

Chapter 1 – Introduction

About this Manual

The *2017 Accountability Manual* is a technical guide that explains how the Texas Education Agency (TEA) uses the accountability system to evaluate the academic performance of Texas public schools. The manual describes the accountability system and explains how information from different sources is used to calculate and assign accountability ratings and award distinction designations.

History of the Accountability System

In 1993, the Texas Legislature mandated the creation of a public school accountability system to evaluate and rate school districts and campuses. A viable and effective accountability system was possible because the necessary infrastructure was already in place: a student-level data collection system, a state-mandated curriculum, and a statewide assessment program tied to the curriculum. This first accountability system remained in use until the 2001–02 school year.

The second accountability system included the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and assigned ratings for the first time in fall 2004. TAKS included additional subjects and grades, which significantly increased system rigor. Also, districts and campuses were required to meet criteria on up to 25 separate assessment measures and up to 10 dropout and completion measures. The last year for accountability ratings based on the TAKS was 2011.

House Bill (HB) 3, passed by Texas legislature in 2009, redesigned the state assessment and accountability systems to focus on postsecondary readiness for all Texas public school students. Because of the transition to the current assessment program, state accountability ratings were not issued in 2012. TEA worked throughout 2012 with technical and policy advisory committees to develop the current accountability system based on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) program. This accountability system uses a performance index framework to combine a broad range of indicators into a comprehensive measure of district and campus performance. The 2012–13 school year was the first year ratings were assigned based on STAAR results.

With the passage of HB 5 in 2013, the legislature added additional indicators of postsecondary readiness. The 2014 ratings included college-ready graduates, a new postsecondary readiness measure. The 2015 accountability system replaced college-ready graduates with an expanded postsecondary readiness measure that added students who earn credit for at least two advanced/dual-credit courses or enroll in a coherent sequence of career and technical education (CTE) courses.

Goals of the Texas Accountability System

Texas will be among the top ten states in postsecondary readiness by 2020 by accomplishing the following:

- Improving student achievement at all levels in the core subjects of the state curriculum
- Ensuring the progress of all students toward achieving advanced academic performance
- Closing advanced academic performance level gaps among student groups
- Rewarding excellence based on other indicators in addition to state assessment results

Guiding Principles

Student Performance

- The accountability system is first and foremost designed to improve student performance.
- The system focuses on preparing all students for success after high school.

System Safeguards

- The accountability system uses safeguards to minimize unintended consequences.

Recognition of Diversity

- The accountability system is fair and addresses the diversity of student populations and educational settings.

Public Participation and Accessibility

- The accountability system's development and implementation are informed by advice from Texas educators and the public.
- The system is understandable and provides performance results that are relevant, meaningful, and easily accessible.

Coordination

- The accountability system is part of an overall coordinated strategy for state and federal ratings, reporting, monitoring, and interventions.

Statutory Compliance

- The accountability system is designed to comply with statutory requirements.

Local Responsibility

- Districts are responsible for submitting accurate data upon which ratings are based.
- The system relies on local school districts to develop and implement local accountability systems that complement the state system.

Distinction Designations

- Distinction designations are based on higher levels of student performance rather than more students performing at the satisfactory level.

Accountability Advisory Groups

Educators, school board members, business and community representatives, professional organizations, and legislative representatives from across the state have been instrumental in developing the current accountability system.

Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) includes representatives from school districts and regional education service centers (ESCs). Members made recommendations to address technical issues for 2017 accountability.

Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) includes representatives from legislative offices, school districts, and the business community. Members identified issues critical to the accountability system and reviewed the ATAC recommendations. The APAC either endorsed the ATAC's recommendations or developed its own, which were forwarded to the commissioner. The commissioner considered all proposals and made final decisions on February 14, 2017, that are reflected in this manual.

See "Appendix A – Acknowledgments" for more information on advisory groups. The accountability development proposals and supporting materials that were reviewed and discussed at each advisory group meeting are available online at <http://tea.texas.gov/2017AccountabilityDevelopment/>.

Overview of the 2017 Accountability System

State Accountability Ratings

The state accountability system assigns one of three academic ratings to each district and campus: *Met Standard*, *Met Alternative Standard*, or *Improvement Required*. These ratings are based on a framework of four indices that combine a range of indicators into a comprehensive measure of performance.

The performance index framework combines results from STAAR assessments, graduation rates, rates of students completing the various graduation plans, and other indicators. The performance indices are as follows:

Index 1: Student Achievement provides a snapshot of performance across subjects.

Index 2: Student Progress measures year-to-year student progress.

Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps emphasizes the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the two lowest-performing racial/ethnic student groups.

Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness emphasizes the importance of earning a high school diploma that provides students with the foundation necessary for success in college, job training programs, the workforce, or the military.

Distinction Designations

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of *Met Standard* are eligible to earn distinction designations. Distinction designations are available for achievement in several different areas and awarded to campuses based on performance relative to a group of campuses of similar type, size, grade span, and student demographics. The distinction designation indicators are separate from those used to evaluate accountability ratings.

Both districts and campuses are eligible to earn a distinction designation in postsecondary readiness.

The following chart outlines the accountability ratings and distinction designations assigned in 2017.

Ratings (Districts and Campuses)	Distinction Designations	
	Districts	Campuses
<i>Met Standard</i>	Postsecondary Readiness	Academic Achievement: ELA/Reading Academic Achievement: Mathematics Academic Achievement: Science Academic Achievement: Social Studies Top 25%: Student Progress Top 25%: Closing Performance Gaps Postsecondary Readiness
<i>Met Alternative Standard</i> This rating is assigned to charter operators and alternative education campuses (AECs) evaluated under alternative education accountability (AEA) provisions.	N/A	N/A
<i>Improvement Required</i>	N/A	N/A

System Safeguards

System safeguards have been established to meet state accountability-related intervention requirements. Performance results are disaggregated to show the performance of each student subgroup for each of the indicators. The purpose of the system safeguard report is to ensure that—in the aggregated district or campus reports—substandard performance in one or more areas or by one or more student groups is not disguised by higher performance in other areas or by other student groups. See “Chapter 8 – System Safeguards and Other Federal Requirements” for detailed information about system safeguards in 2017.

The following indicators are included in the system safeguard report:

- Performance Rates (*district and campus*) by subject – reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies
- Participation Rates (*district and campus*) by subject – reading and mathematics
- Federal Graduation Rates (*district and campus*)
- Federal Limits on Alternative Assessments (*district only*)

Results for the following student groups are included in system safeguard reports:

- All students
- Racial/ethnic student groups – African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, white, and two or more races
- Economically disadvantaged
- Students with disabilities
- English language learners (ELLs)

Comparing 2016 Accountability to 2017 Accountability

The ratings criterion for 2017 is unchanged from 2016. In order to receive a *Met Standard* or *Met Alternative Standard* rating, districts and campuses must meet the performance index target on the following indices, if they have performance data for evaluation:

Index 1 **OR** Index 2 **AND** Index 3 **AND** Index 4

The performance index targets for 2017 are unchanged from 2016. Please see “Chapter 2 – Ratings Criteria and Index Targets” for more information about the index targets.

The only substantive changes made to the accountability system in 2017 were to the calculations used to award distinction designations and the use of assessment results in indices. The changes to the distinction designations are described below. The changes to the assessments used are shown in the table on the following page.

Distinction Designations

Campus Comparison Groups In 2017, two new variables were added to the calculation that determines campus comparison groups: the percentage of students served by special education and the percentage of students enrolled in an early college high school program.

District Distinction Designations The percentage of a district’s campuses that must have postsecondary indicators in the top quartile in order for the district to earn this distinction was reduced from 70 to 55.

Spring 2016	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4	Summer and Fall 2016	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4	Spring 2017	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4
STAAR Grades 3–8 (all subjects)*	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR Grades 3–8 (all subjects)*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	STAAR Grades 3–8 (all subjects*, with and without accommodations)	✓	✓	✓	✓
STAAR EOC (5 tests)	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR EOC (5 tests)	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR EOC (5 tests, with and without accommodations)	✓	✓	✓	✓
STAAR EOC including substitute assessments	✓	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	✓	STAAR EOC including substitute assessments	✓	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	✓	STAAR EOC including substitute assessments	✓	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	✓
STAAR L (evaluated in the ELL progress measure)	✓	✓	X (2)	X (2)	STAAR L EOC (evaluated in the ELL progress measure)**	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR L (evaluated in the ELL progress measure)**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
STAAR A	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR A EOC**	✓	✓	✓	✓	STAAR A**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
STAAR Alternate 2	✓	✓	✓	X	STAAR Alternate 2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	STAAR Alternate 2	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓: Used in accountability X: Available but not used in accountability n/a: Not available

- (1) Substitute assessments apply to the Meets Grade Level performance standard only and progress measures are not calculated.
- (2) ELL students in their first four years in U.S. schools who took STAAR L were excluded from Index 3 and Index 4.

*Index 2 is evaluated using ELA/reading and mathematics only.

**Beginning with the spring 2017 administration, STAAR L and STAAR A exams will be replaced with online versions of STAAR with accommodations.