



May 27, 2009

Dear Key Communicator:

As the 81<sup>st</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature is nearing closure, legislation for the new accountability system is in its final stages. The accountability system determines how we test students, rate schools, and rate districts. I am a supporter of accountability and there are many positive aspects of the new system. However, one proposed change will require an increase in the number of high-stakes tests our students will take.

Lawmakers know the sentiment of parents and community members is that schools spend too much time preparing for and giving state-mandated tests and that the state is much too reliant on one test (TAKS) to determine a school's and district's rating. In response, last session, the Legislature passed a law eliminating the TAKS test in high school and replacing it with End-of-Course (EOC) exams.

#### **Current Law**

Currently, high school students take two TAKS tests in 9th grade and four TAKS tests in 10th and 11th grades for a total of 10 tests. In addition to meeting the district's passing standards, high school students must pass the 11<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS tests to qualify for graduation. Under the bill passed last session, students will take a total of 12 EOC exams that will count 15% towards their course grade.

#### **Proposed Law**

The Senate's version of the bill currently being considered in Austin would greatly expand the number of state-mandated tests needed to graduate. The proposed change would double the number of tests students are required to pass to graduate (8 exams compared to the current 4). Furthermore, since the tests will be in the form of End-of-Course exams, some students would have to pass tests beginning as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade to qualify for high school graduation.

By contrast, the House of Representatives' version of the bill only requires passage of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade EOC exams in order for a student to graduate. In doing so, the House's version maintains local control over graduation requirements while continuing to provide accountability at the state level.

If you would like to have an impact on this legislation, you should contact the members of the Conference Committee and express your thoughts on the matter. I have included a

list of the names below with contact information. The Conference Committee members will begin work on the final version, and will conclude their efforts within the week.

Sincerely,  
David Anthony, Ed.D.

### School Accountability Conference Committee

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