

2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on January 24, 2017

Meeting Objective

The objective for the second meeting of the 2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) was to make recommendations on targets for the 2017 accountability system, consider adjustments to methodology used to determine campus comparison groups, and continue discussing the implementation of the A–F accountability system.

2017 Accountability System

Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff reminded committee members that 2017 will be the final year of the current index system, and, as such, very few changes are expected to be made.

While the design of the accountability system is expected to remain stable, agency staff explained that changes to the online testing platform will likely affect the composition of Index 3 and Index 4. Specifically, STAAR L and STAAR A are no longer separate test forms from STAAR but rather accommodations that accompany an online STAAR. The Consolidated Accountability File (CAF) prepared by the testing contractor will not distinguish which individualized test accommodations a student taking the online version has received. As a result, students who have linguistic accommodations when taking STAAR will be included in both Index 3 and Index 4. One committee member remarked that districts that have a higher proportion of these testers could be negatively impacted by the inclusion of these tests. Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) representatives reminded members that these testers were initially excluded from Index 3 because it didn't seem reasonable to hold them to the advanced standard. Other members reasoned that it may not be consistent to exclude these students while including STAAR A students.

Additionally, the committee deliberated the inclusion of STAAR Alt 2 in Index 4. TEA staff provided data demonstrating that including these tests at the student standard (Level II Satisfactory Academic Performance Standard) proved to be beneficial for the state as a whole. After reviewing the data, members agreed that the student standard for STAAR Alt 2 indicates that the student is ready to transition to life outside of the classroom, and including as many testers as reasonably possible would align with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

2017 Index Targets

Committee members reviewed the 2017 index targets recommended by the ATAC and weighed the advantages and disadvantages of each option. After deliberation, the committee voted as shown in the following chart:

2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on January 24, 2017

	Option 1	In Favor	Option 2	In Favor
Index 1	Maintain 2016 Target	11	Increase From 2016	2
Index 2	Maintain 2016 Target	8	Fifth Percentile of 2017 Performance	7
Index 3	Maintain 2016 Target	6	Fifth Percentile of 2017 Performance	9
Index 4	Maintain 2016 Target	13	Increase From 2016	2

Committee members who voted for maintaining the 2016 target for Index 2 emphasized the potential impact of providing teachers and administrators with a hard target to strive to meet, rather than an relative target, which is based on the performance of others. In contrast, some members were concerned that if the hard target were set, there could be more campuses rated *Improvement Required*.

Campus Comparison Groups in 2017 Accountability

The committee reviewed campus comparison group modeling data, which highlighted the potential effects of using the percentage of students identified as early college high school students and the percentage of student receiving special education services as additional factors in determining campus comparison groups. One member voiced a concern that the “Early College High School” designation is sometimes more related to branding than reality and should therefore be systematically defined. Members reiterated that these indicators would be in addition to the current indicators used to determine comparison groups and that it would only refine the process. Ultimately, 12 members voted for using the additional indicators and three members voted against refining the process.

Q & A Session with the Commissioner

Commissioner of Education, Mike Morath, began the session by providing a brief overview of the future accountability system and emphasizing the advantages of having a tiered system. One member questioned the use of a gain score model in the progress measure. Commissioner Morath assured members that he is open to considering other student growth models (i.e., a value added model or student growth percentiles) but has found that gain scores are easier for others to understand. Although, he noted that he would like to alter the current model to account for greater differentiation. The commissioner also indicated that the assessment staff and their technical advisory committee will be exploring various questions related to the current progress measure that may inform the decisions on the final Domain II construction.

Another member requested that students who have been with their district for an extended period of time carry a greater weight in the future accountability system. This member conducted an analysis on STAAR performance for those students who were continuously enrolled in their district over multiple year and found that they typically outperformed students who were enrolled in the district for shorter time periods. Commissioner Morath mentioned the possibility of considering an additional subgroup of “continuous enrollees” in the future.

2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on January 24, 2017

Several committee members voiced concerns with the industry certification component of the 2017–18 accountability system, noting that rural campuses and districts are at a significant disadvantage due to the absence of qualified instructors and limited access to these pathways. The commissioner informed the committee that the rural task force is attempting to mitigate these challenges with accessibility to postsecondary courses/pathways.

Domain I Methodology Considerations

The committee reviewed the Domain I methodology, expressing concerns with weighting each performance level equally. The majority of members preferred a greater weighting for the passing standard and less emphasis on the advanced standard, reiterating that the advanced standard is not required by statute. Ultimately, 11 members voted for altering the Domain I methodology, while only four members voted to keep it the same, although no specifics were offered as to what should be altered.

Domain III Methodology Considerations

While members favored the notion of accounting for the impact of poverty on academic achievement, they expressed a desire to also consider the intensity of poverty. Commissioner Morath agreed that this differentiation is significant but reminded members that the data available to the agency is limited to the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch. US Census data could add to our understanding of poverty, but not without student home addresses which TEA does not store or collect. One member suggested that the y-axis of student achievement in Domain III should logically top out at 60 since that is A-level performance in Domain I. Holding schools with a smaller percentage of economically disadvantaged students to a higher standard than that would be inconsistent. Other members suggested using the achievement of all students on STAAR, rather than only the economically disadvantaged students when establishing the cut points for Domain III. TEA staff noted that they had run modeling data using this methodology but that using all students as the independent variable masked poor performance for the economically disadvantaged subgroup in approximately 150 campuses.

Domain IV Methodology Considerations

TEA staff began the discussion by pointing out that Domain IV is the one about which TEA has received the most questions since the release of the December 30 legislative report. Staff recognized that there are details of the chronic absenteeism methodology (i.e., excused absences, unique medical situations, suspensions, and grade level inclusion) that create a need for the indicator to be refined if the construction of Domain IV remains for the 2017–18 accountability system. Members suggested using a climate survey, foreign language course participation, UIL participation, percentage of high school courses taken in middle school, or teacher retention rates as indicators rather than chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle schools. Multiple members expressed a desire to remove elementary schools from Domain IV altogether.

The committee reiterated the need for a minimum-size criterion for the numerator of the annual 7–8 dropout rate, noting that several middle schools received seemingly inaccurate Domain IV grades because one of their students was coded as a dropout. Applying a minimum

2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee Summary of Meeting on January 24, 2017

size criterion to the numerator for this indicator would more accurately reflect Domain IV achievement for the campus as a whole. TEA staff agreed to explore possible remedies moving forward.

Members restated concerns with the industry certification component of the college-and-career-ready graduates indicator, pointing out that 2016–17 graduates will be evaluated in the 2017–18 accountability system, and that these multi-year programs will have little time to develop before being factored into accountability. One member suggested that this indicator be report-only for the first year. Another member requested that in addition to achievement on the TSIA, SAT, and ACT, the PSAT and Aspire be considered for the college-and-career-ready graduates indicator.

Future Plans

Agency staff will share proposed dates for future APAC meetings via email. We will discuss implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act at a future meeting.