



# We must test less, invest more in our classrooms

The STAAR test has proven time and again that it does not provide meaningful student assessment. The STAAR is expensive, stressful, time consuming and has virtually meaningless diagnostic value. TSTA believes the millions of tax dollars spent every year on STAAR should be spent to actually support student growth and achievement.

Although federal law is quite flexible about the range of factors that can be used to grade schools, Texas still relies heavily on factors derived from standardized testing. Teachers and other education stakeholders have long agreed that the STAAR exam counts for too much of the accountability of Texas schools. This is especially true in our elementary and middle schools, where the student achievement domain is determined 100 percent by STAAR test results.

Recent changes to the STAAR offer a mixed bag for Texas students. TSTA supports some new features of the STAAR, including open-ended questions, written answers that use text-based evidence and improved accommodations for special populations. But TSTA has concerns about the reliance on a digital infrastructure, including a parent's inability to opt a child out of testing online and the possibility of compromised student privacy. We also are concerned about the potential for an increase in time spent testing.

Teachers are not against testing. Testing can be a meaningful tool to improve instruction and student learning, so long as a test is an accurate reflection of student conceptual understanding or skill development. Tests can provide teachers with information to inform their curricula and provide necessary supports for their students. But by requiring educators to administer a flawed testing instrument, and then placing an unrealistically heavy burden on the results of that instrument, the state is forcing talented educators to abandon meaningful lesson plans and valuable instruction time to teach students how to beat a standardized test. Texas needs skilled workers to succeed in the changing economy, and those skills require more from educators than teaching to a test.

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