

# Public Testimony

By

Dr. Rosie C. Sorrells

Before the

Senate Committee on Public Education

Senate Bill 1016

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**To:** The Committee Chair- Honorable Florence Shapiro and the Honorable members of the Senate Committee on Public Education, I am Rosie Collins Sorrells, a retired educator with over 40 years experience in the field of education. I have worked as a classroom teacher and administrator. As an administrator, I was the Director of ECE/Prek-3.

After retiring from Dallas ISD in 1993, I was elected to serve on the Texas State Board of Education. I served on the SBOE for two terms, representing citizens in District 13 (Dallas and Tarrant Counties). I retired from the SBOE in 2002.

I am indeed honored to testify before you and I wish to thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak on **Senate Bill 1016 relevant to providing a method for assessing the annual improvement in achievement of public school students.** My testimony here today will accomplish the following three goals: (1) review an identified problem; (2) make recommendations for solving the problem and (3) highlight benefits of the recommendations.

## I. **Problem:**

The current TAKS reporting system reflects student achievement and addresses whether or not a student is performing on grade level, **but does not contain any measurement of the academic growth that a student has made from one school year to the next.** Measuring and reporting growth rate **for all students** is an important indication of a school's performance and is **especially important to schools serving a high percentage of at-risk students, who may come to school significantly below grade level.**

In a school that focuses on an at-risk population, students often make significant progress from one year to the next, even if their grade level TAKS scores are low. Student growth is a critical factor when considering that a large number of students enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade performing **2 to 4 years below grade level.** In some alternative or charter schools, for example, **98%** of the students enter with **deficient reading levels.** **an element that will affect their performance on grade**

## II. Recommendations:

- A. Include a student growth indicator in the school accountability system. Include a provision to ensure that any school serving a high percentage of at-risk students and reports sufficient academic growth among the student will not receive an unacceptable rating under the state's accountability system.
- B. Approve a list of pre/post reading assessments that could be used by schools on a voluntary basis.

## 111. Benefits:

- A. Allows schools serving a high percentage of at-risk students to more accurately report the results of their efforts by established State approved indicators that reflect individual student growth. This could be accomplished at minimal cost to the State and is compatible with NCLB.
- B. Accelerates instruction for those entering the system functioning below grade level.
- C. Improves current system by providing a more relevant report for all students.
- D. Eliminates necessity of a separate Alternative Accountability System.
- E. Shows that teachers in schools that are serving a high percentage of at-risk students do actually improve student achievement. In fact, students in these schools may achieve more than one year of growth for one year of instruction, even when rated low performing.
- F. Allows a teacher to focus on individual student needs, thereby benefiting all Texas students.
- G. Shows growth over time from a student's starting point.
- H. Provides schools with diagnostic information about rate of learning in order to target assistance to students, teacher and/or the curriculum.

If a growth rate indicator is not included in our accountability system, we will continue to leave a large number of children behind, especially those identified as at-risk, minority or in alternative or charter schools and were to be protected by NCLB.

I have had the privilege of discussing this issue with a number of individual including SBOE Members; TEA & University Officials; School Board Members and administrators (Dallas, Carrollton-FB; Lancaster, Ft. Worth & Texans CAN! Charter Schools). I know I speak for each of them when I **thank** you, The Senate Committee on Public Education, for your dedication and commitment to excellence in education for all children in Texas.