in response to stakeholder feedback and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Summary of Amendment Updates

Proposed 0–4 Points Definitions

The definition of two points for growth has been updated to measure six years of growth to the next interim target by increasing the denominator to six in alignment with the next interim target increment in 2027–2028. This adjustment measures expected growth from the 2022–2023 school year through the 2027–2028 school year.

Points	Definition
4	Met long-term target (2037–2038 target)
3	Met interim target (2022–2023 through 2026–2027 target)
2	Did not meet interim target but showed expected growth toward next interim target (2027–2028 through 2031–2032 target)
1	Did not meet interim target but showed minimal growth
0	Did not meet interim target and did not show minimal growth

Expected growth to interim target (for 2 points) is defined as on-track growth to reach the next interim target. The denominator for 2023 is six years. The denominator for 2024 will be five years and so forth.

$$\text{Current year rate} - \text{prior year rate} \geq \frac{\text{next interim target} - \text{prior year rate}}{6}$$

Minimal growth (for 1 point) is defined as at least 1.0 percent growth for STAAR and CCMR indicators. Minimal growth is at least 0.1 percent growth for graduation indicators.

Student Groups Evaluated

While each student group will be evaluated within Closing the Gaps under ESSA requirements, a subset of the groups will be measured for the Closing the Gaps rating while disaggregated groups will be measured for targeted support and improvement (TSI) and additional targeted support (ATS) determinations. Disaggregated data for each of the student groups will be reported and evaluated within Closing the Gaps.

- All students
- Seven racial/ethnic groups: African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, white, and two or more races
- Economically disadvantaged

- Emergent bilingual (EB) student/English learner (EL) (current and monitored through year 4)
- Special education
- Foster
- Homeless
- Migrant
- Continuously enrolled
- Former special education

Student Groups Evaluated for Closing the Gaps Rating

- All students
- Two lowest performing racial/ethnic groups from the prior year
- High focus (Students are included in the high focus student group if they are identified as any of the following.)
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - EB student/EL
 - Current special education
 - Highly mobile (foster, homeless, migrant)

Based on guidance from the USDE, the continuously enrolled and former special education student groups are moved to TSI and ATS evaluation.

Student Groups Evaluated for Federal School Improvement

Disaggregated data for the following student groups will be measured for TSI/ATS identifications.

- African American
- American Indian
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
- Economically disadvantaged
- Special education
- Emergent bilingual (EB) students/English learners (EL)
- Continuously Enrolled (beginning with 2023)
- Former Special Education (beginning with 2023)

The continuously enrolled and former special education groups will be evaluated for ATS/TSI for the first time in 2023. These two groups could potentially be identified as “consistently underperforming” in August 2025 based on data from 2023, 2024, and 2025.

For Further Information

A detailed summary of the proposed Closing the Gaps changes, comments and responses, and a full draft of the submitted ESSA amendment, including Appendix A and Appendix E, are available on the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) page.

If you have any questions regarding this amendment, please contact Texas Education Agency’s Performance Reporting Division at (512) 463-9704 or performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov.

Summary of February 2023 ESSA Amendment Comments

Summary of Comments Received and Agency Responses

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

1. As 2023–24 will be the first year that TELPAS writing online is part of the composite score, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) should use 2022–23 as a baseline and not use the proposed evaluation of two of three domains.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) denied a waiver in 2018 requesting a one year pause on ELP evaluation due to TELPAS that year. As such, TEA is proposing the evaluation of ELP at the domain level for 2023 accountability to meet the requirement in ESSA to evaluate the progress of Texas' emergent bilingual (EB) students toward achieving English language proficiency. This proposal allows us to exclude the TELPAS writing online in the evaluation of ELP until we can collect baseline data. Composite ratings will be assigned for 2022–23 TELPAS but will not be included in the evaluation of ELP in 2023 accountability. These composite ratings will be used in our data analysis to determine if future amendments to ELP targets are necessary for 2024 and beyond.

2. The increase in ELP targets, especially at the elementary and middle school levels, is too high.

ELP targets had to be evaluated and reset to align with the adjusted 2023 methodology. TELPAS data were modeled, by school type, using the proposed methodology. The 2023 interim targets are based on the 2022 statewide average, for each school type.

Student Group Targets and Points

3. The change to STAAR cut points is too harsh on campuses and will significantly impact campus and district ratings. This will also lead to negative public perception of public schools. The targets for elementary schools are harder than those for high schools.

The 2023 STAAR performance targets and cut points in the accountability system, including Closing the Gaps, are unchanged from 2017 baseline data. To account for the impact of COVID-19 and the STAAR redesign, Academic Achievement used the original 2017 baseline dataset at Meets Grade Level and further disaggregated targets by school type. Targets were set on actual student group statewide averages, by school type.

4. Having different standards by race is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Requiring fewer African American and Hispanic students to reach the highest levels of mastery in order for campuses and districts to earn an A means campuses and districts will respond accordingly when distributing limited resources.

TEA's goal is to have all students increase 50 percent in the Meets performance level by 2037–38, thereby closing the gap for all student groups. In setting this benchmark, TEA is maintaining the expectation that we should hold all student groups to the same expectations of proficiency growth over the course of this plan. The interim benchmarks, based on 2017 statewide performance, by each student group, creates achievable yet aggressive progress checks for all student groups to achieve to ensure that they are making meaningful improvements towards the long-term goals.

5. There is a big difference between missing a target by two points and missing by 20 points. While growth is being addressed in the graduated point system, it looks like schools that narrowly miss the target are still going to be treated the same as schools that miss the mark by a mile. I'd like

Summary of February 2023 ESSA Amendment Comments

to see the schools within a certain range of the targets get points. Perhaps 2 points – Did not meet interim target but showed expected growth toward interim target *OR* achieved a score within three points of the interim target.

As the focus of ESSA is on ambitious State-designed long-term goals, with interim measures toward the goals, TEA is in alignment with USDE guidance that growth toward targets is a requirement. Meeting the target or showing growth is a requirement under ESSA. If a group remains stagnant below the interim target, or their performance slides backwards to the point they are below the interim target, they are flagged as not meeting expectations as they are not progressing toward the long-term goal.

6. While we support moving from a yes/no point system to gradated point system, we believe that the weight of the challenge of earning a 4 in the gradated system should be equivalent to that of earning a Yes in the current system. This higher standard to a 4 is compounded by simultaneous proposed changes in the number of student groups to be included and changes in minimum group size. The 0–4 points methodology should weight 3 such that if all indicators in the domain scored 3s the scaled score would be an A - 100. Student groups earning 4s should receive extra points.

The focus of ESSA is on ambitious State-designed long-term goals, which in Texas is to reduce achievement gaps by 50 percent. The first set of interim targets is 2017 baseline data which grants campuses five years to demonstrate growth toward long-term targets before the targets increase. TEA disagrees with a methodology that would award a campus an A while none of its student groups have closed existing achievement gaps.

Additionally, Closing the Gaps scaling factored in the 4 as having demonstrated performance equivalent to closing a gap. Scaling was set based on actual statewide averages, by school type, using the 0–4 point methodology. Just as in other parts of the system, the expectations were set based on how Texas schools are performing which means that C is anchored around average performance for schools, and A performance is set equivalently to excellent performance of actual schools in Texas. This means there are currently schools in Texas where achievement gaps between student groups have been reduced considerably. These campuses had one or more groups that received 4s in the modeled data which equates to current highest-level performance (A) in Closing the Gaps.

7. The federal graduation rate targets are too high for alternative campuses. We continue to be identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) based on our graduation rate.

TEA worked extensively with the USDE to seek alternative measures within Closing the Gaps for dropout recovery campuses. Unfortunately, ESSA does not permit alternative standards for any school type, including the 66.7 percent CSI graduation rate cut point.

8. TEA should run 2023 as a transition year with a hold-harmless accountability due to the STAAR redesign.

ESSA requires annual evaluation of disaggregated student performance. Unlike previous changes to the state summative assessment, which historically have increased the rigor of the assessment, the STAAR redesign does not increase the rigor of the test. Instead, the STAAR was redesigned to make the test more tightly aligned to the classroom experience. The redesign does not mean the test will be harder. The same rigorous statistical processes used to ensure that the test is measuring the same thing each year will be applied during the redesign of STAAR.

Summary of February 2023 ESSA Amendment Comments

However, the redesign does mean that in many grades, the RLA test will include writing for the first time. Based on the addition of writing and the impact of COVID-19, TEA has proposed keeping the same baseline used when setting 2017 cut points for STAAR proficiency.

Student Groups and Super Groups

9. Rethink the consolidation of four subgroups into the High Focus group and the use of the two lowest-performing racial/ethnic groups from the prior year. While we appreciate that disaggregated subgroup data would still be collected, this consolidated reporting could mask the real and distinct challenges and growth that these different student subgroups experience. Concern was voiced that Texas is the only state using supergroups.

The proposed change could result in inconsistent scoring trends across school years and unclear data for important student subgroups. The lowest-performing groups can change from year to year.

The proposed changes to consolidate student subgroups' data for accountability leave schools less accountable for these students' educational performance and progress. Obscuring data for student subgroups presents problems for assessing school accountability for all students.

For some districts, including the Economically Disadvantaged students in the High Focus group will include a majority of the All student group. This will not increase the focus on students in the special education current EB, homeless or foster groups and might decrease the focus that was there for special education and current EB in the previous system.

The reduced minimum size of 10 is too small.

TEA acknowledges the changes proposed to the Closing the Gaps domain require a paradigm shift on what it means to "hold districts accountable" for every student group. TEA seeks to narrow the focus of Closing the Gaps to the lowest performing student groups in Texas. During the years spent researching potential adjustments to Closing the Gaps to amplify the focus on our most at-risk groups, TEA consulted staff at numerous state agencies to seek best practices that could benefit our students. A number of states use super groups in an effort to increase the number of students for which each campus is held accountable. The two most common uses of super groups focus on (1) historically underserved students and (2) students in the bottom 25 percent or 30 percent of achievement within their school.

Texas data trends reveal campuses' lowest performing racial/ethnic groups rarely fluctuate. During refresh data analysis, TEA analyzed 2018, 2019, and 2021 STAAR performance data which demonstrated more than 94 percent of campuses had the same lowest performing racial/ethnic groups over all three years. Over 54 percent of these campuses had the same two groups and 40 percent had the same single group that remained stable (some campuses only met minimum size in the one group over the three years). The remaining six percent of campuses had racial/ethnic groups remain stable two of the three years analyzed. These data spotlight alarming and persistent performance gaps across Texas.

The Closing the Gaps domain methodology holds districts accountable for a subset of the groups through the Closing the Gaps rating where super groups will be used to generate points toward a rating which is also used to make CSI determinations. Districts are held accountable for disaggregated student groups through Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support (ATS) determinations where each group's performance is evaluated, assigned

Summary of February 2023 ESSA Amendment Comments

0–4 points, and reported publicly. Campuses with student groups who are consistently underperforming are identified for school improvement.

With the reduced minimum size of ten and use of super groups, disparities in student group outcomes will be amplified, not obscured. The focus shifts to these groups without the previous 14 groups distracting from gaps. Larger student groups are reflected proportionally in and have a direct impact on the Student Achievement and School Progress domains; the goal of Closing the Gaps is to focus on the lowest performing groups in order to drive improvements to close gaps.

Disaggregated data for each of the following student groups will be reported and evaluated within Closing the Gaps. Additionally, district Closing the Gaps reports will include all district students, including those that move between campuses during the year.

- All students
- Seven racial/ethnic groups: African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, white, and two or more races
- Economically disadvantaged
- EB students/English learners (EL) (current and monitored through year 4)
- Special education
- Foster
- Homeless
- Migrant
- Continuously enrolled
- Former special education

10. Rethink the methodology for identifying the two-lowest performing racial/ethnic groups by focusing on a racial/ethnic group's distance from target versus performance.

As a key element of ESSA is to measure progress toward making significant progress in closing statewide proficiency gaps, TEA stands by the proposal to focus on the performance of the lowest-performing student groups in Academic Achievement in order to close these gaps.

Questions and Answers

1. Previously, the ELP methodology evaluated several years of prior scores. Why is this changing and evaluating only 2023 compared to 2022?

Since 2020, the availability of TELPAS composite scores for EB students varied due to the interruptions caused by COVID on instruction and TELPAS administrations. In order to capture data for EB students, a multi-year methodology was used to include as many EB students in the state's evaluation as possible. As we move away from the impacted numbers, the multi-year evaluation is no longer necessary.

2. If two-point growth measures the necessary improvement to the next interim target, shouldn't the denominator be six as the next target will be evaluated at the end of the 2027–28 school year?

Yes. TEA updated the two-point growth calculation to a six to reflect the growth necessary between the 2022–23 and 2027–28 school years.

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3. Is ATS identification reverting to the prior methodology where it is not a subset of TSI?

No. ATS identifications will continue to be based on the subset of TSI identified campuses.

4. Based on a review of information that we received recently, my concern is that EB student/EL reclassification criteria may not be adjusted based on this amendment proposal.

Given the release date for the TELPAS Writing scores, LEAs will have a 30 calendar day extension in the Fall of 2023, to allow LPACs to meet and consider possible Reclassification. LPACs should continue considering all 4 language domains using the 2023 TELPAS Assessment for reclassification purposes. The current [Reclassification Criteria Chart](#) is still applicable for the 2022–23 school year. For additional information, please contact the Emergent Bilingual Support Division www.txel.org.

5. Have the Closing the Gaps component weights for elementary and middle schools changed?

No. The component weighting within Closing the Gaps for all school types remains unchanged.

March 6, 2023

Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

The Honorable Brandon Creighton
Chairman, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Brad Buckley
Chairman, House Public Education Committee
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Governor Abbott, Commissioner Morath, Chairman Creighton, and Chairman Buckley,

Over the past several months, the Texas Education Agency has been working on an “A-F Accountability Refresh” to roll out with the 2023 Accountability Ratings. The TEA states that the purpose of the refresh is to “refocus on goals that directly address post-pandemic student needs” and to “allow Texas to leverage lessons learned over the last five years to improve the rigor, transparency, and fairness of the accountability system.”

These are certainly admirable goals. However, we write today with significant concerns regarding the proposed update to the College, Career, and Military Readiness (“CCMR”) cut scores as part of the refresh and the fact that the TEA has chosen to implement this refresh at the same time as another major change, the redesigned STAAR exam. The undersigned districts have enrollment ranging from less than 100 to over 100,000 students, and collectively we educate more than 2.7 million Texas students. We request that the TEA pause its planned refresh so that the legislature can re-evaluate the accountability system holistically.

The TEA proposes to raise the cut score necessary for a high school to receive an “A” in the CCMR domain from a 60 to an 88, a nearly 47% increase in one year and apply this increased cut score to students who graduated in 2022. Districts no longer have any influence over the performance of those students, and it is unreasonable to apply new standards retroactively, particularly because these students will not benefit from the “improve[d] rigor, transparency, and fairness [of] the accountability system.”

According to materials published by the TEA, the newly proposed cut score was set for two primary reasons: 1) too many schools are performing above the 60 point threshold; and 2) 68% of students who are deemed college, career, or military ready, sustain postsecondary success one year after graduation.

The TEA states that one of the goals of the A-F Accountability System as a whole is to ensure that no forced distribution exists and that all schools have the opportunity to achieve an A rating. As a result, it is perplexing that the TEA would use the justification that too many schools are receiving an A for CCMR to raise the cut score.

Additionally, the fact that only 68% of students who are deemed college, career, or military ready are sustaining postsecondary success one year after graduation suggests that either the components used by the TEA to measure such readiness are inadequate, or that issues in higher education may be hindering otherwise prepared students from succeeding. Both of these likely play a role in this issue. For example, the TEA emphasizes a certain list of “industry-based certifications,” however, many of those certifications are not truly of value in the workforce. But because the TEA emphasizes those certifications, many schools feel compelled to spend resources promoting them instead of focusing on other potential opportunities for students to become prepared for postsecondary success.

These significant changes to the cut score for CCMR will have drastic impacts to school ratings across Texas. The A-F system was designed to make it easier for the public to understand how schools are truly performing. But increasing the cut score for an A for CCMR by almost 47% in a single year will create the misconception that high performing schools are drastically declining, even if their CCMR performance actually improved. In the midst of a teacher shortage, the last thing school districts need is another false narrative that drives a wedge between schools and the families they serve. No public relations campaign from the TEA will be adequate to combat the misperception that our schools are suddenly worse than they were last year.

House Bill 977 would create an Assessment and Accountability Commission to fully review the current system and make recommendations regarding improvements to how we measure success and communicate school performance to parents. The legislature has used the commission model with great success to address other complex issues over the past few sessions and should apply this same model to the A-F Accountability System.

Moving forward with the planned refresh is irresponsible as it will cause significant confusion among the community, put increased pressure on teachers and other staff who are already at their breaking point, and wrest the policy decisions of how we should hold our schools accountable away from the elected representatives of the people leaving them in the hands of unelected bureaucrats. We urge the TEA to pause its accountability refresh and allow the legislature to examine the system and make the policy determinations of what Texans expect from their schools, as they were elected to do.

Sincerely,

A+ Unlimited Potential	Atlanta ISD	Brock ISD	Cedar Hill ISD
Charter School	Austin ISD	Brownfield ISD	Celeste ISD
Abernathy ISD	Azle ISD	Brownsboro ISD	Channing ISD
Alamo Heights ISD	Bandera ISD	Buena Vista ISD	Chapel Hill ISD
Albany ISD	Bells ISD	Buffalo ISD	Chico ISD
Aldine ISD	Benjamin ISD	Burkburnett ISD	Chilton ISD
Aledo ISD	Beta Academy	Burkeville ISD	Claude ISD
Alief ISD	Birdville ISD	Burleson ISD	Clear Creek ISD
Allen ISD	Bland ISD	Caddo Mills ISD	Comal ISD
Alvin ISD	Blue Ridge ISD	Callisburg ISD	Coppell ISD
Alvord ISD	Bonham ISD	Campbell ISD	Corpus Christi ISD
Anahuac ISD	Bosqueville ISD	Canadian ISD	Corsicana ISD
Angleton ISD	Boyd ISD	Canyon ISD	Crawford ISD
Aransas County ISD	Brazosport ISD	Carrollton-Farmers	Cross Roads ISD
Argyle ISD	Bridgeport ISD	Branch ISD	Crowell ISD

Cushing ISD	Hays CISD	New Waverly ISD	Springtown ISD
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Honey Grove ISD	Newton ISD	Sudan ISD
Daingerfield-Lone Star ISD	Houston ISD	Northside ISD	Sundown ISD
Dallas ISD	Huffman ISD	Northwest ISD	Sunnyvale ISD
Damon ISD	Hull-Daisetta ISD	Oakwood ISD	Taylor ISD
Danbury ISD	Humble ISD	Odem-Edroy ISD	Tenaha ISD
Dayton ISD	Hutto ISD	Orange Grove ISD	Terrell ISD
Decatur ISD	Ingleside ISD	Palmer ISD	Texas School of the Arts
Del Valle ISD	Ingram ISD	Pampa ISD	Tornillo ISD
Denison ISD	Iowa Park CISD	Panhandle ISD	Treetops School
Denton ISD	Irving ISD	Paradise ISD	International
Detroit ISD	Italy ISD	Paris ISD	Trinity ISD
Dickinson ISD	Jacksboro ISD	Patton Springs ISD	Utopia ISD
Dodd City ISD	Jasper ISD	Pearland ISD	Van Alstyne ISD
Dr. M.L. Garza-Gonzalez	Jim Ned CISD	Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD	Van ISD
Charter School	Katherine Anne Porter	Pettus ISD	Vega ISD
Duncanville ISD	School	Pewitt CISD	Victoria ISD
Eagle Mountain-	Katy ISD	Pittsburg ISD	Waller ISD
Saginaw ISD	Kaufman ISD	Plains ISD	Warren ISD
East Chambers ISD	Keller ISD	Plano ISD	Water Valley ISD
Edgewood ISD	Kelton ISD	Poolville ISD	Waxahachie ISD
El Paso ISD	Kennedale ISD	Port Aransas ISD	Weatherford ISD
Era ISD	Kerens ISD	Pottsboro ISD	West ISD
Farmersville ISD	Ki Charter Academy	Pralrie Valley ISD	West Orange-Cove CISD
Fayetteville ISD	Kingsville ISD	Prairiland ISD	Westlake Academy
Flour Bluff ISD	Klein ISD	Prosper ISD	Charter School
Follett ISD	Knox City-O'Brien CISD	Queen City ISD	Wheeler ISD
Forestburg ISD	Krum ISD	Red Lick ISD	White Deer ISD
Forney ISD	La Vega ISD	Red Oak ISD	Whitewright ISD
Forsan ISD	Lago Vista ISD	Rice ISD	Whitney ISD
Fort Bend ISD	Lancaster ISD	Richardson ISD	Willis ISD
Fort Davis ISD	Leander ISD	Rio Hondo ISD	Wylie ISD
Fort Stockton ISD	Lewisville ISD	Riviera ISD	Zapata County ISD
Fort Worth Academy of	Liberty Hill ISD	Rockwall ISD	
Fine Arts	Liberty ISD	Rogers ISD	North Texas Commission
Fort Worth ISD	Liberty-Eylau ISD	Round Rock ISD	Texas ASCD
Freer ISD	Lipan ISD	Royse City ISD	Career and Technical
Frisco ISD	Little Elm ISD	S&S CISD	Association of Texas
Frost ISD	London ISD	Sands CISD	Raise Your Hand Texas
Fruitvale ISD	Lubbock ISD	Savoy ISD	
Gainesville ISD	Lubbock-Cooper ISD	Schertz-Cibolo-Universal	
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Garland ISD	Mabank ISD	Sealy ISD	
Gatesville ISD	Mansfield ISD	Seguin ISD	
Graford ISD	McKinney ISD	Seminole ISD	
Grand Prairie ISD	Melissa ISD	Shallowater ISD	
Grandview ISD	Mesquite ISD	Slaton ISD	
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD	Miami ISD	Slidell ISD	
Gregory-Portland ISD	Miles ISD	South San Antonio ISD	
Groesbeck ISD	Montgomery ISD	Spearman ISD	
Hardin ISD	Muleshoe ISD	Splendora ISD	
Harlandale ISD	New Braunfels ISD	Spring Branch ISD	
Hawley ISD	New Diana ISD	Spring ISD	









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Guest column

A fable, a moral, and a call to action

Quintin Shepherd - Guest Column

Feb 27, 2023

Once upon a time, in a small kingdom far away, there lived two children named Westington and Easterly. They were known throughout the land for their speed. They were especially well known because they got faster with every race. They were on pace to outrun any animal, outpace any carriage, and most importantly were beloved by all who knew them.

One day, the ruler of the kingdom, who was jealous of their increasing speed, decided to change the definition of “fast.” He decreed that from that day forward, anyone who could not run faster than his new definition of fast would be considered slow.

At first, no one noticed the change. But soon, it became apparent that Westington and Easterly were now considered slow. They were heartbroken and the village who loved these children were heartbroken, but they did not know how to challenge the king’s decree.

Two important sages, both very wise and with special power of influence, saw what the king had done and knew they had to act. Their special power came directly from the villagers, and they knew if they could rally the people, they could challenge the king and make him see the error of his ways.

So, the ineffable sages went out into the village and began to tell the people what had happened. They explained that nothing had changed about Westington and Easterly’s speed, just the way it was being measured. The people were outraged, and they rallied behind these great and powerful sages. The people began sharing the story with others and soon the entire village was outraged, giving the sages great power.

Together, they went to the king and demanded he change his decree. The king was surprised by the show of force from the village, but he refused to budge. So, the people organized a race to time Westington and Easterly and then compare them to their previous race times to show they were getting faster, not slower.

The king insisted the new race be run on more rugged terrain.

The race was a close one, but in the end, Westington and Easterly beat their previous times. The king had to admit that they were still fast, despite his attempts to redefine the word.

In the end, the people of the village learned an important lesson: power comes from their unity and willingness to speak out against injustice. They knew that if they worked together, they could accomplish anything they set their minds to, no matter how powerful the opposition may seem.

The moral of the story is that a united village is an unstoppable force. When people work together, they can overcome any obstacle and achieve their goals, no matter how impossible they may seem.

Here are the facts: West High School Overall 2022 TEA rating was 81. East High School Overall 2022 TEA rating was 78. TEA has changed the definition this coming year and using those exact scores above, with the exact same students and the exact same data, West could move from an 81 to a 72. East could move from a 78 to a 68. Remember, this is nothing more than a recalculation, not a reflection on learning or improvement.

This is simply tragic for our students, our families, and our staff, who work with relentless effort to improve student learning. Victoria ISD has worked hard to make improvements in the past several years and we have made great strides. TEA has changed the way it measures students which may create a narrative that our scores are dropping which is untrue. This is bigger than simple test scores. These rating changes can negatively impact property values, economic development, families, and our entire community (and every other community in Texas).

My concern with TEA's proposed changes in how Texas high schools are rated is not based on a fear of higher standards or expectations; it's the timing. The concerns are based upon two reasonable facts: a) 60% of the new 2023 high school accountability label under TEA's proposed changes is based on students who graduated in 2022 and are no longer in Texas high schools and, b) Texas school districts have not been given any time to adequately adjust their courses, curriculum, and programs to meet the TEA's proposed rule changes. It boils down simply to an issue of fairness to students, teachers, parents, and school systems.

I encourage every one of you to reach out to your elected officials and TEA and ask for a transition year, just one year, which would allow TEA to proceed with implementing the new rules, and also allow districts and schools to prepare for this change with students currently in our system. To be clear, I am not opposed to higher standards, I just want our school district, teachers and students to have the opportunity to prepare.

Quintin Shepherd is the superintendent of the Victoria Independent School District.

An Educational Contrarian

Divergent thoughts about education and other pertinent matters

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Please reject the Children at Risk school rankings

Unfortunately for all of us that care about public schools, Children at Risk is back to releasing more of their junk science in the form of school rankings. They use test scores and graduation rates and a few other variables to create what they claim is a more accurate picture of how schools compare than what the state does. Newspapers all over the state just parroted their nonsense.

And here's why its nonsense: they don't—and this is unfathomable to me given their position as a research and advocacy organization—have a clue what a standardized test is, what the scores mean, or the limitations on their use. They, like so many others, think that once a score exists it is free to be interpreted in any manner convenient to the interpreter. That is bogus.

A standardized test score allows a researcher to analyze the differences in total literacy and numeracy attainment between children. However, absent other research, it does not allow for an analysis of what caused that literacy or numeracy attainment. Good educational researchers are aware of this and thus would never—and I mean never—use standardized test data to make inferences that could not be supported by a body of evidence. They would certainly never offer up a crude interpretation that drew lines in the sand and assumed definitive meaning on one side or the other. And they would never make the mistake of presuming that a high or low score on its own could signal anything.

All those mistakes were made by Children at Risk. They seem to have presumed that because you can perform math on the numbers the results are meaningful.

Here's the thing: a test score has never been an automatic signal of anything. All standardized test scores signal a result that has multiple effects or causes. School will always be one of them. So will the world outside schools (as but one other example), and the non-school effects are often as powerful if not more powerful than what happens in a school. If you try and pass judgment on the signal without knowing the cause, you risk thinking you are judging one when you are in fact judging the other. That renders the judgments invalid. I can't assign all the credit for an effect to one cause just because its convenient to do so when I know there is more than one.

So, ignore the Children at Risk rankings. As well intentioned as they claim to be and perhaps are, their work does not contain the truth about our schools. Furthermore, they contain nothing that anyone should act on. And that is sad given the size of the effort. We need the truth about our schools. We need to understand where they are effective and where they are not, and we should champion systems that help us with those understandings. This is not one of them. Please reject it.

Posted by [John Tanner](#) at [2:04 PM](#)

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About Me



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John Tanner is a writer, educational thinker, and a passionate advocate for public schools. He is the founder and executive director of Test Sense which is now [bravEd](#), an organization committed to supporting educators in the conversion to a true educational accountability.

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My book, *The Pitfalls of Reform*, is available through Amazon and the other online retailers or directly from the publisher, which you can access by clicking [here](#).

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