



# TEXANS ADVOCATING FOR MEANINGFUL STUDENT ASSESSMENT

## TAMSA Recommendations for 87th Legislative Session

TAMSA is a 100% volunteer, statewide, grassroots organization comprised of concerned parents and community members who seek an alternative to the financial, developmental, and emotional toll high stakes STAAR tests are inflicting on our children.

TAMSA advocates for meaningful assessments that provide timely and relevant information to parents, students, and teachers. STAAR tests are very expensive, both in administration and remediation. Texas needs to improve public education through the use of effective student assessments that allow for more productive classroom instruction and more efficient use of public funds. TAMSA urges you to take the following actions.

### Focus School Funding on Learning not Testing

**Problem:** Texas state and city revenues have fallen drastically in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the state and city budgets in crisis, Texas must focus on maintaining adequate funding to support individualized student education, access to technology and supporting student social and emotional health. The STAAR is administered at the end of the year and is not a diagnostic test. It does not give teachers the information needed to assess student education gaps. Teachers already have diagnostic tools available to them that will be crucial as students transition away from the crisis and back into traditional learning. STAAR testing and STAAR preparation are exceedingly costly to the state and school districts. Current data from the Texas Education Association indicates that the cost of STAAR/STAAR-ALT/TELPAS/TELPAS-ALT is \$83.5M per year at the state level, and Texas has spent \$1.5 billion over 20 years. This number does not include the cost to implement HB 3906 nor does it include the mandates districts must implement to administer the STAAR test securely.

**Solution:** Place a moratorium on STAAR contracts through 2021 and redirect tens of millions of dollars to student education improvement initiatives, access to technology, and other pandemic responses designed to keep students healthy, safe, engaged and learning during these challenging times. Direct the Commissioner of Education immediately to request a testing waiver from DOE for the 2020-21 academic year.

### Eliminate High Stakes on State Assessments

**Problem:** The high stakes associated with state standardized tests should be removed from our students. Denying students grade promotion or a diploma based on a single measure when they have met all other requirements places too much emphasis on standardized testing. Today 39 states no longer tie high stakes to standardized testing. Only 11 states require high school exit exams for graduation. (*FairTest*, [www.fairtest.org/graduation-test-update-states-recently-eliminated](http://www.fairtest.org/graduation-test-update-states-recently-eliminated) - May 2019). States are decreasing the stress on children and shifting standardized tests toward data-gathering only. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the extraordinary education gap as students and educators struggle with technology limitations, virtual classrooms and extreme disruptions in their homes and families due to the virus. High stakes are not required under federal law, only by Texas law, which should be changed this session.

**Solution:** Eliminate high stakes on students. Neither grade promotion in grades 5 and 8, nor high school graduation requirements, should be tied to performance level on state assessments.