



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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TSTA: Education commissioner drops test scores as requirement for teacher evaluations

The Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) announced today that Education Commissioner Mike Morath has agreed to drop a requirement that at least 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation be based on value added measures (VAM) such as standardized test scores. TSTA sued the commissioner last year for including that provision in the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS), the new state-recommended teacher evaluation system.

In a negotiated settlement of the lawsuit, the amended evaluation system will allow individual school districts to determine how to measure the progress of a teacher's students by "one or more student growth measures" of their own choosing.

TSTA contended in its suit that state law — Section 21.351 of the Texas Education Code — clearly requires a teacher appraisal system adopted by the commissioner to be based on "observable, job-related behavior." Section 21.352 of the Texas Education Code sets the same "observable, job-related behavior" requirement for school districts that choose to create their own appraisal systems.

But a VAM model is not "observable," and evaluation standards based on VAM models often are incomprehensible to the teachers being evaluated. A VAM model typically is based on a complicated formula that compares actual student test scores to the scores predicted by a mathematical target based on the test scores of similar student populations.

The American Statistical Association has discredited VAM models as ineffective measurements of teacher performance.

"We are happy that Commissioner Morath has agreed to remove a provision from his evaluation system that not only has been discredited by experts but also violated state law," TSTA President Noel Candelaria said. "You can't use a confusing, test-based formula to

accurately or fairly measure the work that teachers do for their students every day in the classroom or how that work will affect a child's future."

"Educators appreciate and deserve a fair, easily understood evaluation system that helps them do an even better job for their students," Candelaria added. "Tying teacher evaluations to test scores only raises the stakes on STAAR testing, unnecessarily raising the stress level of children and teachers alike and angering parents."

A bipartisan poll commissioned by TSTA earlier this year showed that 66 percent of Texas voters — and 73 percent of Republican Primary voters — want to do away with standardized testing.

The Texas American Federation of Teachers, the Texas Classroom Teachers Association and the Association of Texas Professional Educators, which had filed separate legal proceedings against the commissioner over TTESS, also participated in the settlement.