

SUBJECT: Revising public school accountability, continuing graduation committees

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 13 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Allison, Ashby, K. Bell, Dutton, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jacquie Benestante, Autism Society of Texas; Sarah Matz, CompTIA; Laurie Filipelli, League of Women Voters of Texas; Kristi Hassett, Lewisville ISD; Deborah Caldwell, North East ISD; Billy Rudolph, ResponsiveEd; Sheri Hicks and Theresa Trevino, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Jerod Patterson, Texas Rural Education Association; Felicia Miyakawa; Brandy Schott; Heather Sheffield; Deirdre Staples)

Against — Kara Belew, Texas Public Policy Foundation

On — Molly Weiner, Texas Aspires Foundation; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Hannah LaPorte, IDEA Public Schools; Pablo Barrera, TCSA; Jamie Crowe, Chris Jones, Tyson Kane, Eric Marin, Monica Martinez, Heather Mauze, and Melody Parrish, Texas Education Agency; Drew Scheberle, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Heather Smith)

BACKGROUND: The 85th Legislature in 2017 enacted HB 22 by Huberty, which revised the public school accountability system. The bill established three domains for evaluating district and campus performance: the student achievement domain, the school progress domain, and the closing the gaps domain. The bill also established the indicators for each domain and

aligned the revised grading system for school districts and campuses with Texas' sanction and intervention strategies for low-performing schools.

The 84th Legislature in 2015 enacted SB 149 by Seliger, which established an alternative method to satisfy graduation requirements for high school students who have completed their curriculum but failed to pass up to two STAAR end-of-course exams. The 85th Legislature in 2017 enacted SB 463 by Seliger, which continued the alternative method until September 1, 2019.

DIGEST:

CSHB 3904 would revise the public school accountability system to limit the use of STAAR results and incorporate new measures into the domains of the accountability system. It would revise measures used to rate dropout recovery schools. The bill also would repeal the expiration date on the use of individual graduation committees to determine whether certain students are qualified to graduate and receive their high school diplomas.

STAAR results. The bill would prohibit the commissioner of education from attributing more than 50 percent of any domain performance rating to the results of required state standardized exams.

For purposes of assigning each district and campus a rating for the student achievement domain, the commissioner would have to attribute 30 percent of the rating to STAAR results, 40 percent to high school graduation rates, and 30 percent to indicators showing college, career, and military readiness.

The commissioner of education would be required to designate a satisfactory level of performance on certain college readiness exams that a student could use to satisfy the requirements concerning a required high school STAAR end-of-course exam. The commissioner also would have to designate the performance level that would indicate college readiness on a substitute assessment as "masters grade-level performance."

Accountability measures. Under CSHB 3904, the student achievement

domain for high school campuses and districts that included high school campuses would include performance indicators that accounted for:

- students who participated in extracurricular activities, including University Interscholastic League A+ academic events and foreign language, chess, and robotic clubs;
- ninth grade students who were academically on track to graduate with their ninth grade cohort;
- students who earned a three-hour course credit in a dual credit course in any subject; and
- students who completed coherent sequences of courses required to earn industry certifications.

The commissioner of education would have to determine a method by which a student's performance on a coherent sequence of courses required to earn an industry certification could be included if a student completed the courses but did not receive the industry certification until after graduation. The performance of such a student would be assigned equal credit under the college, career, and military readiness component calculation as a student who earned an industry certification before the student graduated.

Under the bill, the student achievement domain for middle and junior high school and elementary school campuses and districts that include those campuses would include performance indicators that accounted for:

- students who participated in full-day prekindergarten programs;
- students who participated in elementary literacy and math academies;
- and students who participated in extracurricular activities, including University Interscholastic League A+ academic events and foreign language, chess, and robotics clubs.

Dropout recovery schools. For purposes of assigning performance ratings under the accountability system, the commissioner would have to evaluate a dropout recovery school under alternative education

accountability procedures adopted by the commissioner.

Student achievement. Under the student achievement domain, the commissioner would have to consider the performance of students in a dropout recovery school based only on the "approaches grade level" performance standard. Any evaluation of student performance based on a higher standard could not be considered to negatively affect the domain rating or a performance target score of the school.

School progress. Under the school progress domain, the commissioner would be required to award credit for academic growth based only on a student reaching the "approaches grade level" performance standard. Any evaluation of student performance based on reaching a higher academic growth standard could not be considered to negatively affect the amount of credit awarded to the school or the domain rating or target score of the school.

Overall rating. For purposes of assigning an overall rating for a dropout recovery school, the commissioner would have to consider only the school's ratings under the student achievement or school progress domain. Such a school's performance on the closing the gaps domain would have to be used for reporting purposes only.

Individual graduation committees. CSHB 3904 would repeal the September 1, 2019, expiration date of statutory provisions that allow high school students who had failed to pass one or two required end-of-course (EOC) exams to be considered for graduation by an individual graduation committee. The bill would continue the requirements that districts and charter schools establish individual graduation committees at the end of or after a student's junior year to recommend additional requirements and to decide whether the student should be allowed to graduate and receive a high school diploma.

The bill would repeal the September 1, 2019, expiration date of a statutory provision that allows a student who has failed to pass the Algebra I or English II EOC exam to use a proficient score on the Texas Success

Initiative college readiness exam for the corresponding EOC exam. It would repeal the September 1, 2019, expiration date for certain reporting requirements related to the individual graduation committees.

The bill would repeal the September 1, 2019, expiration date of other statutory provisions relating to certain former students who entered the ninth grade before the 2011-2012 school year and had not performed satisfactorily on a required exam after at least three attempts to graduate and receive a high school diploma. It would continue requirements that the commissioner of education establish criteria regarding alternatives such as work or military experience that could allow such a student to qualify to receive a high school diploma.

These provisions would go into effect September 1, 2019.

Contracts with charter schools. The bill would revise provisions that exempt certain school district campuses operating under a contract between the district and charter entity from specified sanctions and intervention under the accountability system. The bill would prohibit the performance of such a campus from being included in determining the performance of the district during the period the campus was exempt from sanctions.

Effective date. The changes to the school accountability system would apply beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

The 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 on the 91st day after the last day of the legislative session.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 3904 would improve the public school accountability system by limiting the use of STAAR results and incorporating new indicators that account for extracurricular activity. It also would continue the successful program that has allowed a small percentage of high school students to demonstrate they are qualified to graduate despite not having passed all of their required exams.

Accountability measures. The bill would add non-test indicators in the student achievement domain to account for extracurricular activities that provide students with opportunities to build relationships, character, and leadership skills. Research has shown that students who participate in these activities show improvements in school attendance and test scores and are less likely to have disciplinary issues or drop out of school.

STAAR scores would still be a key factor in determining how well schools are educating students but would be limited as the Legislature intended when it reformed the accountability system last session.

Student achievement in career and technical education currently is counted only when a student obtains an industry certification, but few such certifications are available or attainable at the high school level. CSHB 3904 would recognize the value of students beginning a course of study that could lead to an industry certification or other postsecondary credential.

Individual graduation committees. The bill would make permanent the individual graduation committee process that has allowed a number of students who failed one or two end-of-course exams but were otherwise qualified to graduate to receive their high school diplomas. Texas should continue providing this path to graduation for students who can demonstrate through portfolios or other means that they have mastered the curriculum. This path is especially important for students with learning disabilities or facing language barriers.

The alternative process contains appropriate safeguards to protect the integrity of state graduation requirements and has not been abused. In 2017, fewer than 4 percent of all high school graduates were qualified to receive their diplomas by permission of individual graduation committees.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 3904 would weaken the school accountability system by moving it away from measuring academic achievement to considering factors such as extracurricular activities. It also would continue an alternative process

for graduating high school students who may not be academically prepared for postsecondary success.

Accountability measures. By including measurements of non-academic factors such as participation in extracurricular activities, CSHB 3904 could obscure how well schools are doing at their fundamental job of ensuring that students can read and do math at the appropriate grade level. If the state wants to limit the use of STAAR scores, it should consider other academic metrics that could focus schools on improving student performance.

Individual graduation committees. CSHB 3904 would continue a process that awards high school diplomas to students who may not be ready for college or the workforce. Texas has seen a reduction in college readiness of high school graduates, and the individual graduation committee process could be a contributing factor. Allowing students who have not met their testing requirements to receive their diplomas devalues the diplomas of students who did pass their required exams and reduces incentives for schools to provide additional instruction to get students ready to pass all of their end-of-course exams.

NOTES: According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of \$4.6 million in general revenue related funds through fiscal 2020-21.