



The Bearkat BUZZ

www.shsu.edu/charter-school

"Ascending to Excellence."

September 2023

Texas Public School Accountability *Facts and Opinion from Mrs. Hernandez*

FACT: The Texas Education Agency (TEA) follows a public school Accountability rating system that measures the following:

Domain 1: Overall Student Achievement

Domain 2: Student Achievement Growth (from 2022 to 2023)

Domain 3: Closing the Gaps (how student subgroups and special populations performed on STAAR and TELPAS)

During the 2023 Assessment Cycle, so much changed with the instruments TEA uses to measure student achievement for Texas public schools, including:

- 1.) STAAR / TELPAS redesign to online format, includes typed text entry on all tests, and additional new item types;
- 2.) Changes to cut points that determine Did Not Meet, Approaches, Meets, and Masters
- 3.) Changes to state Accountability system that make it extremely difficult to demonstrate progress through Growth (Domain 2 and 3).

SHSU Charter School students typically score well in Domain 1, making it difficult to demonstrate growth from year to year (which is a great problem to have). This year, Charter School leadership are projecting the following for our district:

Domain 1: 89B

Domain 2: 85B

Domain 3: 73C

Overall Rating: 84B

You may have heard that many Texas Independent School Districts (ISDs) are suing the TEA because the new Accountability Rating system is so restrictive. In response to this, TEA announced Tuesday that it is postponing the release of School ratings from September 28 to the end of October. If this postponement results in modifications to the current Accountability system, the SHSU Charter School (and all public schools in Texas) could see improvements in their overall rating.

OPINION: Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath has stated the impetus for reforming the School Accountability system was to make it harder for Schools to be rated an "A" for student growth. I sympathize with that sentiment. It seems unfair for students that their school can receive an "A" rating just because student performance the year prior was poor. Changes to the way TEA rates Growth doesn't impact the SHSU Charter School like it will other school districts, because historically our overall achievement is relatively high. However, as a school leader that specializes in achievement data and accountability analysis, I'm concerned about how politics are creeping in to the public school system. It has implications for all public schools, not just the SHSU Charter School. I'm requesting you do your own research to determine how you feel about these changes.

Critics of the new Accountability system speculate that the timing of such reform serves one purpose: *to erode voter trust in the public school system*. During the 88th Texas legislative session, our state legislators failed to pass a school funding bill. To this day, public school officials do not know what our per-pupil funding from the state will look like for the 2023-2024 school year and that is a travesty. State legislators had originally allocated billions of dollars in Texas school funding, but the funding bill stalled when legislators rejected School Voucher requirements affiliated with it (spurred by Governor Greg Abbott). (Side Note: Public school stakeholders typically decry the use of school vouchers because they use taxpayer funds to pay for students to attend private schools, and private schools are exempt from taking state assessments and following any of the aforementioned Accountability requirements.)

Another criticism of this new Accountability system is that it will label many more schools and districts as a "D" or "F", thereby prompting additional takeovers like what we're currently seeing with the Houston ISD. This will give Commissioner Morath and the TEA unprecedented power to take over local School Boards with their own appointees, and assign TEA-developed prescriptive instructional content and lesson plans that teachers and school leaders are forced to follow. This New Education System (NES) may be effective in some schools, but I share in the concern of where this could lead to. The SHSU Charter School is able to recruit masterful teachers because we afford them the autonomy to make decisions about what tools and content they use to meet students' needs within the four walls of their classroom. We want our teachers to be innovators and risk-takers to provide our students with an uncommon education. *(continue on page 2)*

When you remove that safety and autonomy, teachers ultimately feel unsupported, and they are leaving the field of education in droves because of it.

Please consider reaching out to your local State Representative to advocate for a school funding bill for the 2023-2024 school year. We are in need of immediate financial backing without behind-the-scenes political strings attached.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the SHSU Charter School. We are pleased with our current and historical overall student achievement. We are only able to maintain our consistent student achievement through the unwavering support of our University, our PTOs, and are parent partnerships.

Thank you,
Mrs. Hernandez

Upcoming District Events

September 19

Board Meeting @ Huntsville campus @10am

September 25-28

NW1 Benchmark Assessments

September 28

NW1 Ends

September 29– October 16

Fall Break

October 17

Return to School, NW2 Begins

October 18

Monthly Board Meeting

October 20

Report Cards Go Home

October 23-27

Red Ribbon Week

District RTI Meetings

Join our Campus/ District Improvement Plan Meeting

Open to Parents and Community members to participate in collaborative planning with district strategic alignment for the 2023-2024 school year and beyond.

Thursday, October 19 @ 6:30pm

<https://shsu.zoom.us/j/82652574621>

Meeting ID: 826 5257 4621

Passcode: 867923

Principal Spirit Shirt Sale

September 16-30

electronic payment via *Future Fund*, no cash orders

Proceeds go towards events and incentives for Charter School Staff and Parent Volunteer Recognition



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