



TEA Should Not Count SY20-21 as Consecutive with SY18-19 for Accountability and Accreditation Sanctions

TLEEC Public Comments on TEA Proposed Amendment to 19 TAC Chapter 97, Subchapter EE on Accreditation Status, Standards, and Sanctions, Division 1, Status, Standards, and Sanctions, §97.1055, Accreditation Status

Submitted to the Texas Education Agency, Attn: Commissioner Mike Morath, December 14, 2020

Dear Commissioner Morath and Texas Education Agency officials:

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of over 20 organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. We advocate at the local, state, and national levels for high-quality teaching, curriculum and instructional practices and bilingual education for English learners, as well as fair funding and enhanced college access and success.

We submit these comments for consideration to adjust the proposed rules to count the 2020-2021 school year as consecutive with the 2018-2019 school year for public school accountability and accreditation purposes. We further recommend that TEA does not issue A-F accountability ratings for the 2020-2021 school year, and instead issue “Not Rated” ratings as in the 2019-2020 year. While we understand and support the need for school districts to be accountable through the accreditation system, we likewise believe accreditation and accountability sanctions should not be issued due to the tumult caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reject proposed amendment to §97.1055, section (a)(9):

The SY20-21 and SY18-19 should not count consecutively for accreditation, as proposed in the rule change. All schools undoubtedly have faced entirely different, unanticipated, and unprecedented challenges since March 2020 and over the course of this school year (SY20-21). School administrators have had to navigate frequent changes in TEA guidance for reopening schools, regional surges in COVID-19 cases, drastic declines in student enrollment, and entirely new instructional environments (i.e., in-person, remote, and hybrid). Given these immense and immediate challenges, counting this academic school year as consecutive for accountability purposes overlooks the immeasurably different circumstances between the pre-pandemic SY18-19 year and the current one, and promotes an unfair assessment of schools’ accreditation standing.

Modify proposed amendment to §97.1055, section (a)(12):

Based on our recommendation to reject the amendment to subsection (a)(9), we also recommend that accountability ratings for years separated by a Not Rated- Data Integrity or similar rating not be counted as consecutive for accreditation status.

Modify proposed amendment to §97.1055, section (a)(13):

The proposed amendment to allow the Commissioner to use one accountability rating (academic or financial) if both ratings are unavailable for the purposes of assigning an accreditation status should be modified. If the Commissioner decides to use one available rating, the newly assigned accreditation status should be no lower than Accredited-Warning until both ratings can be determined. A district should not receive a new status of either Accredited-Probation or Not Accredited-Revoked based on incomplete rating information due to being Not Rated-Data Integrity between rating years.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit public comments on these proposed rules. School districts must be held accountable for serving students, but should not face potentially severe accreditation sanctions that do not account for the drastically varying circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For questions, please contact TLEEC either through Ana Ramón (ana.ramon@idra.org) or Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes (chloe.sikes@idra.org) at IDRA, or Fátima Menéndez at MALDEF (fmenendez@maldef.org).

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. The coalition convenes organizations and individuals who advocate in the interest of public school students at the local, state and national levels.

TLEEC Member Organizations Signing On to Comments

ARISE Adelante	Texas American Federation of Teachers
Breakthrough Central Texas	Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)	Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
Dr. Hector P. García G.I. Forum	Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC)
Every Texan	Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin
Houston Community Voices for Public Education	Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)	Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership	Texas NAACP
Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA)	Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA)
National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) – Tejas Foco	
San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	