



ALEDO ISD BOARD MEETING TEMPLATE

MEETING DATE: February 20, 2012

AGENDA ITEM: STAAR 15% Rule

ALIGNS TO BOARD GOAL(S): Students will meet or exceed educational performance standards.

Background Information:

- **Aledo ISD along with most other districts across the state has delayed decisions on board policy concerning EIA Local and the application of the 15 percent rule.**
- **Reasons surrounding the delay in board policy decisions have been due to the constantly changing landscape of the application of the 15 percent rule.**
- **Options for application of the 15 percent rule have been drafted for months and will be finalized once Commissioner Scott has published the “Final Commissioner’s Rules” for testing and accountability practices for the 2011-2012 school year.**
- **Commissioner Scott’s speech to administrators at the Midwinter Conference on January 30th has prompted a flurry of communication between the Commissioner and the legislators. The communication centers on the controversial requirement to have the EOC test count as 15% of a student’s final grade in an EOC course. I have included a few quotes from the Commissioner’s speech in this report, as well as a link to a recording of the Commissioner’s speech at the Midwinter Conference.**

“I believe that testing is good for some things, but the system we have created has become a perversion of its original intent,” Scott said to applause. “The intent to improve teaching and learning has gone too far afield.”

Scott addressed end-of-course exams and the 15 percent requirement that has stirred controversy of late. He said he’s met with his attorney to see if there’s any way he can waive the 15 percent requirement this year but he’s been advised he doesn’t have the authority. “I would waive it if I could,” he said, to another round of applause.

- **The following is a link to a You Tube recording of Commissioner Scott’s Midwinter speech -**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpioJvplR1q&feature=youtube_qdata&noredirect=1

- Included are letters from Senator Shapiro and House Chairman Eissler written to the Commissioner indicating *he does have the authority* to waive the application of the 15 percent rule for the current school year. In addition, I have provided excerpts from newspapers around the state reporting on the STAAR/EOC implementation.
- Districts are waiting see if Commissioner Scott elects to exercise his authority to waive the 15 percent rule for the current school year.
- Aledo ISD administration believes that it is in the best interest of our students that the 15 percent rule be waived by Commissioner Scott.

Administrative Considerations: There are no administrative considerations at this time. We do anticipate bringing any necessary board policy for approval in March pending the publication of the “Final Commissioner’s Rules” at the end of February.

FISCAL NOTE: None

Administrative Recommendation: Report item only

EduSlate

TASA's Jenny LaCoste-Caputo examines education policy from the Capitol to the classroom

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Commissioner Scott delivers no-holds-barred speech at Midwinter

Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott delivered a surprising speech to the thousands in attendance at TASA's 2012 Midwinter Conference Tuesday afternoon, invoking a pull-no-punches tone and sharing his frank opinions on the state's accountability program, his frustration with bureaucratic meddling – both the feds' and the state's - and even the names of a few folks who make him mad enough to want to stay in an incredibly difficult job that makes him lose sleep and miss meals.

Usually, Scott delivers a Power Point presentation full of AP participation rates, NAEP scores and graduation results to the crowd of district administrators. He started off by telling them he was dispensing with that today and instead told them about the book he's reading: *Carrots, Sticks, and the Bully Pulpit*, a book critical of the role of federal involvement in K-12 education.

He said his frustration isn't limited to the federal government, but also with himself for being complicit in the state's overreaching influence in local school districts.

"I believe that testing is good for some things, but the system we have created has become a perversion of its original intent," Scot said to applause. "The intent to improve teaching and learning has gone too far afield."

He discussed the cuts made by the Legislature last year and said while he was glad that things didn't end as badly as first projected – at one point lawmakers were considering a \$10 billion cut to public education – he realizes that the cuts that were made were personal.

"They were personal to me as well," Scott said. He had to lay off roughly a third of his staff at TEA because of cuts made to the agency. "For the fact that I was not able to get back every dollar, I apologize, but I did my best."

Scott also said he's completed a review of Education Service Centers – something districts have feared would be the target of massive cuts and potential closure – and he's found them in a "remarkable" state. He said they remain vital and he's very pleased to announce that none of them will be eliminated. He did say that boundary lines may be redrawn and he'll be looking for input about ESCs and the services they provide from superintendents and other district leaders.

Scott addressed end-of-course exams and the 15 percent requirement that has stirred controversy of late. He said he's met with his attorney to see if there's any way he can

waive the 15 percent requirement this year but he's been advised he doesn't have the authority.

"I would waive it if I could," he said, to another round of applause.

Scott said he believes our system is on the cusp of change and the backlash to testing is reaching a boiling point. He talked about Senate Bill 1557, which will create the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium and give some districts the chance to design a new assessment system that is a more accurate portrayal of what's going on in the classroom, and measures the skills important for a 21st Century education. The bill is the result of work by TASA's Visioning Network, which this week launched Mission: School Transformation as the work moves from vision to mission.

The goal of the mission: Student-center schools, future-ready students. Hundreds of conference attendees are sporting bright buttons with that message.

Scott said if he's looking a little under-rested and under-fed these days, it's because he's been in "fight mode" for four and a half years, so much so that the thought of resigning crosses his mind.

"And then Arne Duncan says he feels sorry for the children in the state of Texas...and then the Irish in me comes out," Scott told the crowd. "And I say not just 'No' but 'Hell, No, I'm gonna fight.'"

The commissioner also called out Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business, who publicly criticized Scott last week saying that TEA has been "derelict" in not issuing uniform grading guidelines for the new accountability system. He also said school districts are "gaming the system" and that students will follow by "gaming the system." Scott fired back with a news release that said that power rests with local school boards.

In the end, Scott said, he stays because he's fighting for the children of Texas.

"We've got to keep climbing and we've got to keep fighting," he said. The crowd gave him a standing ovation.

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FLORENCE SHAPIRO
Texas State Senator
District 8

COMMITTEES:
Education, Chair
Finance
Administration
Transportation and
Homeland Security

President Pro Tempore
2005

February 13, 2012

Robert Scott
Commissioner of Education
1701 N. Congress Ave.
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioner Scott:

Recognizing the on-going concern in the school community regarding the impact of end-of-course assessments on current ninth grade students, this letter clarifies our legislative intent as the authors of SB 1031 (80R) and the sponsor of HB 3 (81R). SB 1031 amended Section 39.023(c) of the Texas Education Code to require that an end-of-course assessment be counted as 15% of a student's final grade in a course and HB 3 established a transition plan. We understand that you have been asked to grant a waiver of the 15% provision for the 2011-2012 school year. While we agree that the provisions of Chapter 39 may not be waived under your general waiver authority, we believe that you have authority by virtue of the transition plan authorized under Section 39.025(f) to defer the requirement that an end-of-course assessment count as 15% of a final grade until the 2012-2013 school year to coincide with full implementation of the testing and accountability changes.

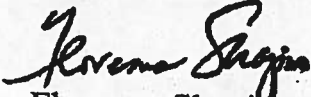
We wish to be clear that we do not support any change in the requirement that end-of-course assessments be completed as part of high school graduation requirements. A waiver of that graduation requirement is explicitly prohibited within the waiver statute itself. However, the application of an end-of-course assessment to a final grade can be deferred to allow the new testing system to be introduced and aligned with an accountability system based on those new outcomes.

We strongly support the transition to end-of-course assessments as crucial to enhancing the college readiness of our students. We support the waiver of the course grade requirement solely as a transition to the new testing and

accountability system, for which your office was given additional authority to deal with unforeseen consequences in the legislation.


Thank you for your attention to the matter and your dedication to the public schools and schoolchildren of our state.

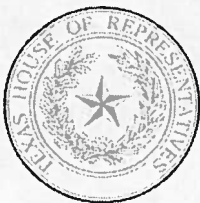
Very truly yours,


Florence Shapiro
Senator


Royce West
Senator


Kel Seliger
Senator


Dan Patrick
Senator



COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

P.O. Box 2910

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Rob Eissler
Chairman

Scott Hochberg
Vice Chairman

February 17, 2012

Commissioner Robert Scott
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioner Scott:

During the 2011 legislative session, the Texas House of Representatives went on record opposing the overemphasis of standardized testing in our public schools. Opposing excessive testing is not a retreat on school accountability and rigorous standards in the classroom. We firmly believe that a student who graduates with a Texas diploma must be ready with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully pursue a college degree or enter the workforce.

For the 2011-2012 school year, districts will not receive an accountability rating as we transition into the new system, but unfortunately our students are being held accountable for all provisions immediately. This is not fair or good policy.

Current law requires that an end-of-course assessment be counted as 15% of a student's final grade in a course. We would like to formally request that you defer the 15% provision for the 2011-2012 school year. While we agree that the provisions of Chapter 39 may not be waived under your general waiver authority, we believe that you have authority, by virtue of the transition plan authorized under Section 39.025(f), to defer the requirement that an end-of-course assessment count as 15% of a final grade until the 2012-2013 school year to coincide with full implementation of the testing and accountability changes.

We strongly believe this action is in the best interest of our ninth grade students. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Members

Alma Allen • Jimmie Don Aycocock • Harold Dutton • Ryan Guillen • Dan Huberty • Mark Shelton • Todd Smith • Mark Strama • Randy Weber

Excerpts from Articles on STAAR

Houston Chronicle

Let's make new exams fair for students and schools

By Karen Peck, Jeanmarie Stevenson and Susan Kellner – February 2, 2012

The STAAR tests are brand new and have never been reviewed by districts, teachers or parents. The Texas Education Agency, which is not writing the tests but is instead purchasing them at significant cost, has only released a limited number of sample questions, even though the tests are being administered this spring.

Undoubtedly, the requirement that students must pass 12 EOC exams in order to graduate gives students a genuine incentive to take the test seriously. So then why would it also be necessary for the test score to count for 15 percent of a student's final grade? This is the first time in Texas history that a standardized state test is counting towards a student's final class grade and toward their GPA. Even apart from the tremendous time, expense and logistical difficulties for our school districts to administer these tests, the fact remains that these accountability programs are at heart intended to ensure school accountability, not affect student GPAs.

We applaud state Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, the chairman of the House Public Education Committee, and members of the Texas House for their attempts to redress these issues last session in H.B. 500, which would have removed the 15 percent grade requirement. Although this bill overwhelmingly passed in the House, state Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, opposed the changes and held the bill in committee, so the Senate never had the opportunity to vote on it.

Moreover, the new accountability assessment is unfair to students, as it is untested and has no independent quality assurance behind it. We urge Texas lawmakers and the TEA to agree that the scores from these tests should not count toward student grades and GPAs until the Legislature can meet again in 2013 to address these issues.

Kellner is a member of the board of the Spring Branch ISD and Peck and Stevenson are parents of children in Spring Branch schools.

Cedar Park Citizen

School district says new end-of-course test will not affect grade point average

Friday, February 3, 2012 – Heather Bonham

Details of how the incoming new STAAR state assessment test will impact high school students topped the topics discussed by the Leander school district board of trustees' Thursday meeting, with Superintendent Bret Champion saying that the end of course grade will not be included in a student's grade point average.

In accordance with House Bill 3 passed in 2009, school districts are required to include the grade of a student's end of course, or EOC, exam in the final class grade. However, Champion said, the state left it up to individual districts to decide how to apply that 15 percent requirement to the final grade.

So the Leander school district, at its allowed discretion, decided to apply the 15 percent as part of the final grade, but not on a student's GPA or overall class standing.

Director of Secondary Curriculum Todd Washburn said the district's choice was made with the students' interest in mind.

"This is the best for our kids in the given circumstances," he said.

statesman.com

Parents, officials decry STAAR grading requirements

COMPILED FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Published: 10:41p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, 2012

Parents and community officials are expressing alarm about new, more-rigorous standardized testing for Texas school children. Many are complaining about a provision allowing test results to represent up to 15 percent of grades for high school students.

CCISD STUDENTS TO TRANSITION
TO NEW STAAR TESTS
WWW.YOURHOUSTONNEWS.COM
By MARY ALYS CHERRY
Posted: Tuesday, February 7, 2012 8:58 am

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Texas School Chief: Testing Has Gone Too Far

By Morgan Smith

1/31/2012

Texas Education Agency Commissioner Robert Scott said today that the state testing system has become a "perversion of its original intent" and that he was looking forward to "reeling it back in." At the Texas Association of School Administrators' annual midwinter conference, Scott said that he believed testing was "good for some things," but that in Texas it has gone too far. He said that he was frustrated with what he saw as his "complicitness" in the bureaucracy that testing and accountability systems have thrust on schools.

Uncertainty around the implementation of STAAR – and whether students and teachers will be able to meet the new requirements with reduced resources – has caused deep anxiety around the state.

Scott said today that if he had the authority – which he said he doesn't – he would waive the 15-percent requirement in the first year as students adjust to the test. Scott also predicted that there would be a "backlash" against standardized testing during the next legislative session. But he said that the new tests, which are course-based rather than subject-based, would be better for students in the long run and that the transition provided a chance to create a new accountability system that accounts for "what happens on every single day in the life of a school besides testing day."

"We have a huge opportunity to move kids farther and better than we ever thought possible," Scott said. "And I do not want to blow that opportunity."

Walking the Halls

February 7, 2012 - By: Dr. Jon Whittemore, Jasper ISD Superintendent

Now testing will be tied to a course title... Algebra 1, Chemistry 1, World History, etc... more specific... less generic. To make the stakes on these EOC tests even higher, the Legislature has determined that the EOC's should count 15% of a student's grade in that course. There are several problems that arise from this Legislative dictate: (#1) Texas schools and their elected Boards are supposed to have local control over the operation and management of their particular districts. Yet, we are being told by officials in Austin how to calculate our students' grade point average...ie. "...count the EOC's 15%." (#2) Districts have never seen the new EOC tests. We don't know how the test will measure performance (ie. Does it really show what the students learned and to what degree?) or even how scores will look. (#3) There is no consensus standard for converting the EOC test performance into a "grade" that can factored into a student's overall grade point average (GPA). Will the EOC results be on a 100 point scale, a 1-4 scale, a pass-fail designation, or what? (#4) There is a question about whether to count the 15% EOC weight when figuring class rank. We need to remember that 15% is a significant weight to assign an assessment that our teachers have never seen and are not sure how to prepare for. The law indicates that 15% should be factored into the course grade... but college entrance applications often ask what the class rank for an individual is (e.g. "number_15_ out of _147_ graduation in that class). (#5) How does the 15% EOC weight affect English Language Learners who may struggle with English and/or learners with other educational challenges (dyslexia, 504 considerations, special education, etc.)? (#6) How does the 15% EOC count for GPA and class rank? (#7) How does the EOC affect UIL eligibility and participation? Can a student pass his course but fail his EOC and still compete? What about the other way around... fail the course but pass the EOC? These questions - and many more - will have to be answered in the weeks to come.

TimesRecordNews

Wichita Falls, Texas

New STAAR test results are less straight forward

By Ann Work - Monday, February 6, 2012

During the era of TAKS testing, the answer to the question, "Did my child pass or fail the state assessment?" was straightforward. But as schools begin giving the state's new End of Course STAAR tests to ninth graders in March, the answer to that question will be unclear and confusing to many parents, according to several Wichita Falls Independent School District administrators who have been schooled in the intricacies - and peculiarities - of the new tests.

Brace yourself, they warn, because STAAR testing is going to be complicated.

In fact, the eccentricities of this new testing program, particularly at the ninth-grade level in the End of Course tests, are so extreme that WFISD curriculum and testing specialists Debby Patterson and Denise Williams said Thursday that parents must familiarize themselves early with this new breed of testing, or their children will suffer.

Ninth graders will be given the first new End of Course (EOC) assessments.

Students in grades 10, 11, and 12 will finish out their high school career on the previous generation of TAKS tests, leaving ninth graders - and their parents - to confront the state's new rules on EOC tests.

The state has not yet revealed - even though the first EOC tests begin next month - what the standards are for passing or failing.

However, they do know this: Standards for this year's freshman will be different than for next year's freshmen - a quirk that high school counselors must track, Williams said. She also said, the most complicated detail in EOC testing is the required cumulative score that a child must achieve in each subject area to graduate

Another peculiarity: A student's score on the EOC assessment will count 15 percent toward the student's final grade in that course, but late release of test results may complicate grading.

Counselors will be required to track all the rules for all the students, a mammoth task, Peterson and Williams agree.

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

STAAR Faces Questioning From Lawmakers

By Ben Philpott
1/24/2012

The new test is called STAAR, which stands for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Questions mainly centered on the end-of-course exams that ninth-grade students will take in May. Former state Rep. Jim Dunnam has one of those ninth graders at home. He came to the committee hearing because his daughter received a first-semester report card with no GPA and no semester grades for some of her classes.

"When I got it, I sort of scratched my head and didn't think too much of it," Dunnam said. "And then ultimately somebody reminded me that I voted for House Bill 3. That made 15 percent of her GPA dependent on a test she's going to take in May, that the school will score sometime in June. And then we'll find out what she made last semester, next fall."

He said the test will not affect students' GPAs until lawmakers think the system is ready to face the state's accountability system. STAAR will not count toward schools' or school districts' state rankings until 2013.

But that was just one issue.

Some also want to know if teachers would be ready, how much end-of-course exam would count toward a student's final grade, and how schools would pay for remediation when a student doesn't pass the test.

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

In Texas, a Backlash Against Student Testing
By Morgan Smith - 2/6/12

STAAR Testing Implementation 2011-2012

