

# State eyes new ratings for schools

By Richard Greene  
*Managing Editor*

The sign on the Pilot Point ISD Administration Building boldly exclaims the district's status as "recognized" by the Texas Education Agency in the last accountability ratings released in 2011.

But the sign will be an artifact along with the school ratings jargon of recognized, exemplary and acceptable later this year when the state unveils its new accountability system that Texas Education Commissioner Mike Williams announced Tuesday.

Starting this year, schools will receive one of three ratings — met standard, met alternative standard or improvement required — based on student performance on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and four additional indicators.

The other four indicators

were:

- Student achievement — snapshot of performance across all subjects and all assessments.

- Student progress — improvements in subjects and subgroups.

- Closing performance gaps — showing academic achievement of economically disadvantaged and low performing ethnic student groups.

- Postsecondary readiness — measures high school completion rates.

Williams said in a press release that the new system will point out the successes of districts along with the areas that need improvement.

"The new system makes use of multiple indicators to provide parents and taxpayers a more detailed overview of the successes as well as areas of necessary improvement for each school district, charter

and campus," Williams said.

The initial reaction to the proposed system was mostly favorable. The state has not rated schools since 2011 as it implemented the new STAAR, which replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

"It's a lot better than what we did have," said Tioga ISD Superintendent Charles Holloway. "At least we know the rules. I like the broadness of it."

Aubrey Deputy Superintendent Debby Sanders said the indicators were not a surprise.

"The intent of the state is to base district accountability ratings on several indicators," she said. "The new accountability system takes into account other factors that are important in providing stakeholders with information about how their districts meets the needs of its students."

She added the district will monitor the new system to get a grasp on its implications.

"Our focus will continue to be providing our students with the best possible educational experience," Sanders said.

Pilot Point ISD Superintendent Glenn Barber expects his staff and students to adjust to the new system and perform.

"Our staff does as good of a job as anyone," he said. "They work as hard as anyone to produce results within a system that is constantly changing."

Barber said he wishes the state would show how the districts' current scores would translate into the new system.

"Show me my scores with these new standards," he said.

The new accountability system may be short-lived. Williams said in his statement about the system that he is continuing to work on an A-F rating system for 2014.