



Texas Classroom
Teachers Association

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**Testimony of Texas Classroom Teachers Association
House Public Education Committee
Paige Williams, Director of Legislation
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The Texas Classroom Teachers Association provides the following written testimony regarding the interim charge:

Study the unfulfilled recommendations from the 2016 Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability. Evaluate the state's progress on assessments and accountability and consider possible legislation to support the recommendations from the report. Study and recommend measures needed at the state level to prevent unintended consequences to students, campuses, and districts, including changes that could improve the system for students or help public schools serving a disproportionate number of educationally disadvantaged students impacted by the pandemic.

The majority of the recommendations made by the 2016 Commission on Next Generation Assessment and Accountability have been implemented or are in the process of implementation, but there are a few that have not been adopted that TCTA wishes to focus on.

Unfulfilled Recommendations

Support the continued streamlining of the TEKS – The State Board of Education has taken on this challenge and with every TEKS review endeavors to streamline the TEKS, however, this is not a discrete recommendation. This recommendation must be implemented in a continuous fashion, ensuring that each TEKS review from here on out will be sure to consider what content can be successfully taught in a single school year. And it is simply not enough to consider what can be taught during a single school year, but there must be consideration for how long it will take for students to truly master the content and be thoughtful as to the timeline when differentiated instruction is the expectation. TEKS streamlining should be embedded into each and every content review period.

An additional concern with streamlining TEKS is that oftentimes, in order to reduce the number of “including” examples – which means that the example to follow must be taught by the educator – TEKS writers turn to listing more examples under “such as.” What has not always been clear to teachers is that the examples listed as “such as” examples often are the basis of assessment questions even though the content is not required to be taught and a teacher may choose a different example to illustrate the content included in the TEKS.¹ The

¹ Texas Education Agency, “Explanation of the Terms Such As and Including on STAAR,” (2015); <https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769821685>

unfortunate result is often a very long list of “such as” examples that teachers feel they must include in the classroom for fear that the example will form the basis of an assessment question. This can lead educators to minimize other examples that may be of more interest or more relevant to a student’s experience and education. This confusion may be best addressed by the next unfulfilled recommendation.

Limit state testing to readiness standards – The Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability recommended that state testing be limited to readiness standards in an effort to “To provide a more clearly articulated K–12 education program in Texas that focuses on deeper student outcomes and content mastery.” TCTA supports this recommendation; however, to date, the STAAR test still includes both readiness and supporting standards.² TEA identifies a portion of the TEKS for each grade, subject, and course as readiness standards. A readiness standard is defined as those student expectations that are not only essential for success in the current grade or course but are also important for preparedness in the next grade or course. TCTA agrees that the focus should be on assessing the readiness standards but understand the importance of the use of supporting standards as building blocks to student understanding.

Eliminate Domain IV from state accountability calculations for elementary schools – Part of the Commission’s rationale for this recommendation was the “lack of meaningful non-test related measures that would differentiate among elementary schools.” While the commission was unable to identify non-STAAR measures, there have been advances in discussions around non-test-based measures that could be used for elementary and middle schools. For example, there is some discussion about adding an “accelerated learning” indicator that would replace the current Closing the Gaps STAAR component. Additionally, a number of states use a measure of school climate in their accountability systems, most via school climate survey results. This measure is attractive in that it could apply to all levels of schools. Additionally, a climate survey already exists in state law, though currently not funded. Passed in 2013, HB 2012³ established a biennial teaching and learning conditions survey and was originally funded by a \$800,000 appropriations rider. This survey still exists in law, as it was never repealed, the legislature simply did not fund it following its first administration. The legislature should look to this survey as a starting point for not only gathering information that can be used for accountability purposes, but also to gather information to help address additional issues such as teacher shortages or school safety. Again, several other states use climate surveys as either part of the ESSA plans or to help shape school improvement⁴ and it can be done successfully here as well.

Conduct a study, using existing data, to test the relationship between the results of stratified, random sampling and whole-population testing – In full transparency, TCTA is not sure if this recommendation has been implemented or not. If the study has not been done, we support doing so as soon as possible. TCTA has long supported efforts to reduce

² Example assessed curriculum document – Reading 3rd grade.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2022-gr3-english-assessed-curriculum-reading.pdf>

³ <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/83R/billtext/pdf/HB02012F.pdf#navpanes=0>

⁴ <https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/FutureEdSchoolClimateReport.pdf>

the testing burden on districts, educators, and students but still provide statistically valid and reliable information that can be used to improve the educational experience.

Conduct an independent research study to explore the implications of replacing the state developed assessment system with nationally recognized assessments that align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) Content Standards - TCTA is not aware if this recommendation has been fulfilled. While current law requires the commissioner to determine a method by which a student's satisfactory performance on an advanced placement test, an IB exam, an SAT subject test, the SAT, the ACT, or any nationally recognized norm-referenced assessment used by higher education institutions will be used to satisfy the requirements of an end-of-course assessment, this recommendation goes further and warrants more consideration. This recommendation would allow the state to study alternative assessments, such as the ITBS, to determine if it would be possible to use them or modify them in a way that could allow them to be used to assess the TEKS. Due to the design of these tests, the information that they provide to educators and parents is more meaningful and can be used in a formative manner which makes for a more meaningful educational experience.

Further considerations

TCTA would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to re-emphasize the role that annual standardized testing plays in the frustrations of teachers and its factor in the teacher shortage crisis we are currently facing. As the legislature continues to examine the form and the role of state assessment in the education system, TCTA continues to advocate that the number of required state tests be reduced to just those required by federal law.

Thank you for this opportunity for input.

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