



School Accountability

School districts have operated under different accountability and assessment systems over the past several years – three since 2003 – and they have faced new modifications after almost every legislative session. Data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) demonstrates the dramatic inconsistencies in the number of districts and campuses found to be academically unacceptable over the last ten years. During this time, as the student population has steadily shifted to a minority-majority one with an increasing percentage of children living in poverty, the number of academically unacceptable campuses has ranged from 95 to 768 with no correlation to be found except for the changes to the accountability system itself.

Background

Beginning in spring of 2012, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) system replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) system as the state’s assessment program. The STAAR program originally included tests in grades 3–8 and 15 high school end-of-course (EOC) exams.

In order to graduate, students were required to pass a certain number of EOC tests based on the graduation plan they selected (Distinguished, Recommended, or Minimum). In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 5, which reduced the number of EOC exams required for graduation from 15 to 5: Algebra I, English I (combined reading/writing), English II (combined reading/writing), biology, and U.S. history.

In 2010, TEA implemented the Texas Projection Measure (TPM) in an effort to comply with state legislation requiring that student progress be measured over time instead of capturing a snapshot of where a student is through one test on one day. The TPM was an estimate of whether a student was likely to pass a TAKS test in a future grade based on the student’s previous and current performance and the performance of other students in the same campus. The introduction of the TPM greatly reduced the number of Academically Unacceptable schools in the 2010 accountability ratings.

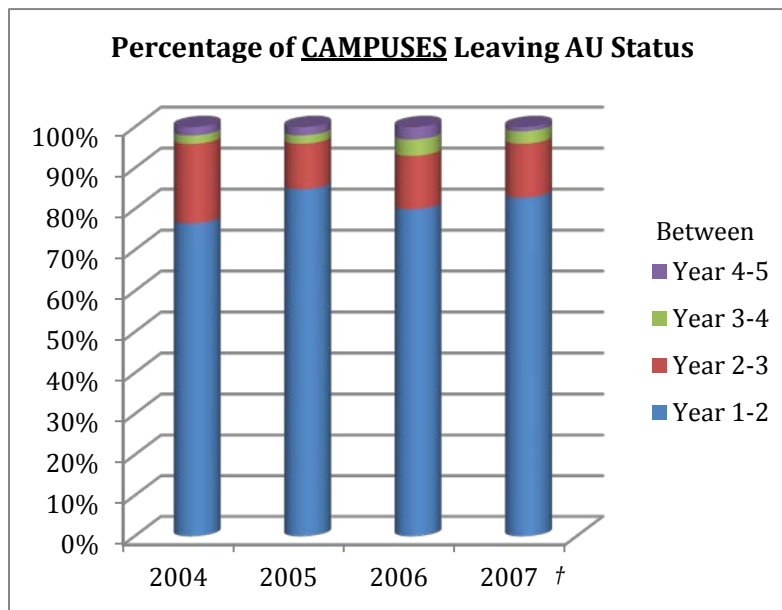
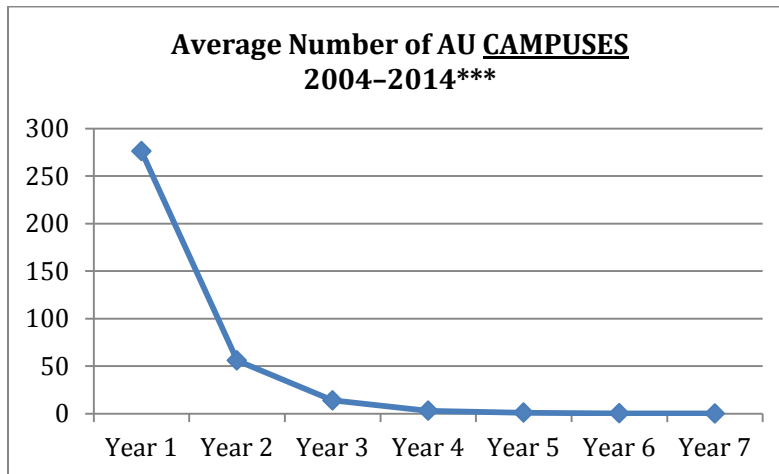
Due to overwhelming criticism from legislators and the public, the commissioner of education discontinued the use of TPM for the 2011 accountability ratings, significantly increasing the number of Academically Unacceptable schools. Also in 2011, students who took TAKS Modified and Alternate exams were included in state accountability system after previously being exempted.

When the state moved to the STAAR program in 2012, legislators recognized that the new tests were more rigorous and assessed skills in greater depth and cognitive complexity than the previous TAKS tests. The Legislature directed the commissioner of education to postpone school accountability ratings for 2012, in part, to aid districts with the transition.

As districts have adapted to these significant changes, “education reform” groups and others have pointed to the number of schools deemed by the state accountability system as “Academically Unacceptable” as proof that drastic measures should be taken to address these low performing schools. These groups have called for vouchers, a statewide government school district, expansion of charter or virtual schools, and other means to remove campuses from local school districts.

Upon examination of the data, it appears that Texas school districts have managed, by and large, to rectify most of the issues raised by the state accountability system on their own and through means already established in Texas statute.

According to data from TEA, Texas educators are able to dramatically reduce the number of Academically Unacceptable campuses and districts after just one year. Further, most schools rectify their issues by Year 3 of unacceptable performance.

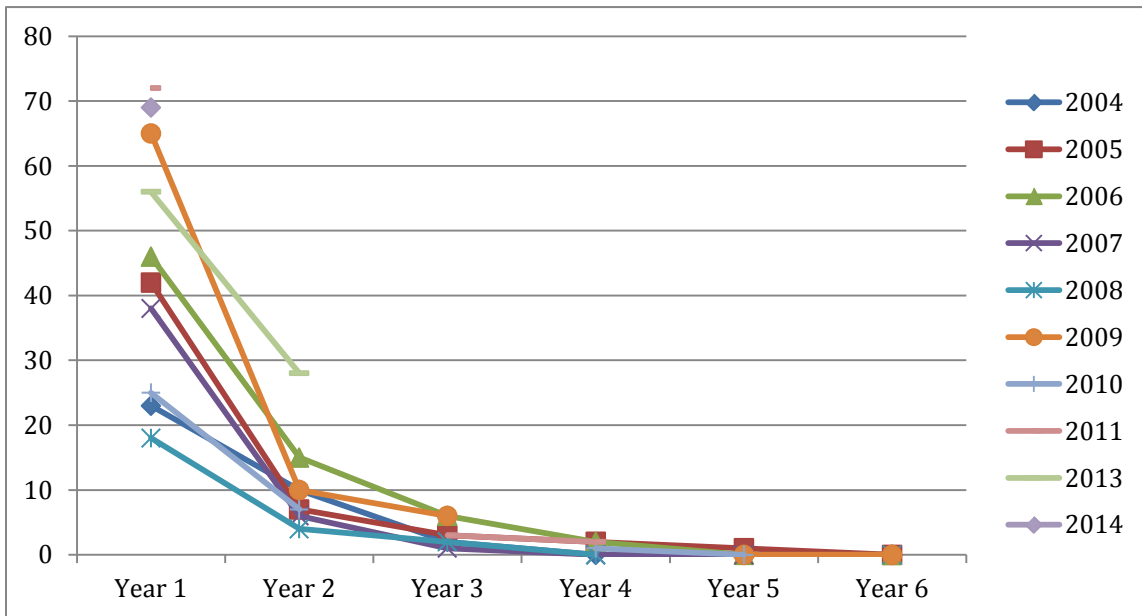


† Only years with enough continuous data for comparison.

*** No state accountability ratings were assigned in 2012. *TEC §39.116(e)* stipulates that, during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, the commissioner shall continue to implement interventions and sanctions for districts and campuses identified as having unacceptable performance in the 2010-2011 school year.

Multi-Year Academically Unacceptable DISTRICTS: 2004 to 2014

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*	2011**	2012***	2013	2014
Year 1	23	42	46	38	18	65	25	72	N/A	56	69
Year 2	1	10	7	15	6	4	10	7	N/A	16	28
Year 3	0	0	2	3	6	1	2	6	N/A	3	11
Year 4	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	N/A	1	2
Year 5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	N/A	0	0
Year 6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	24	52	55	56	32	73	37	85	N/A	76	110



* In 2010, TEA institutes use of the Texas Projection Measure.

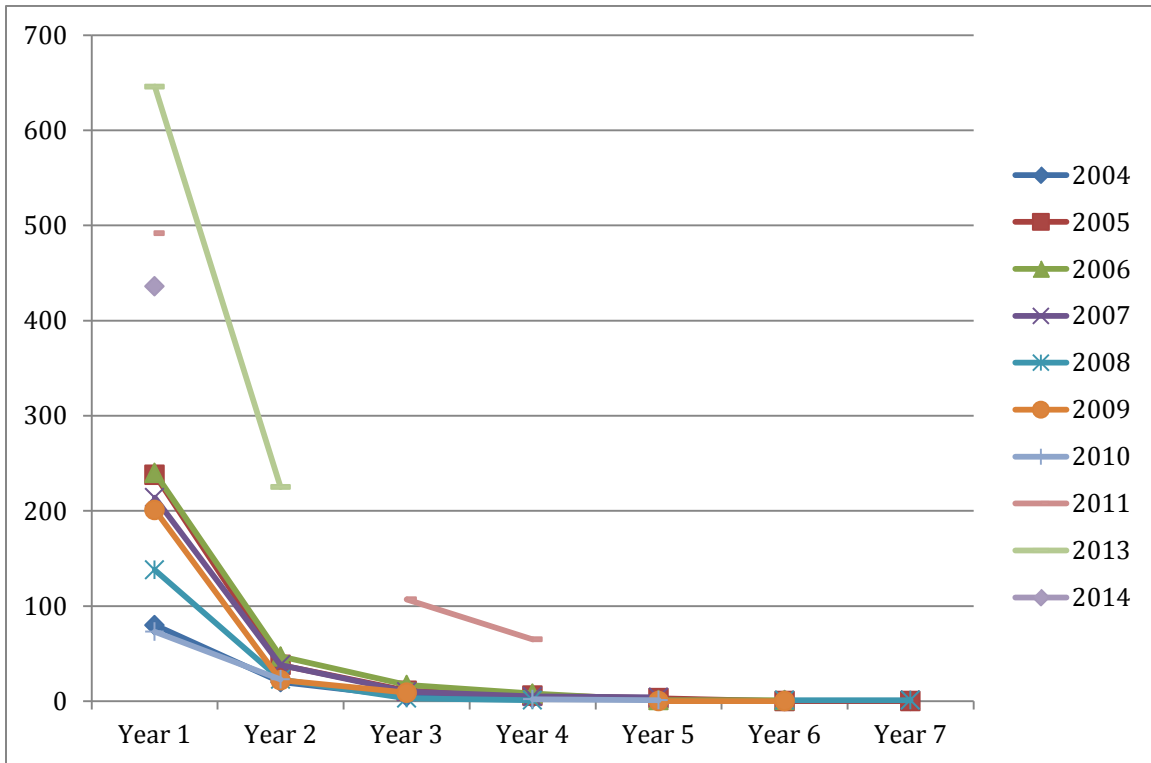
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Other issue to note: Transition from TAAS to TAKS in 2003 and transition from TAKS to STAAR in 2012.

Multi-Year Academically Unacceptable CAMPUSES: 2004 to 2014

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*	2011**	2012***	2013	2014
Year 1	80	238	240	214	138	201	73	492	N/A	646	436
Year 2	12	20	38	47	38	23	22	23	N/A	107	225
Year 3	3	5	5	11	17	10	3	9	N/A	11	65
Year 4	0	1	3	3	6	8	5	1	N/A	2	5
Year 5	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	4	N/A	0	1
Year 6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	N/A	1	0
Year 7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	1	1
Total	95	264	286	276	202	245	104	530	N/A	768	733



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