

- SUBJECT:** Redesigning school evaluations and adopting A-F campus ratings
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Aycock, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Galindo, Huberty, K. King
4 nays — Allen, Farney, González, VanDeaver
- WITNESSES:** For — HD Chambers, Alief ISD; Randal O’Brien, Goose Creek CISD; Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Kim Alexander, Roscoe Collegiate ISD; Robert Bostic, Stafford Municipal School District; Fred Brown, Texans Can Academy; Kelli Moulton, Texas Association of Community Schools, Hereford ISD; MaryAnn Whiteker, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of School Boards; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Monty Exter, The Association of Texas Professional Educators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Anderson, Arlington ISD Board of Trustees; Julie Cowan, Austin ISD Trustee; Howell Wright, Huntsville ISD; Barbara Frandsen, League of Women Voters of Texas; Dineen Majcher and Theresa Trevino, TAMSA; Jodi Duron, Texas Association of Mid-sized Schools; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Kristi Morrison)
- Against — None
- On — Wanda Bamberg, Aldine ISD, Texas School Alliance; Michael Barnes, Texas Center for Educational Policy; Shannon Housson, Texas Education Agency; Steve Swanson; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Criss Cloudt and Gloria Zyskowski, Texas Education Agency)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 39.053 establishes performance indicators of the quality of learning and student achievement. The indicators form the basis for rating districts and campuses under the accountability system. Sec.

39.054(a) requires the commissioner to assign each district a performance rating of A, B, C, D, or F and each campus a performance rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable, or unacceptable.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2804 would adopt a new system for evaluating school districts and campuses that would include additional performance indicators unrelated to state standardized testing. The bill would establish five domains for measuring achievement. Three of the domains would use State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores to measure student achievement, student progress, and closing achievement gaps. A fourth domain would use non-test measurements of academic attainment and the fifth domain would use locally designed and administered measures of student and community engagement.

The bill also would assign campuses a letter rating of A-F beginning in the 2017-18 school year.

Accountability system. Districts and campuses would be evaluated on three domains related to student achievement on standardized tests, with results aggregated across grade levels by subject area.

First domain. The first domain would include STAAR results for students in grades 3-8 and high school end-of-course exams, as well as the results of tests for certain students of limited English proficiency and those in special education programs.

Second domain. The second domain would include the percentage of students who met standards for annual improvement on STAAR.

Third domain. The third domain would include differences in STAAR annual improvement among students from different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Fourth domain. The fourth domain would include indicators of student achievement unrelated to STAAR. For high schools, measures would include dropout and graduation rates; military enlistment; advanced

placement enrollment; endorsements and distinguished achievement; postsecondary credit; and industry certification. For elementary schools, measures would include student attendance. For middle and junior high schools, measures would include attendance and dropout rates or any additional indicators of student achievement determined by the education commissioner in consultation with educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers.

Fifth domain. The fifth domain would include three locally selected and evaluated programs or categories related to community and student engagement. Each district and campus would develop the criteria it used and would submit that information to the Texas Education Agency. Each district and campus then would rate itself according to those criteria.

A-F ratings. The bill would add campuses to the requirement that districts be assigned a performance rating of A, B, C, D, or F. Ratings would be publicly released on August 15 of each year. The letter grades would correspond to existing ratings in the following manner:

- an A would reflect exemplary performance;
- a B would reflect recognized performance;
- a C would reflect acceptable performance; and
- a D or F would reflect unacceptable performance.

Each district and campus would be assigned an overall performance rating plus a separate letter rating for each domain. A district could not receive an overall or domain rating of A if the district included any campus with a corresponding overall or domain rating of D or F.

For purposes of assigning an overall rating, the commissioner would attribute 55 percent of the performance evaluation to the first, second, and third domains; 35 percent to the fourth domain; and 10 percent to the fifth domain. The commissioner would be required to adopt procedures to ensure that a repeated rating of D or F in one domain would be reflected in the overall district or campus rating and would not be compensated for by a higher rating in another domain.

The bill would make conforming changes and would apply beginning with the 2017-18 school year.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2804 would redesign the school accountability system to lessen the weight of STAAR scores on district and campus ratings. It also would assign letter grades to campuses to increase parental engagement.

Accountability system. Educators and parents have consistently expressed concerns about the emphasis on STAAR scores as the main factor in evaluating schools and districts. State and local communities need to know how students are performing on state assessments, and the bill would ensure that tests account for more than half of a district and campus rating. The bill also would recognize that student academic achievement involves more than test scores, and would consider other valuable measures such as endorsements, college readiness, and military enlistment.

For the first time, a portion of performance ratings would be under local control and independent from the state. This would allow schools and districts to design their own measurements of student and community engagement and self-assess how well they were doing against those measurements.

A-F ratings. The introduction of letter grades to rate campuses, in combination with a new accountability system, would give parents a clearer and fuller picture of exactly how their child's school was performing. Parents might not understand what an "acceptable" designation means but they would understand a C rating. This information could empower parents to demand changes if they were unhappy with a campus rating. Similar to a report card brought home by students, the bill would provide more information to parents, who could see how a school

wa “graded” on each domain.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 2804 would not sufficiently move the school accountability system away from its reliance on a questionable testing system. The use of A-F grades to label campuses could unnecessarily stigmatize schools and neighborhoods.

Accountability system. The bill would take a welcome step toward moving the accountability system away from an overreliance on testing, but STAAR results would continue to dominate the system. The use of test scores should account for no more than half of a campus or district rating.

Some of the new non-testing measures could put certain districts at a disadvantage. For instance, students in some rural schools might not have access to college courses that could allow them to earn postsecondary credit, which is one possible measure of academic attainment.

The new accountability system should include a measure of teacher quality. The addition of this information about teacher qualifications and experience could help hold districts accountable for staffing decisions that could strongly impact student achievement.

A-F ratings. The bill would adopt letter grades to rate campuses under a system that remains largely reliant on high-stakes testing. Labeling a campus as D or F could negatively impact not only the school but the surrounding neighborhood, which in many cases would be a high-poverty community. This could make it more difficult for those schools to attract and keep good teachers. The bill would change the way Texas schools are rated under the guise of reform instead of helping low-performing schools access resources needed to boost student achievement.