

October 12, 2005

**TO THE EDUCATOR ADDRESSED:**

**SUBJECT: State Accountability Decisions**

This letter serves as notification to school district personnel of decisions related to the inclusion of students in the state accountability performance indicators for 2006 district and campus ratings.

**Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Inclusive**

In order to be compliant with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), TEA is making the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Inclusive (TAKS-I) available this school year as an additional option to the Locally Determined Alternate Assessments (LDAA) for grades and subjects for which there is no SDAA II. Additional information about this testing program and the students for whom it is appropriate can be found in the *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program Reference Manual for 2005–2006 Testing Year*, which is located on the agency website.

The TAKS-I results will not be included in the state accountability base indicators used for district and campus ratings in 2006. An Educator Focus Group that meets in spring 2006 will propose a plan for incorporating the TAKS-I results into the state accountability performance indicators beginning in 2007 or later. Decisions about use of TAKS-I in the Performance-Based Monitoring (PBM) system for 2006 have not been made; however, TEA will analyze assessment patterns relating to the subjects assessed by TAKS-I and TAKS as part of accountability system safeguards.

**Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**

The TEA will make accommodations in the state accountability rating system to address Texas districts and campuses that are affected by Hurricane Katrina and/or Hurricane Rita.

**Districts and Campuses Serving Displaced Students.** Performance of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina and/or Hurricane Rita who are enrolled in Texas school districts in 2005-06 will not be included in the indicators used for district and campus 2006 state accountability ratings. To address the impact of the influx of students from other states as a result of Hurricane Katrina and Texas students displaced by Hurricane Rita, procedures for identifying which students will be included in the performance indicators for 2006 state accountability will need to be modified. Two options are currently under consideration by TEA. In the first option, students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita would be identified and removed from the performance indicators prior to determining 2006 state accountability ratings. In the second option, the accountability subset used for TAKS and SDAA II indicators would be redefined to include only students enrolled in the prior school year.

**Hurricane Rita.** Districts directly affected by Hurricane Rita will have unique issues dependent upon the extent of damage to school facilities, homes in the community, businesses, public services, or closeness to communities and school districts that received damage. For these districts, special accommodations tailored to the unique circumstances of the district may be more appropriate than a system-wide solution. Options that will be considered include not rating some school districts that were unable to open for an extended amount of time and evaluating some school districts' specific circumstances through the ratings appeals process.

**2007 State Accountability Ratings.** State accountability ratings for 2007 may also be impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This is because 2005-06 data on leavers and completers are used to calculate the dropout and completion indicators used for 2007 accountability ratings. New leaver reporting requirements have been implemented for 2005-06 leavers in conjunction with the adoption of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout rate definition for state dropout and completion rates. Displaced students who leave Texas schools during the 2005-06 school year will be reported under the new requirements. Nonetheless, these leavers will affect dropout and completion rates at the same time a new dropout definition and data submission system are scheduled to be introduced for 2007 accountability.

The specific option that will be selected for resolving accountability issues that have arisen as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are still under review. Issues related to definitions, data collection and data submission must be resolved before the specific details are communicated to school districts.

**Student Data Files and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.** School districts will receive a separate letter this week from the Texas Education Agency providing data standards for the maintenance of student data files with indicators for students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The data standards are for separate data files and will not require changes to other agency reporting systems such as PEIMS. School districts will be required to maintain these data at the local level. In the event that TEA learns that individual identification of students is the only option available to address some Katrina/Rita related requirements, then school districts will be notified of the need to submit the data to TEA.

In closing, please know that your accountability concerns have been heard and will be addressed by the Texas Education Agency. It is important that those school districts across Texas that stepped up to the plate and served students from neighboring school districts both within and outside of Texas not be hurt by accountability rules that were not designed to address the special circumstances created by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. At the same time, it is critical that those districts serving displaced students focus on those students' needs, bringing them along as quickly as possible.

Please be sure to share this letter widely in your school district and in your community so that your teachers, principals, and parents are not unnecessarily worried about the accountability consequences of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Sincerely,



Shirley J. Neeley