



TSTA SUPPORTS HB 3346

*The following are the Texas State Teachers Association's
comments in support of House Bill 3346.*

The Texas State Teachers Association is in full support of Representative Meza's House Bill (HB) 3346. Educators have long understood that the true measure of school quality includes much more than the results of standardized test scores. HB 3346 is an overdue recognition of this truth and would serve to move Texas toward a more holistic system of accountability, while continuing to hold schools responsible for academic achievement.

The current reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), permits states to design their own accountability systems. While ESSA requires the plans to meet some minimal parameters, states overall — and relative to previous iterations of ESSA — have much greater flexibility to design accountability systems that take into account multiple indicators of school success.

Under ESSA, states are required to hold schools accountable in five categories: student performance in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics; a second academic metric, such as growth in ELA or mathematics; progress in achieving English language proficiency; high school graduation rates; and at least one measure of school quality or student success. In addition, states are required to disaggregate these indicators by individual subgroups of students, including those from low-income families, those from major racial and ethnic groups, those with disabilities, and English language learners. Beyond these requirements, however, the 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act permits local flexibilities and really underscores the relevance of and need to include indicators other than test scores.

Although federal law is quite flexible about the range of factors that can be included, Texas still relies heavily on factors derived from standardized test scores to grade schools. The Texas plan is also generally lacking in innovative measures that take into consideration the multivariate elements that contribute to school success. Teachers and other education stakeholders have long agreed that the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam counts for too much of the accountability of Texas schools, and this is especially true in our elementary and middle schools where the student achievement domain is determined 100 percent by the results of the STAAR test.

The statewide accountability systems across all 50 states range in sophistication and include a variety of indicators, and many states include measures that they know to be a relevant measure of school quality and student success that are outside the scope of standardized test scores. This includes recognition of innovative programming, culture and climate, and educator credentials. Virginia, for example, credits schools for offering foreign language instruction in elementary school. Georgia recognizes schools, including elementary schools, for serving special needs students in inclusion settings. Virginia, Connecticut and New Jersey all credit schools for arts and physical

fitness programming. Many states credit schools for programming aimed at improving school climate among students, such as conflict mediation, mentoring and positive behavioral interventions and supports. Iowa includes staff retention, and California, among several other states, includes educator culture and advanced certifications and degrees into school accountability factors.

These are but a handful of examples where states have taken advantage of the ESSA flexibilities to more holistically measure schools based on a range of factors that matter in determining student success. The Texas ESSA plan disregards many of the elements that are a truer measure of school quality than standardized test scores, such as programming and school climate. TSTA supports HB 3346 because it would require TEA to include non-test-based indicators of achievement for elementary and middle schools. It is also our hope that in codifying this requirement, Texas will choose to expand other measures of accountability to include school attributes that are much more meaningful than the STAAR.