



Texas Association of School Boards  
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*Serving Texas Schools Since 1949*

**Testimony before the Select Joint Legislative Committee on Public  
School Accountability**  
Monday, June 16, 2008

Senator Shapiro, Representative Eissler and Members of the  
Committee,

I am Jackie Lain and I'm testifying on behalf of the Texas Association of  
School Boards.

Texas school board members support a rigorous accountability system.  
Most school board members are business people who depend on data  
for making daily decisions. Thus, they need and value the  
disaggregated data the current accountability provides. Additionally,  
they ran for the school board to help improve their schools, and they  
recognize that high expectations propel students, schools and districts  
to continuously higher achievement.

But, school board members have learned that despite "high  
expectations for all students," the reality is that not all students and not  
all schools are going to progress at the same pace; nor are they going to  
reach the same performance levels.

For these reasons, we ask you to revise the current state accountability  
system to:

- (1) Incentivize progress by basing accountability ratings primarily on  
the achievement of a minimum annual rate of growth;
- (2) Establish performance standards that are rigorous, yet realistic  
and respectful.

- a. Any school board member will tell you that not all students will choose to go to college. Our accountability system must recognize that reality and respect college and non-college career paths equally.
- b. The accountability system must allow districts flexibility to offer the courses students need either:
  - i. to pass state licensing/certification exams for the types of professions that are in demand in their communities, OR
  - ii. to enter community college prepared to succeed during their freshmen year without the need for remediation.
- c. Our accountability system should establish an annual floor for performance, not the ceiling. Our standards should be rigorous but realistically attainable by the majority of our students, and annual increases in rigor should be calibrated with those two goals in mind.

(3) Measure district and campus performance equitably, so that large, diverse districts are not disadvantaged;

(4) Minimize the number of times a single student's performance is counted in the accountability system; counting a single student in multiple subgroups distorts the value of the rating as a measure of the schools/district's true performance;

(5) Maintain the report-report-count implementation stages so that we can identify and fix systemic flaws before holding students, campuses and districts accountable;

(6) Maintain the exceptions and “required improvement” provisions with the current safeguards to prevent abuse

And last, but certainly not least,

(7) Align the state accountability system with NCLB requirements as closely as possible so that the ratings under both systems are consistent.

a. The school board members who have testified before this committee have consistently expressed frustration at having to explain to their communities the relevance of conflicting state and federal accountability ratings.

b. Aligning the state accountability system will likely involve a change in the number of student groups analyzed, the indicators considered and the sanctions imposed.

c. We realize the difficulty of this task, given that the uncertain direction of the NCLB reauthorization process and we ask you to consider an appropriate timeline for implementing changes in the state system.

Thank you for your time and attention. I’m happy to answer any questions?