

Chapter 1 – Introduction

About this Manual

The *2015 Accountability Manual* is a technical guide that explains how the accountability system used by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) evaluates the academic performance of Texas public schools. The manual describes the accountability system and explains how information from different sources is used to calculate and assign accountability ratings and award distinction designations.

History of the Accountability System

In 1993, the Texas Legislature mandated the creation of a public school accountability system to evaluate and rate school districts and campuses. A viable and effective accountability system was possible because the necessary infrastructure was already in place: a student-level data collection system, a state-mandated curriculum, and a statewide assessment program tied to the curriculum. This first accountability system remained in use until the 2001–02 school year.

The second accountability system included the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and assigned ratings for the first time in fall 2004. A significant change from the previous system was that TAKS included additional subjects and grades that increased system rigor. Also, districts and campuses were required to meet criteria on up to 25 separate assessment measures and up to 10 dropout and completion measures. The last year for accountability ratings based on the TAKS was 2011.

House Bill (HB) 3, passed by Texas legislature in 2009, overhauled the state assessment and accountability systems to focus on postsecondary readiness for all Texas public school students. Because of the transition to the current assessment program, state accountability ratings were not issued in 2012. TEA worked throughout 2012 with technical and policy advisory committees to develop the current accountability system based on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program. This accountability system uses a performance index framework to combine a broad range of indicators into a comprehensive measure of district and campus performance. The 2012–13 school year was the first for assigning ratings based on STAAR results.

With the passage of HB 5 in 2013, the legislature added additional indicators of postsecondary readiness. The 2014 ratings included college-ready graduates, a new postsecondary readiness measure. The 2015 accountability system replaces college-ready graduates with an expanded postsecondary readiness measure that adds students who earn credit for at least two advanced/dual enrollment courses or enroll in a coherent sequence of career and technical education (CTE) courses.

Goals of the Texas Accountability System

Texas will be among the top ten states in postsecondary readiness by 2020 by

- improving student achievement at all levels in the core subjects of the state curriculum,
- ensuring the progress of all students toward achieving advanced academic performance,
- closing advanced academic performance level gaps among student groups, and
- rewarding excellence based on other indicators in addition to state assessment results.

Guiding Principles

Student Performance

- The accountability system is first and foremost designed to improve student performance.
- The system focuses on preparing all students for success after high school.

System Safeguards

- The accountability system uses safeguards to minimize unintended consequences.

Recognition of Diversity

- The accountability system is fair and addresses the diversity of student populations and educational settings.

Public Participation and Accessibility

- The accountability system's development and implementation are informed by advice from Texas educators and the public.
- The system is understandable and provides performance results that are relevant, meaningful, and easily accessible.

Coordination

- The accountability system is part of an overall coordinated strategy for state and federal ratings, reporting, monitoring, and interventions.

Statutory Compliance

- The accountability system is designed to comply with statutory requirements.

Local Responsibility

- Districts are responsible for submitting accurate data upon which ratings are based.
- The system relies on local school districts to develop and implement local accountability systems that complement the state system.

Distinction Designations

- Distinction designations are based on higher levels of student performance rather than more students performing at the satisfactory level.

Accountability Advisory Groups

Educators, school board members, business and community representatives, professional organizations, and legislative representatives from across the state were instrumental in developing the current accountability system.

Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) includes representatives from school districts and regional education service centers (ESCs). Members made recommendations to address major policy and technical issues for 2015 accountability.

Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) includes representatives from legislative offices, school districts, and the business community. Members identified issues critical to the accountability system and reviewed the ATAC recommendations. The APAC either endorsed the ATAC's recommendations or developed its own, which were forwarded to the commissioner.

The commissioner considered all proposals and made final decisions on April 8, 2015, that are reflected in this manual.

See *Appendix A – Acknowledgments* for more information on advisory groups. The accountability development proposals and supporting materials that were reviewed and discussed at each advisory group meeting are available online at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2015/index.html>.

Overview of the 2015 Accountability System

State Accountability Ratings

The state accountability system assigns one of three academic ratings to each district and campus: *Met Standard*, *Met Alternative Standard*, or *Improvement Required*. These ratings are based on a framework of four indexes that combine a range of indicators into a comprehensive measure of performance.

The performance index framework combines results from STAAR assessments, graduation rates, rates of students completing the various graduation plans, and other indicators. The performance indexes are as follows:

Index 1: Student Achievement provides a snapshot of performance across subjects.

Index 2: Student Progress measures year-to-year student progress.

Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps emphasizes the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the two lowest performing racial/ethnic student groups.

Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness emphasizes the importance of earning a high school diploma that provides students with the foundation necessary for success in college, job training programs, the workforce, or the military.

Distinction Designations

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of *Met Standard* are eligible to earn distinction designations. Distinction designations are available for achievement in several different areas and awarded to campuses based on performance relative to a group of campuses of similar type, size, grade span, and student demographics. The distinction designation indicators are separate from those used to evaluate accountability ratings.

Both districts and campuses are also eligible to earn a distinction designation in postsecondary readiness.

The following chart outlines the accountability ratings and distinction designations assigned in 2015.

| Ratings (Districts and Campuses) | Distinction Designations | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| | Districts | Campuses |
| <i>Met Standard</i> | Postsecondary Readiness | Academic Achievement: Reading/ELA and/or Academic Achievement: Mathematics and/or Academic Achievement: Science and/or Academic Achievement: Social Studies and/or Top 25%: Student Progress and/or Top 25%: Closing Performance Gaps and/or Postsecondary Readiness |
| <i>Met Alternative Standard</i> This rating label is assigned to charter operators and alternative education campuses (AECs) evaluated under alternative education accountability (AEA) provisions. | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Improvement Required</i> | N/A | N/A |

System Safeguards

System safeguard have been established to meet state accountability-related intervention requirements. Performance results are disaggregated to show the performance of each student subgroup on each of the indicators. The purpose of the system safeguard report is to ensure that—in the aggregated district or campus reports—substandard performance in one or more areas or by one or more student groups is not disguised by higher performance in other areas or by other student groups. See *Chapter 8 – System Safeguards and Other Federal Requirements* for detailed information about system safeguards in 2015.

The following indicators are included in the state system safeguard report:

- Performance Rates (*campus and district*) by subject – reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies
- Participation Rates (*campus and district*) by subject – reading and mathematics
- Federal Graduation Rates (*campus and district*)
- Federal Limits on Alternative Assessments (*not applicable in 2015*)

Results for the following student groups are included in state system safeguard reports:

- All Students
- Racial/Ethnic student groups – African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, and Two or More Races
- Economically Disadvantaged
- Students with Disabilities
- English Language Learners (ELLs)

Comparison of 2014 and 2015 Performance Index Criteria and Indicators for Non-AEA Districts and Campuses

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|--|
| Index 1: Student Achievement | Index 1 Target: 55 | Index 1 Target: 60 |
| | All Student Groups and all tests combined | All Student Groups and all tests combined <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grades 3–8 mathematics excluded o STAAR A and STAAR Alt 2 for all grades and subjects excluded |
| | Performance standard: Phase-in 1 Level II (Satisfactory) | No change |
| | STAAR EOC Assessments (5 tests): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o English I (reading and writing combined into single English I) o English II (reading and writing combined into single English II) o Algebra I o Biology o U.S. History | No change |
| | Substitute assessments for STAAR EOC tests are included | No change |
| | English Language Learners (ELLs): English version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2–4 included (ELL Progress Measure) o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included (Phase-in 1 Level II) Spanish version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2–4 included (Phase-in 1 Level II) o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included (Phase-in 1 Level II) | English Language Learners (ELLs)*: No change |
| STAAR L evaluated in ELL Progress Measure | | |
| Index 2: Student Progress | Index 2 Target: Based on 5 th percentile of Index 2 outcomes based on the 2014 performance results by campus type: elementary, middle, or high school. Targets for districts based on 5 th percentile of campus performance across all campus types. | Index 2 Target: Based on 5 th percentile of Index 2 outcomes based on the 2015 performance results by campus type: elementary, middle, or high school. Targets for districts based on 5 th percentile of campus performance across all campus types. |
| | Ten student groups: All Students, seven racial/ethnic groups, Students with Disabilities, and ELL Students | Ten student groups: All Students, seven racial/ethnic groups, Students with Disabilities, Current and Monitored ELLs |
| | By subject: reading and mathematics | Across all subjects: reading, writing, and mathematics (Algebra I only for available grades) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grades 3–8 mathematics excluded o STAAR A and STAAR Alt 2 for all grades and subjects excluded |
| | Aggregated weighted score <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o One point for each percentage of assessment results that meet or exceed progress o One additional point for each percentage of results that exceed progress | No change |
| | Progress Measures: STAAR, STAAR Modified, STAAR Alternate, and ELL Progress Measure | STAAR and ELL Progress Measures |
| | High schools/K–12 campuses are not evaluated on Index 2 | High schools/K–12 campuses are evaluated on Index 2 |

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>English Language Learners (ELLs):</p> <p>English version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2+ included <p>Spanish version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2+ included <p>STAAR L evaluated in ELL Progress Measure</p> | <p>Current and Monitored ELLs*:</p> <p>No Change</p> |
| <p>Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps</p> | <p>Index 3 Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o District: 28 o Elementary: 28 o Middle School: 27 o High School/K-12: 31 | <p>No change</p> |
| | <p>By Subject Area: reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies</p> | <p>By Subject Area: reading, Algebra I, writing, science, and social studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grades 3-8 mathematics excluded o STAAR A and STAAR Alt 2 for all grades and subjects excluded |
| | <p>Student Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Economically Disadvantaged o Two Lowest Performing Racial/Ethnic Student Groups | <p>No change</p> |
| | <p>Minimum Size Criteria for Racial/Ethnic Student Groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify the Racial/Ethnic student groups that have 25 or more tests in reading/ELA and 25 or more tests in mathematics from the prior year 2) Select the lowest performing student group(s) that meet the above minimum size based on prior year results for All Subjects. | <p>No change</p> |
| | <p>Points based on STAAR performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Phase-in Satisfactory Standard: One point for each percentage of tests at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard or above o Advanced Standard: One additional point for each percentage of tests at Advanced Standard | <p>No change</p> |

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|--|---|
| | <p>English Language Learners (ELLs):</p> <p>English version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2– 4 included ELL Progress Measure (1 point); STAAR Final Level II (2 points) o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included Phase-in 1 Level II (1 point); STAAR Advanced Level III (2 points) <p>Spanish version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2– 4 included Phase-in 1 Level II (one point); STAAR Advanced Level III (two points) o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included Phase-in 1 Level II (one point); STAAR Advanced Level III (two points) <p>STAAR L evaluated in ELL Progress Measure</p> | <p>English Language Learners (ELLs)*:</p> <p>No Change</p> |
| <p>Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness</p> | <p>Index 4 Target:</p> <p>All Components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Districts: 57 (based on all four components)* o High Schools/K–12: 57 (based on all four components)* o Elementary/Middle School: n/a <p>STAAR Only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o District: 13 o Elementary: 12 o Middle School: 13 o High School/K–12: 21 <p>Based on four components: STAAR Final Level II, Graduation Rate (or Dropout Rate), Graduation Diploma Plan, and College-Ready Graduates.</p> <p>If any of the four components are not available, districts and campuses are evaluated on the STAAR component only.</p> | <p>No change</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Based on four components: STAAR Final Level II, Graduation Rate (or Dropout Rate), Graduation Diploma Plan, and Postsecondary Readiness Indicator.</p> <p>If any of the four components are not available, districts and campuses are evaluated on the STAAR component only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grades 3–8 mathematics excluded o STAAR A and STAAR Alt 2 for all grades and subjects excluded |
| | <p>STAAR Score: STAAR Percent Met Final Level II on two or more STAAR subject-area tests for All Students and racial/ethnic student groups</p> <p>Students tested on one subject area only must meet the final Level II performance standard for that subject area. Similarly, students tested on only two subject areas must meet the final Level II performance standard for both subject areas.</p> | <p>No change</p> |

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|---|---|
| | <p>Graduation Score: Combined performance across graduation/dropout rates for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grade 9–12 Four-Year Graduation Rate for ten student groups; or o Grade 9–12 Five-Year Graduation Rate for ten student groups, whichever contributes the most points to the index <p>Ten Student Groups: All Students and each racial/ethnic group (seven groups), Students with Disabilities, and ELLs</p> | No change |
| | <p>Graduation Plan: RHSP/DAP Graduates based on Four-Year Longitudinal Cohort: All Students and racial/ethnic groups</p> | No change |
| | <p>College-Ready Graduates: High school graduates from the 2012–13 school year who met the college-ready criteria on the TAKS exit-level test, or the SAT test, or the ACT test in both ELA and mathematics.</p> | <p>Postsecondary Component: Annual graduates who demonstrate postsecondary readiness in any one of three ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meeting the college-ready criteria on the TAKS exit-level test, SAT test, or ACT test in both ELA and mathematics o Earning credit for two advanced course/dual credit courses o Enrolling in a coherent sequence of two or more career and technical education (CTE) courses as part of a four-year plan of study. |
| | <p>Weighting: Combine with equal weight (25%) the results of four components if all four are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o STAAR Final Level II o Graduation Rate o Graduation Plan o College-Ready Graduates | <p>Weighting: Combine with equal weight (25%) the results of four components if all four are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o STAAR Final Level II o Graduation Rate o Graduation Plan o Postsecondary Readiness Indicator |
| | <p>Substitute assessments for STAAR EOC tests are included</p> | No Change |
| | <p>English Language Learners (ELLs):</p> <p>English version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2–4 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included (Final Level II) <p>Spanish version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students in U.S. schools Year 1 excluded o Students in U.S. schools Years 2–4 included (Final Level II) o Students in U.S. schools Years 5+ included (Final Level II) | <p>English Language Learners (ELLs)*:</p> <p>No change</p> |

* See Appendix I for a detailed description of the inclusion policies for ELL students.

Comparison of 2014 and 2015 Performance Index Criteria and Indicators for AEA Charters and Campuses

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Index 1: Student Achievement* | Index 1 Target: 30 | Index 1 Target: 35 |
| Index 2: Student Progress* | Campuses and charters districts registered for Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) provisions are not evaluated on Index 2. | Campuses and charters districts registered for Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) provisions are evaluated on Index 2. For both AEA charter districts and campuses, the Index 2 target is based on the 5 th percentile of AEA 2015 campus performance. |
| Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps* | Index 3 Target: 11 | No change |
| Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness | Index 4 Target (with bonus points): 33 (based on two components) Based on two components: STAAR Final Level II and Graduation Score/Annual Dropout Rate If both components, STAAR Final Level II and Graduation Score/Annual Dropout Rate, are not available for AECs or charter districts, evaluate the Graduation Score/Annual Dropout Rate performance only and the Index 4 target (with bonus points) is 45. If the Graduation Score/Annual Dropout Rate performance component is not available, do not evaluate Index 4. | No change |
| | STAAR Score: STAAR Percent Met Final Level II on two or more subject-area tests for All Students and racial/ethnic student groups Students tested on one subject area only must meet the Final Level II performance standard for that subject area. Similarly, students tested on two subject areas must meet the Final Level II performance standard for both subject areas. | No change |
| | Graduation Score: Combined performance across graduation/dropout rates for ten student groups for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Grade 9–12 Four-Year Graduation, Continuers, and GED Rate; or o Grade 9–12 Five-Year Graduation Continuers, and GED Rate; or o Grade 9–12 Six-Year Graduation, Continuers, and GED Rate, whichever contributes the most points to the index. | No change |

* For Indexes 1, 2, and 3, the same assessments and indicators are used for both non-AEA campuses and districts and AEA campuses and charter districts.

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