



TEXANS ADVOCATING FOR MEANINGFUL STUDENT ASSESSMENT

TAMSA Recommendations for 86th 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.

No High-Stakes on State Assessments

Problem: The high-stakes associated with standardized tests should be removed from our students and new high-stakes should not be introduced into the school funding formula. 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. Tying school finance to a standardized assessment exacerbates the current system of testing rather than encouraging a system of learning. *Standardized tests were not designed to be a funding mechanism.* States are decreasing the stress on children and today 38 states no longer tie high stakes to standardized testing.

Solution: Performance level on state assessments should not be tied to promotion in grades 5 and 8. State mandated assessments should not be tied to high school graduation requirements. Do not include state mandated assessments in the school finance formula or incentives. Use the test results for reporting purposes only.

Bill Language: House Bill 1321, Landgraf, as filed in the 85th legislative session.

Assessments that Provide Timely and Useful Feedback

Problem: Current state assessments are neither diagnostic nor timely. The assessments do not specify a child's areas of strength or weakness in order to provide feedback to parents, students, or teachers. The current questions are not written in reading levels appropriate to their grade level. The scores are sent after the school year is over. Thus, these assessments are not assisting our children's educational attainment.

Solution: Require state assessments to be diagnostic and grade-level appropriate (both in content and comprehension). Ensure the results are provided within a timeframe to provide useful feedback to enrich our children's learning.

Bill Language: Add the following to TEC Sec. 39.023 (a): These assessments shall diagnose and provide timely feedback for the grade-level standards on which a student has demonstrated proficiency.



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Remove the Sunset Date for Individual Graduation Committees

Problem: Passage of state mandated assessments should not be tied to high school requirements. If high-stakes are not removed from the testing system, it is imperative to offer an option for students to have an alternative path to graduation.

Solution: Remove the sunset date from statutory language.

Bill Language: Senate Bill 213, Seliger, as filed in the 86th legislative session.

Test No More than Required by Federal Law

Problem: Federal law requires each child be tested every year in grades 3-8 in reading and math, and twice in science. Texas exceeds that with two additional writing tests and one additional social studies test. In high school, students must be tested once in three subjects: reading, math, and science. Texas exceeds that with an additional history and English test, and two incorporated writing tests. Texas is over-testing and under-investing.

Solution: Writing is best assessed through classroom projects that are evaluated by certified teachers. Texas should eliminate the following tests:

1. 4th grade writing
2. 7th grade writing
3. 8th grade social studies
4. English II EOC
5. U.S. History EOC
6. Writing in English I EOC

Bill Language: House Bill 515, VanDeaver, as originally filed in the 85th legislative session.

Replace STAAR with National Assessments

Problem: Students in grades 3-8 are not permitted to substitute nationally recognized assessments for STAAR. In high school the PSAT, ACT and SAT can now be substitute assessments but they are de-valued in the accountability system. This decision creates conflict between what is good for the district's rating vs. what is in the best interest of students. It also forces expenditure of limited resources on assessments that have no positive impact on a student's progress to college and career.

Solution:

- Allow students in grades 3-8 to use nationally recognized assessments in place of STAAR, get a waiver from the USDE if needed.
- Do not attach high-stakes of any kind to these exams and do not assign cut-scores.
- National assessments should earn equal weight as state assessments in the accountability system.

Bill Language: House Bill 1993, Anderson, as originally filed in the 85th legislative session.