

2025 SPECIAL SESSION

FROM

CAPITOL TO CLASSROOM:

>>>>> MAKING AN IMPACT <<<<<<



SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA ITEM:

ELIMINATE STAAR TEST

- ▶ Legislation to eliminate the STAAR test and replace it with effective tools to assess student progress and ensure school district accountability.

Where We Stand on Assessment and Accountability

Texas public schools do so much more than prepare students for a single test on a single day. In addition to delivering high-quality core curriculum, public schools offer high-impact programming such as fine arts, career and technical education, and dual-language instruction. Beyond academics, Texas schools do the vital work of community and family engagement, addressing health and safety issues, and creating an environment where all children can thrive. Texas' current A-F accountability system ignores these indicators of school quality and oversimplifies the important work of school districts and campuses.

Texans deserve an accountability system that increases the transparency of school performance for all valuable services that our public schools provide. At the elementary and middle school levels, 100% of the accountability rating is based on one test on one day. The Texas Legislature can lead the way on assessment and accountability reform by eliminating the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), a **criterion-referenced test**, and replacing it with a **nationally norm-referenced test**, as well as effective tools to assess student progress and ensure school district accountability.

What is the value of a Nationally Norm-Referenced Test?

Nationally norm-referenced growth measures are critical for our Texas students because they compare an individual student's performance to the performance of a large, representative group of students, often at a national level. The goal of a nationally norm-referenced test is to determine where a student stands relative to their peers. By expanding the frame of reference, these assessments offer valuable context beyond what state-specific criterion-referenced tests can provide.

In contrast, a criterion-referenced test measures a student's performance against a set of criteria or standards. The STAAR Test is a criterion-referenced test that measures how well students have learned the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)¹. It is important to note that nationally norm-referenced instruments can be – and often are – designed to align with state curricula.

Nationally Norm-Referenced Tests Versus STAAR, a Criterion-Referenced Test	Nationally Norm-Referenced Test	STAAR, a Criterion-Referenced Test
Measures how well Texas students know TEKS	✓*	✓
Compares an individual student's performance to the performance of a large, representative group of students at a national level	✓	✗
Can be used for assessing student achievement under Senate Bill 2 (SB 2), Texas' new Education Savings Account (voucher) program	✓	✓
Can offer adaptive evaluations to capture each student's unique learning needs, along with real-time growth throughout the school year	✓	✗
Can generate test results within days of completion	✓	✗
Often designed to be completed in under 60 minutes	✓	✗

* Many nationally norm-referenced assessment instruments are aligned to the TEKS



83% OF TEXANS
POLLED THINK
PUBLIC SCHOOLS **SHOULD NOT BE**
GRADED ENTIRELY ON STAAR PERFORMANCE*

69% OF TEXANS
POLLED **DO NOT**
BELIEVE STAAR EFFECTIVELY MEASURES
HOW WELL STUDENTS ARE LEARNING*

* Measure What Matters Report, October 2022

Texas students deserve an assessment and accountability system that offers a broader, more comprehensive approach. Nationally normed-referenced tests empower us to measure student growth over time, providing immediate and reliable feedback that allows teachers to customize instruction in real-time. Tests² like i-Ready, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP, and Renaissance Star are widely trusted for their validity. STAAR, in contrast, is often met with skepticism from parents and educators who question what the scores really mean. And, unlike the STAAR, these trusted assessments free up valuable instructional time

and offer a clearer picture of how our students truly compare, not just within Texas, but across the nation. If such tests are deemed valuable enough for private schools and Education Savings Account students, they are certainly valuable enough for every child in our Texas public school system.

An Opportunity for the Legislature to Align on Assessment and Accountability

The Summer 2025 Special Session will give Texas lawmakers a second opportunity to address their constituents' priorities for the next biennium. At the end of the 89th Session, House Bill 4 (HB 4), which would have replaced the STAAR with a nationally norm-referenced test and added additional measures of school quality to accountability ratings, was voted out of the House with a vote of 143-1. However, it died in conference committee.

The momentum behind HB 4 was unprecedented, placing the idea of STAAR and accountability reform within reach for all Texas lawmakers. While time cut the deliberations on HB 4 short during the 89th Session, this Special Session will give lawmakers another shot to eliminate the STAAR test, reimagine public school accountability, and put students before state politics.

Key Takeaways of Nationally Norm-Referenced Tests:

- Designed for measuring growth
- Enables more intentional and consistent tracking of student progress throughout the year
- Less testing time
- Immediate (or near immediate) results so teachers can adjust instruction in real time to meet student needs

Sources

¹ Source from <https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/staar>.

² Source from <https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/student-assessment-overview/state-approved-group-administered-achievement-tests.pdf>.