

Chapter 7 – Overview of AEA

ABOUT PART 2 OF THIS *MANUAL*

Part 2 of this *Manual* is a technical resource to explain the criteria and procedures applied by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in evaluating the performance of alternative education campuses (AECs) including charters and charter campuses that:

- are dedicated to serving students at risk of dropping out of school;
- are eligible to receive an alternative education accountability (AEA) rating; and
- register annually for evaluation under AEA procedures.

Registered AECs and charters rated under AEA procedures are subject to all the terms and provisions of this *Manual*.

EDUCATOR INPUT

While it was the role of the Commissioner of Education to develop AEA procedures, the commissioner relied extensively on the detailed review, study, and advice of educators and other education stakeholders. The resulting procedures contain appropriate indicators for AECs and charters with increased rigor phased in over time.

HISTORY OF AEA

Enacted by the Texas legislature in 1993, accountability legislation mandated the creation of an accountability system for all Texas schools. This accountability system integrated the statewide curriculum; the state criterion-referenced assessment system; district and campus accountability; district and campus recognition for high performance and significant increases in performance; sanctions for poor performance; and school, district, and state reports.

A set of alternative performance measures for campuses serving at-risk students was developed in late 1994 and implemented in the 1995-96 school year. In order for a campus to qualify as alternative, it was required to serve one or more of the following student populations: students at risk of dropping out; recovered dropouts; pregnant or parenting students; adjudicated students; students with severe discipline problems; or expelled students.

For the 1995-96 school year, alternative accountability ratings were based on state-approved district proposals that included student performance indicators, current-year data, and comparisons of pre- and post-assessment results. Following a review of campus data by the local board of trustees, each district made an initial determination of the campus rating. This initial determination was then forwarded to the TEA where it was reviewed by a panel of peer reviewers who sent a recommendation to the commissioner.

From the 1995-96 to 2001-02 school years, revisions were made to the ratings criteria and procedures determined by an *ad hoc* Alternative Education Advisory Committee:

- Minimum performance levels for an *Acceptable* rating were established in 1996-97.
- Beginning in 1996-97, school districts were required to select campus-based performance indicators from a menu of state-established indicators.

- In 1997-98, TEA staff assumed responsibility for the review and analysis of campus performance data.
- In 1999-00, TEA required that the rating for each AEC be determined on three base indicators: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) passing rates for reading and mathematics, dropout rates, and attendance rates.
- In 1999-00, disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs) and juvenile justice alternative education programs (JJAEPs) were no longer permitted to register for AEA. Instead, the performance of students served in these programs was attributed to the campuses where these students would otherwise have attended.
- In 2000-01, campuses were required to serve “students at risk of dropping out of school” as defined in Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081(d) in order to be eligible to receive an accountability rating under AEA procedures.

House Bill 6, enacted by the 77th Texas Legislature, called for a pilot program to examine issues surrounding accountability of alternative education programs. The purposes of this pilot were to analyze the existing status of AECs and to make recommendations regarding the methods of evaluating the performance of these campuses. In order to achieve these purposes, the following activities were undertaken in 2002:

- a set of surveys for principals, teachers/counselors, parents, and students at AECs was administered;
- a more detailed survey was administered and follow-up telephone calls were made to a small sample of AECs;
- an analysis of existing Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data was undertaken; and
- individual student data from a small sample of AECs were compiled and analyzed.

Results of the pilot program are published in the *Report on the Alternative Education Accountability Pilot* (Texas Education Agency, December 1, 2002).

While these pilot activities were conducted, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), Public Law 107-110, was signed into law. This federal legislation was considered as part of the pilot project report. Accountability provisions of NCLB require that all campuses, including AECs, be evaluated annually for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The 2003 Educator Focus Group on Accountability made a recommendation to develop new AEA procedures for 2005 and beyond. The new AEA procedures are based on the following guidelines:

- The AEA indicators are based on data submitted through standard data submission processes such as PEIMS or by the state testing contractor.
- The AEA measures are appropriate for alternative education programs offered on AECs rather than just setting lower standards on the same measures used in the standard accountability procedures. Furthermore, these measures ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state assessments in order to graduate.

- The Texas Growth Index (TGI) and other improvement indicators are evaluated as base indicators for AEC ratings.
- Additional AEA criteria are included. For example, AECs must have a minimum percentage of at-risk students (based on PEIMS data reported on current-year fall enrollment records) to be evaluated under AEA procedures.

Also, in 2003, ratings for all campuses were suspended for one year while the new Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessments were implemented for the first time and the new state accountability system was developed. In 2004, registered AECs received a rating of *Not Rated: Alternative Education* while new AEA procedures were developed.

In 2005, registered AECs were evaluated for the first time under the newly developed, redesigned AEA procedures. From 2006 to 2009, the amendments below were made to the AEA procedures.

- The at-risk registration criterion began at 65% in 2006 and increased by five percentage points annually until it reached 75% in 2008, where it remains.
- Beginning in 2008, AEA campuses and charters are evaluated on Gold Performance Acknowledgment (GPA) indicators.
- Beginning in 2009, the Texas Projection Measure (TPM) is used in the TAKS Progress indicator.

PHILOSOPHY OF AEA

AEA procedures are based on the following principles:

- Procedures apply to AECs, not programs.
- Procedures apply to AECs and charters dedicated to serving students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Procedures apply only to those AECs that qualify and register for evaluation under AEA procedures.
- Procedures do not apply to DAEPs or JJAEPs. Statute or interpretation of statutory intent requires that DAEP and JJAEP data are attributed to the student's home campus.
- Procedures do not apply to standard campuses, even if the campus primarily serves at-risk students.

The following issues affect many components of the accountability system.

- Small numbers of test results and mobility – AECs are smaller on average than standard campuses and have high mobility rates.
- Attribution of data – High mobility also affects attribution of data and complicates evaluation of AEC data.
- Residential Facilities – Education services are provided to students in residential programs and facilities operated under contract with the Texas Youth Commission (TYC), students in detention centers and correctional facilities that are registered with

the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC), and students in private residential treatment centers.

OVERALL DESIGN OF AEA PROCEDURES

The overall design of the AEA procedures is an improvement model that allows AECs and charters to meet either an absolute performance standard or an improvement standard for each accountability measure.

The AEA procedures include these major components:

- Rating labels – *AEA: Academically Acceptable*, *AEA: Academically Unacceptable*, *AEA: Not Rated – Other*, and *AEA: Not Rated – Data Integrity Issues*;
- AEC registration criteria and requirements including an at-risk registration criterion;
- Base Indicators – TAKS Progress, Completion Rate II, and Annual Dropout Rate;
- Additional Features – Required Improvement and use of district at-risk data; and
- AEA GPA recognize high performance on indicators other than those used to determine AEA ratings and are reported for AECs and charters rated *AEA: Academically Acceptable*.

COMPARISON OF 2009 AND 2010 AEA PROCEDURES

The AEA ratings issued in 2010 mark the sixth year of the current procedures. Many components of the 2010 system are the same as those that were in effect in 2009. However, there are several significant differences between 2009 and 2010:

- In 2010, the phase-in of the TAKS (Accommodated) assessments is complete. TAKS (Accommodated) results for all grades and subjects are evaluated for 2010 ratings.
- The phase-in of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition of a dropout is complete for the Completion Rate II indicator. All four years of the 2009 cohort are based on the NCES dropout definition.
- The standard for the AEA GPA TSI indicators increases by five points to 65.0%.

The following table provides details on changes between the 2009 and 2010 systems. Components that are unchanged are provided as well.

Table 10: Comparison of 2009 and 2010 – AEA Procedures

Component	2009	2010		
Base Indicators for Determining Rating (Chapter 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAKS Progress • Completion Rate II • Annual Dropout Rate for grades 7–12 	No Change		
Rating Standards (Chapter 10)	TAKS Progress	50%	TAKS Progress	No Change
	Completion Rate II	60.0%	Completion Rate II	No Change
	Dropout	20.0%	Dropout	No Change
TAKS Progress (Chapter 10 unless noted otherwise)				
Grades Tested	Performance results are summed across grades and subjects	No Change		
TAKS (Accommodated) Subjects & Grades Evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA (grade 11) • Mathematics (grade 11) • Science (grades 5, 8, 10, 11; grade 5 Spanish) • Social Studies (grades 8, 10, 11) 	All subjects and grades evaluated		
TPM	TAKS grade 3-10 tests meeting TPM are included in the TAKS Progress numerator.	No Change		
TGI	TAKS grade 11 tests meeting TGI are included in the TAKS Progress numerator.	No Change		
Accountability Subset	Campus and district accountability subset rules are applied. However, the performance of students displaced by Hurricane Ike who are tested in Texas school districts in 2008-09 is not included in the TAKS Progress indicator used for 2009 accountability ratings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Campus Accountability Subset</i> – AECs are accountable for TAKS results for students enrolled on the AEC on the PEIMS enrollment snapshot date and on the testing date. • <i>District Accountability Subset</i> – Charters are accountable for TAKS results for students enrolled at the charter on the PEIMS enrollment snapshot date and on the testing date. 		
Evaluation of Student Groups	All Students, African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged	No Change		
Minimum Size Criteria for All Students	All Students performance is always evaluated.	No Change		
Minimum Size Criteria for Student Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 to 49 tests for the student group and the student group represents at least 10% of All Students tests; or • at least 50 tests for the student group even if these tests represent less than 10% of All Student tests. 	No Change		
District At-Risk Data	The AEC is evaluated on performance of at-risk students in the district if the AEC does not meet the standard or demonstrate RI based on fewer than 10 tests or if the AEC has no TAKS results.	No Change		
Special Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Analysis is conducted for the charter when there are fewer than 10 TAKS tests in the charter. • Special Analysis is conducted for the AEC when there are fewer than 10 at-risk TAKS tests in the district/charter. 	No Change		
Hurricane Ike	Charters and campuses closed for ten or more days may receive a rating of AEA: <i>Not Rated – Other</i> .	None		

Table 10: Comparison of 2009 and 2010 – AEA Procedures (continued)

Component	2009	2010
Completion Rate II (Chapter 10 unless noted otherwise)		
Dropout Definition	Includes three years of NCES dropout definition (2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08)	Includes four years of NCES dropout definition (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09)
Evaluation of Student Groups	All Students (if minimum size criteria are met); Student groups are not evaluated.	No Change
District At-Risk Data	The AEC of Choice is evaluated on Completion Rate II of at-risk students in the district if the AEC of Choice does not meet the standard or demonstrate RI or if the AEC of Choice serves students in any of grades 9-12 but does not have a Completion Rate II.	No Change
Annual Dropout Rate (Chapter 10 unless noted otherwise)		
Evaluation of Student Groups	All Students (if minimum size criteria are met); Student groups are not evaluated.	No Change
District At-Risk Data	The AEC is evaluated on Annual Dropout Rate of at-risk students in the district if the AEC does not meet the standard or demonstrate RI.	No Change
Required Improvement (RI) and AEA GPA		
Required Improvement (Chapter 11)	RI is calculated for the TAKS Progress, Completion Rate II, and Annual Dropout Rate indicators when the standards are not met and when prior year minimum size requirements are met.	No Change
AEA GPA Indicators and Standards (Chapter 13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Course/Dual Enrollment $\geq 30.0\%$ • AP/IB Results $\geq 15\%$ and $\geq 50\%$ • Attendance Rate $\geq 95.0\%$ • Commended Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading/ELA $\geq 30.0\%$ ○ Mathematics $\geq 30.0\%$ ○ Writing $\geq 30.0\%$ ○ Science $\geq 30\%$ ○ Social Studies $\geq 30.0\%$ • RHSP/DAP $\geq 85.0\%$ • SAT/ACT Results $\geq 70\%$ and $\geq 40\%$ • TSI - Higher Education Readiness Component: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELA $\geq 60.0\%$ ○ Mathematics $\geq 60.0\%$ • College-Ready Graduates $\geq 35\%$ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSI - Higher Education Readiness Component: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELA $\geq 65.0\%$ ○ Mathematics $\geq 65.0\%$