



# We must test less, invest more in our classrooms

Although STAAR scores will not count toward student promotions this year, the Texas Education Agency still insists on administering the test — at a huge cost — in an attempt to quantify student growth or learning loss during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the STAAR test has proven time and again that it does not provide a meaningful assessment of student learning. It is expensive, stressful, time consuming and has virtually meaningless diagnostic value. This money should be spent on classroom resources that actually support student growth and achievement.

For more than 20 years, various academic studies have determined tests such as STAAR are seriously flawed. One found that the relation between test scores and quality of instruction can be as low as 3 percent. The American Academy of Sciences concluded that such scores are not a valid measure of teacher performance. And a 2019 study found that models purporting to measure a teacher's impact on students' standardized test scores were only a bit more trustworthy than using the same models to determine an educator's impact on students' heights.

Tests can be meaningful tools to improve instruction and student learning, but STAAR doesn't do this. It simply measures a student's ability to pass a STAAR test. It is not helping students learn. It is forcing talented educators to abandon meaningful lesson plans to teach to the test. Our teachers and students can no longer afford to waste valuable instruction time — and our tax dollars — on the misguided STAAR exercise.

TSTA also urges the Legislature to permanently abolish the A-F district and school accountability system, which is largely based on STAAR scores. Districts and schools in low-income communities receive a disproportionate amount of the Ds and Fs under this system because low-income students receive a disproportionate amount of STAAR failing grades. These students and their schools need more resources, not the stigma a D or an F can bring.

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