MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

THE LATEST ON ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY:

- House Bill 8 (HB 8) passes and creates a new statewide Student Success Tool to launch in 2027-28 to replace the STAAR
- The Student Success Tool requires beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year tests in reading language arts, math, science, and social studies
- The A-F accountability system and its heavy dependence on test scores remain largely unchanged
- HB 8 identifies potential pathways to a broader set of school quality measures, but it will be up to future legislatures to act decisively to include more measures in campus and district ratings

Where We Stand on Assessment and Accountability

In 2025, after the regular session and two special sessions, the 89th Legislature passed House Bill 8 (HB 8), creating a new statewide Student Success Tool assessment system that will replace the STAAR in the 2027–28 school year. While this new assessment system should address some of the widespread frustrations with STAAR, the legislation leaves the fundamentals of Texas' A-F accountability system intact.

Raise Your Hand Texas has maintained, for multiple legislative sessions, that the core shortcoming of our accountability system is its overreliance on standardized test scores from a single test taken on a single day. HB 8 still leaves this framework in place; the last test is still the only test that will matter in our A-F ratings. While HB 8 requires a study to create new annual growth measures, it will be up to future legislatures to include them in official campus and district ratings.

Student performance on a single test is only one measure of academic preparedness and the ability to contribute in the workplace or in one's community. Texas public schools do so much more to prepare students for success after high school. 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 that equips students with valuable hard skills as well as practical problem-solving and cooperation experience. Texas schools also do the vital pre-work of academic success by engaging families, 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 complex work of school districts and campuses.

Changes in Assessment

The Student Success Tool requires beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year tests in reading language arts, math, science, and social studies. It also adds a standalone writing component in reading language arts and sets strict testing windows to minimize disruption to instruction. Additionally, HB 8 eliminates the English II end-of-course exam, limits district benchmark assessments, and requires automatic rescoring of the writing portion in certain cases. The bill expands parent access to results and allows students to substitute qualifying scores on exams such as the SAT, ACT, TSIA, AP, IB, PSAT, and Pre-ACT for end-of-course exams. It also directs the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to adopt accountability rules earlier and with greater transparency when defining cut scores. While the limiting of some tests and increased transparency with respect to rules and procedures will likely be welcomed by school districts and parents, it remains to be seen whether the Student Success Tool will come to replace popular growth test tools that many school districts already use. It is possible that the multiplicity of tests will be a source of frustration for students and teachers.

Changes in Accountability

At the same time, HB 8 does not fundamentally change how the Texas accountability system works. Campuses and districts will continue to receive A-F ratings, mainly driven by standardized test results, graduation rates, and college, career, and military-readiness indicators. About 80% of campuses, primarily elementary and middle schools, are still rated solely on standardized test performance, and HB 8 leaves that structure in place.

HB 8 also requires the TEA to contract with a public institution of higher education to conduct a comprehensive study of new accountability indicators. The study will examine whether performance ratings could be diversified beyond test scores to include measures such as advanced academic coursework, student engagement, workforce development, and parental involvement. The commissioner must submit the results of this study to the Legislature by December 1, 2028. While the study aims to chart a possible path toward a more well-rounded accountability system, the findings will only serve as recommendations.

The bill also instructs the TEA to develop an annual growth measure using the new assessments, but instead of requiring the

implementation of this measure in the accountability ratings, HB 8 only calls for a report to be delivered to state leaders in 2029. A growth measure would formally integrate the progress students make between the beginning-of-year and end-of-year tests into the accountability system. Adopting a growth measure would be an important step away from the current system's overreliance on scores from one snapshot in time. Whether growth measures become part of the accountability system remains unsettled and will require future action.

What to Expect

For students and parents, the standardized testing experience may not feel drastically different when the new system begins in the 2027–28 school year. State tests will be spread across the school year instead of being concentrated in the spring, which may feel familiar since many districts already use interim assessments, such as MAP Growth. Overall, it is expected that testing time should be somewhat shorter. The most noticeable change may be fewer district benchmark tests, as HB 8 places strict limits on how often benchmark tests can be administered.

Ultimately, it will be up to the Legislature to continue monitoring how testing works in our state and to decide if and how Texas can move away from relying solely on standardized tests to rate our schools.

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

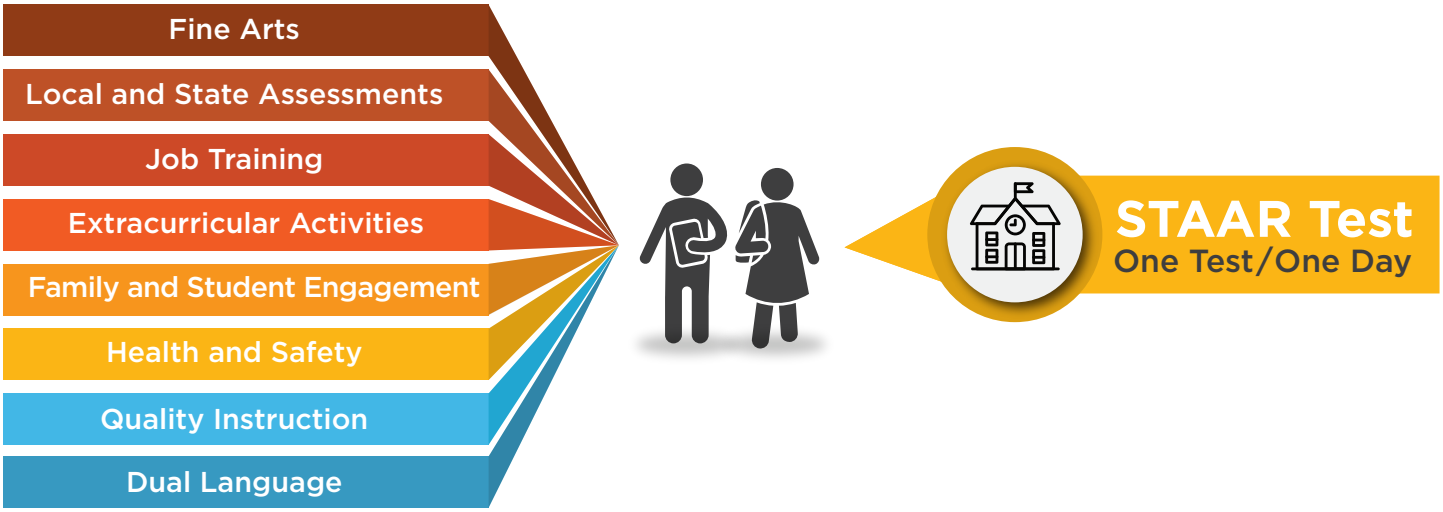
69% OF **TEXANS** POLLED **DO NOT** BELIEVE STAAR EFFECTIVELY MEASURES HOW WELL STUDENTS ARE LEARNING*

** Measure What Matters Report, October 2022*

A Better Way to Measure Progress

Texas needs an accountability system that is attentive to holistic student preparation and diverse drivers of long-term student outcomes. Raise Your Hand Texas supports a more rigorous accountability system that measures the full scope of a student's learning.

How Schools Prepare Students → **How the State Grades Schools**



Read our Measure What Matters Report and reimagine assessment and accountability for Texas public schools.

RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS
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