

Board of Trustees Lewisville Independent School District

Resolution Concerning Proposed Legislation on an Audit and Moratorium of STAAR

I. Recitals

Lewisville Independent School District (LISD) is committed to the success of every child through real innovation and limitless opportunities for all our students.

LISD has previously expressed concerns over State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) grading errors and now expresses concern over STAAR readability levels. The resulting doubts create a lack of confidence in the state assessments.

LISD opposes the use of assessment items with a readability level higher than the grade tested. State assessments are designed to show whether a student has mastered content solely within the grade level tested.

Three outside studies have been conducted on STAAR Reading passages in grades 3-8:

- 2012 - Susan Szabo and Becky Sinclair, Texas A&M University-Commerce
- 2016 - Michael Lopez and Jodi Pilgrim, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
- 2019 - Susan Szabo and Becky Sinclair, Texas A&M University-Commerce

All three studies found concerns with the readability and text complexity of many of the reading passages.

The State Board of Education conducted a statewide survey in a 2016 entitled “Texans Speak.” In that survey, an overwhelming majority of Texans in all groups (85 percent to 99 percent) agreed that assessments should not contain “trick or developmentally inappropriate” questions. The survey also found that one of the largest areas that needed improvement was ensuring assessments are developmentally appropriate.

In 2018, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) conducted a study “designed to determine a mechanism to provide reading levels that can be matched to text based on the STAAR Reading, English I and English II results.” TEA has correlated STAAR passing scores and Lexile levels in its Raw Score Conversion tables. The Lexile levels of every STAAR and EOC are far beyond the grade level tested.

Several proposed bills in the 86th Legislative Session address the need to audit and secure a moratorium for the use of high-stakes on our student and schools until all assessments have been verified by an outside entity. LISD believes it is the duty of the Legislature ensure a deliberate process to safeguard the integrity of the students' educational experience.

LISD believes our state's future prosperity relies on a high-quality education system that prepares students for college and careers, and without such a system Texas' economic competitiveness and ability to attract new business will falter.

II. Resolution

Lewisville Independent School District respectfully implores our legislative representatives to take the following actions this legislative session to ensure state assessments more accurately reflect what students know and can do as it relates to the state standards to which they are being held.

LISD is resolved that state assessments shall test only grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and readability standards.

- Each assessment item must be evaluated by an independent group, including qualified educators with Texas teaching experience, for readability within the grade level assessed, and each assessment item of sufficient length must be separately evaluated for readability within the grade level assessed before being field-tested by November 2019. A determination of readability must consider available correlations with other assessments commonly used by Texas school districts, and should be verified by an independent group of qualified educators with Texas teaching experience. The TEA commissioner should hold a public hearing before making a determination as to readability of assessments.
- Negative sanctions cannot be placed on students, campuses, or districts based on the results of the 2018-19 state assessments.
- State assessments may not be administered during the 2019-2020 or any later school year unless they meet the readability standards outlined above.
- If state assessments do not meet the readability standards, the TEA commissioner must:
 - Request a federal waiver from ESSA requirements; and
 - Correct any and all issues before another testing cycle is initiated.

PASSED AND APPROVED on this 15th day of April 2019.

By: _____
Angie Cox, President
LISD Board of Trustees

By: _____
Krona Thimesch, Vice President
LISD Board of Trustees

By: _____
Katherine Sells, Secretary
LISD Board of Trustees

By: _____
Kristi Hassett, Member
LISD Board of Trustees

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Allison Lassahn, Member
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Tracy Scott Miller, Member
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Jenny Proznik, Member
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