



# TEXANS ADVOCATING FOR MEANINGFUL STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The current STAAR testing system creates unnecessary barriers to graduation, takes valuable instruction time from Texas classrooms and diverts significant public funding to a for-profit testing company. In addition to its economic costs, STAAR imposes other significant costs: teaching to the test, numerous benchmarks and practice tests, and remediation classes replacing electives.

## RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO TESTING IN TEXAS

### **Decrease the number of tests to no more than required under federal law.**

To the extent that Texas must comply with NCLB, current STAAR tests are still more than required under federal law. Limit high school standardized tests to Reading, Math, and Science. For grades 3-8: eliminate the 3 tests not required under NCLB. Also, give the TEA Commissioner explicit authority as well as a mandate to reduce the number of state assessments immediately upon passage of federal law reducing testing requirements.

### **Eliminate “high-stakes” performance requirements for grade promotion and high school graduation.**

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. Denying students a diploma based on a single measure when they have met all other graduation requirements puts them at high risk of poor post-secondary outcomes.

### **Replace writing EOCs with non-high stakes student portfolio review.**

Revise writing assessment paradigm. Current assessments are not establishing an education environment conducive to strong writing. Replace current writing assessments with non-high stakes student portfolio.

### **Decrease the length of tests, and eliminate field-test questions.**

State assessments should be designed to be age appropriate in length, and should include accommodations for students who need them. 3<sup>rd</sup> graders should not sit for multiple four-hour tests; nor should single subject high-school EOCs last 4- 5 hours. Eliminate all field test essay questions, and minimize the amount of multiple choice field testing questions included in state-designed assessments to shorten assessment lengths (especially English I & II EOCs).

### **Use diagnostic Norm Reference Tests (NRTs) to gauge student learning.**

Evaluate how NRTs can replace STAAR tests and still meet the NCLB requirements, offering parents far more diagnostic data about student learning. In high school, fund the use of up to 2 NRTs: one in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and one in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, such as PSAT and SAT or PLAN and ACT at the district’s choice, to gauge college-readiness.

### **Use random sampling testing for state accountability.**

Publish by subgroup random samplings of the results of the state Reading and Math assessments.