



## **TLEC Asks Texas Senate to Reduce Over-testing** **Testimony on SB 2049, before the Texas Senate Education Committee, May 2, 2017**

Chairman Taylor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing the Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) the opportunity to provide written and oral testimony on the implementation of legislation that would help scale back on Texas' burdensome and costly testing regime. TLEC is a collaborative of organizations and individuals who advocate for the rights of Latina/o students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus specifically on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools.

Our testimony today focuses on how the State of Texas can improve its public education system by reducing the number of state exams administered by the state by:

- eliminating all high-stakes testing;
- limiting the administration of the Texas Success Initiative that would otherwise require retesting and would be cumulative to end-of-course exams (EOCs); and
- limiting testing to the subjects required under the *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

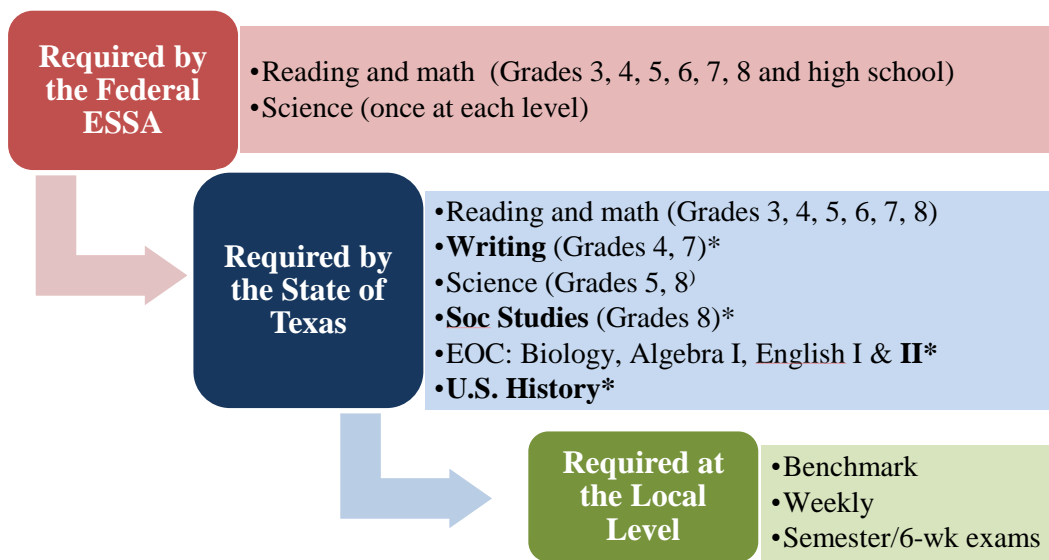
In addition, and to the extent permissible, TLEC recommends that the state administer testing through a randomized sampling of students capable of capturing the performance of students by race, national origin, sex/gender, socioeconomic status, language, disability, and other student group characteristics identified for educational purposes across Texas. The state should also redesign the state testing system to require formative (as opposed to summative) testing that is valid and reliable for all learners and designed for the purpose of providing teachers and school leaders diagnostic data to improve student learning.

### **National and State Trends in Testing and Opportunities to Improve Efficiency under the Every Student Succeeds Act**

Texas currently requires students to pass five exit STAAR exams to graduate high school. While some believe that the extensive number of high school exit exams is required under federal law, that is not true. Federal law sets a minimum. Under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which was signed into law in December 2015 and replaced the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), states are merely required to test students in reading, math and science in high school as shown below. The federal government does not require that Texas mandate passage of these tests for graduation (high-stakes testing) nor does federal law require the additional tests noted below

with an asterisk (\*). Texas, itself, chooses to go beyond minimal federal requirements, expending significant state resources in the process and creating a far less efficient public school system.

## High School Exit Exams in Texas as Required by Federal Government and the State of Texas



\* not required by federal law

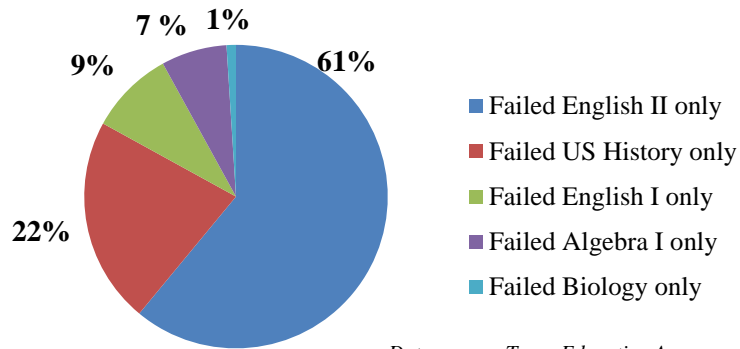
Source: IDRA, 2016

Public opinion polls also show a growing disenchantment with the obsessive testing era, with 67 percent of parents stating that there is too much emphasis on testing (Gallup, Phi Delta Kappa Poll, 2015).

**To be clear, TLEC does not support the elimination of standardized testing.** TLEC understands that standardized testing, when valid and reliable, provides important information for students, parents, teachers, administrators, the public and policymakers. Texas, however, has relied too extensively on a flawed testing strategy that wastes tax dollars.

**TEA data for the 2014-15 school year show that the vast majority of students graduating based on recommendations from their respective Individual Graduation Committees (IGCs) failed the two end-of-course exams (EOCs) that are *not required* for testing by the federal government: English II and U.S. History.** Of the 3,684 IGC graduates failing one EOC, English II and U.S. History accounted for 83 percent of all IGC graduates. The following chart shows the results for IGC students failing one exam.

**Percent of IGC Graduates Failing One Exam, by Subject, 2014-15**



*Data source: Texas Education Agency*

In addition, of the 1,991 students failing two EOC exams, less than 1 percent failed a combination of exams that did not include either the English II or U.S. History exam.

The state expends significant costs of time and resources for the preparation and administration of these tests and could avoid wasting precious tax dollars on these tests. Eliminating the two additional EOCs, and eliminating the high-stakes testing component of the EOCs, would greatly improve the efficiency of the education system by reducing costs, test retakes, and the number of IGCs required to be formed.

Again, TLEC thanks you for the opportunity to present testimony on this important issue and urges this Committee to pass HB 1333.