



Duncan F. Klussmann, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

May 22, 2009

Dear Members of the Spring Branch ISD Community:

Over the past year, the State of Texas has been working to redesign its public school accountability system. The accountability system determines how we test students and rate schools.

The Texas Legislature is down to its final days and its final drafts of a new system. There are many positive aspects of the new system; however, while I am a strong supporter of accountability, I need to share with you one proposed change that will increase the number of high stakes tests our students will be required to take.

Lawmakers have consistently heard from parents and community members that schools spend too much time preparing for and giving State-required tests and that the State relies too heavily on one test (TAKS) to determine a school's and a district's rating. In response, last session, the Legislature passed a law eliminating the TAKS test in high school and replacing it with End-of-Course (EOC) exams.

Current Law

Currently, high school students take two TAKS tests in 9th grade and four TAKS tests in 10th and 11th grades for a total of 10 tests. Also under current law, in addition to meeting all of the District's passing standards, high school students must pass the 11th grade TAKS tests to qualify for graduation. Under the bill passed last session, students will take a total of 12 EOC exams that count 15% towards their course grade.

Proposed Law

The Senate version of the bill currently being considered in Austin would greatly expand the number of State-mandated tests needed to graduate. The proposed change would double the number of tests students are required to pass to graduate (8 exams compared to the current 4). Furthermore, since the tests will be in the form of End-of-Course exams, some students would have to pass tests beginning as early as 7th grade to qualify for high school graduation.

By contrast, the House of Representatives version only requires passage of the 11th grade EOC exams in order for a student to graduate. In doing so, the House version maintains local control over graduation requirements while continuing to provide accountability at the State level.

If you would like to have an impact on this legislation, you should contact the members of the Conference Committee and express your thoughts on the matter. I have attached a list of the names with contact information. The Conference Committee members will start work on the final version of the bill today, and will conclude their efforts within the coming week.

Thank you,

Duncan F. Klussmann, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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