

**Select Committee on Public School Accountability**  
Testimony by Missy Bender, Plano ISD Trustee  
On Monday, April 14, 2008

Chairmen Shapiro and Eissler and members of the Committee, my name is Missy Bender. I am honored to serve as a Trustee in the Plano Independent School District, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective with you regarding our state's accountability system.

This afternoon I will describe its impact on my district and on me, the benefits and unintended consequences of the current system, and recommendations for improvement.

**IMPACT**

My community holds the school board accountable for the quality of its schools, but it uses the state's accountability rating as the hallmark indicator of our ability to provide a quality education. Intended or not, the single label rating has nearly become the exclusive measure of educational quality. The trouble is that my community's expectation of quality and the way that the state measures quality are not the same, and the community does not realize that.

The impact of this upon my district is that we have chosen to increase our community's understanding of our district's results beyond the accountability rating in two ways.

1. We produce an Annual Report that describes the successes across the district, and we mail it to every enrolled household.
2. We have changed the playing field by designing our own accountability system that holds us accountable to a fairer representation of educational excellence - a student's growth. This is a relatively new area of accountability, so we spent the last few years researching various methodologies and have constructed a system that we believe reflects our community's expectation of an excellent education and measures our ability to provide that. Soon we will be able to incorporate our new growth measures into this Annual Report.

The current accountability system impacts me personally as a school board member because I spend a large portion of my personal time communicating the messages contained within our Annual Report across the community in order to demonstrate a more complete picture of the real academic success that is occurring beyond the accountability rating. The community

seems to think that the rating label is the only measure of consequence, so it feels like I'm swimming upstream on this front.

### **BENEFITS AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

Since its inception, we have experienced benefits and unintended consequences. I will highlight 3 benefits and an associated unintended consequence for each.

<b>BENEFITS</b>	<b>UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES</b>
<p>1. Our state has shifted from a process to a performance oriented approach of monitoring public schools. Therefore, we now have data for the purpose of measurement.</p>	<p>In a performance oriented approach you will get what you measure. Because the current system design uses single-event high stakes tests, educators are pressured to change their behavior accordingly to yield a positive result. A positive result is simply the absence of a negative consequence.</p> <p>This means that districts and teachers definitely feel the pressure to narrow their focus to what is measured in the single-event performance oriented approach. No, the state does not require such narrowing in an overt way, but it is nonetheless implied simply by the tenor of the consequences.</p>
<p>2. The current design has illuminated achievement gaps in subgroup populations, and we have either closed and/or narrowed the gap in every subject for every subgroup from 2003 to 2006. (See Attachment A)</p>	<p>Even though I can see the closing of achievement gaps, the one-dimensional design based upon single event test achievement does not provide me with a robust enough picture of the learning that is occurring within a school, so we have created a growth model that does.</p> <p>If we see measures in this robust model that are demonstrating growth across every subgroup in every subject even though we are not meeting the state minimums, then this is a more accurate representation of success and it may have to take precedence over the state's accountability rating.</p> <p>Now I must struggle with whether and how I can tell my community that we must accept an Academically Acceptable rating as our most achievable rating from the state.</p>

BENEFITS	UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES
3. The accountability system provides information to home buyers and businesses interested in relocating.	<p>A tendency to place undue emphasis and reliance upon an accountability rating label can erroneously influence one's decision to purchase a home or relocate a business.</p> <p>Yet, the current system design makes the task of performing the appropriate level of due diligence to avoid this pitfall too complex.</p>

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I perceive that we have reached our saturation point with the design of the current system. It has served its original purpose of illuminating achievement gaps in subgroups that were previously under-represented in college, and it is time to now to reflect and reposition.

*Recommendation 1: Define the desired outcome of a successful accountability system. In my opinion, the current desired outcome is to measure single-event student test scores and assign negative consequences for students, teachers, or schools when a minimum standard is not met. We know this as high-stakes testing. Perhaps a different desired outcome could be to assign growth targets and reward achievement when targets are met, provide support when targets are missed, and state intervention as a last resort.*

*Recommendation 2: Align the design to the desired outcome. If you agree with a new definition of success then replace the current one-dimensional design with a multi-faceted view of student success. A multi-dimensional view of student success could start with a measure of a student's Ability using a measure like CogAT, incorporate a measure of Adaptive Achievement like the Measures of Academic Progress (known as MAP), and complete it with a measure of Performance Achievement like TAKS. Track each student's growth and subgroup growth within a year and then follow that student and the subgroup year-to-year.*

*Recommendation 3: Create dual functionality by adding classroom relevance to the accountability system design. A growth model requires snapshot information for every student during the year. Make this information available to classroom teachers so that they can have more information to identify a need for additional challenge and diagnose a demonstrated*

Administration Building 2700 W. 15th Street Plano, Texas 75075-7543 (469)752-8100 [www.pisd.edu](http://www.pisd.edu)

An Equal Opportunity Employer 