



87th Legislative Session

Texas PTA Legislative Priority

STATE ASSESSMENT

Advocate for a reduced emphasis on state-mandated testing that penalizes the student rather than guide instruction, and identify learning problems.

BACKGROUND

At the start of the 86th Texas Legislature, one of the chief complaints about the state's student assessment system, STAAR, centered on the issue of "readability" – whether STAAR passages are written at a level higher than the appropriate reading level for students in that grade.

The legislature responded to this concern by including provisions in House Bill 3 that required the Commissioner of Education to study grades 3-8 STAAR exams used in 2018-2019 and in 2019-2020 to: examine whether the assessments are written at an appropriate reading level; whether they only include content aligned with curriculum standards for that or earlier grades; and whether they only include passages written at the reading level or below for the grade level taking the assessment.

TEA contracted with the University of Texas at Austin to conduct the study. The [report on 2018-19 STAAR tests](#) was released in early December 2019. It found that the vast majority of passages in that year's reading and writing exams were within or below the test's grade level, and that most questions aligned with what the state expects students to learn in each subject.

- Texas PTA believes the purpose of testing should be to provide relevant feedback to teachers, parents, and students about students' acquisition of skills.
- State-mandated test results should be just one measure of student progress, not the only measure.
- Texas PTA is concerned about the emphasis on state-mandated tests to evaluate schools and school districts and to make determinations about promotion of individual students.
- Despite reductions in the number of tests administered in high school, the number of tests administered in grades 3-8 remains high. Benchmark testing adds to the number of hours spent on testing and preparation for testing.
- Texas PTA supports reducing the number of state-mandated tests to those required by federal law.
 - Federal law requires that each child be tested every year in grades 3-8 in reading and math and twice in science. Texas exceeds that number with two additional writing tests and one additional social studies test.
 - In high school, federal law requires students to be tested once in three subjects: reading, math, and science. Texas exceeds that with an additional history and English test and two incorporated writing tests.
- Texas PTA opposes tying student promotion decisions to a score on one state-mandated test.
- Texas PTA supports removing language in law that requires an end to the Individual Graduation Committee system on September 1, 2023, so that, in certain narrow circumstances, students can continue to prove the acquisition of important skills by means other than a state test.

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