



McAllen AFT, 1500 Dove, McAllen, TX

July 2014

Volume 21 Issue 12

## NEW EVALUATION DELAYED!

Texas will take an additional year to pilot a controversial new state teacher evaluation system, Education Commissioner Michael Williams told federal education officials Wednesday, July 23, 2014.

"Texas educators understand the need to update the current evaluation system to one that better reflects what's occurring in today's classroom," he said in a written statement. "If Texas is to develop an evaluation system that truly supports our teachers, we need time to complete the pilot year and then utilize the constructive feedback we will receive from our school districts, charters and educators."

The new policy — which for the first time ties teacher assessments to student performance on standardized tests — is also the first update to teacher evaluations the state has made in 17 years. Williams informed the U.S. Department of Education of his decision in a letter requesting the extension of a waiver from No Child Left Behind requirements. During the last legislative session, attempts to emphasize student achievement in teacher evaluation hit a roadblock amid overwhelming support among state lawmakers to scale back standardized exams. But when the state received the federal waiver last September, it came with the condition that it update teacher evaluations, which are used for pay and

employment decisions, to include a focus on student test scores.

Under the new system, school districts would base 20 percent of each teacher's evaluation on "student growth" data that includes standardized

test scores. The system has attracted criticism from a range of sources, including teacher groups and lawmakers from both parties who oppose attaching high stakes to state tests.

Delaying the roll-out of the new policy was a "wise decision," Linda Bridges, President of Texas AFT, said in a statement. "It's a good step, but any feedback the

commissioner is going to get in this short time will certainly echo what teachers have said all along, that bogus value-added measures are no way to evaluate teachers, and in fact, misusing test scores for evaluations will drive teachers away from the profession," she said.

According to the Texas Education Agency, up to 70 school districts will participate in the pilot program set to begin this fall. At least one of those concerns over the inclusion of student test scores. At least one of those



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## CONTINUED

districts, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, which is the state's third largest, has since decided to withdraw because of In a June op-ed explaining the decision, Cypress-Fairbanks Superintendent Mark Henry said the approach "places additional fear, anxiety and pressure on professionals who are stressed enough already."

Henry said "I have seen this first-hand with principals and teachers who fret over the STARR test, a once-per-year high-stakes assessment that measures how a child performed on one test on one day," he said. "Testing is a key diagnostic tool, and results should be used to access the progress of students so plans can be developed to address the gaps and deficiencies of each student."

**Texas Tribune—July 23, 2014**

### **CHARTER SCHOOLS SUCH AS IDEA CAUSE LOSS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL JOBS**

At a Texas Education Agency hearing today a parade of witnesses from the state's charter-school industry complained that new state rules for charter schools would make it too hard on charter applicants and operators seeking renewal of their charters or state approval for expansion of their operations. Texas AFT legislative counsel Patty Quinzi was on hand to counter that tale of woe with Texas AFT's testimony that the charter rules if anything need to be more stringent.

By and large the charter operators seemed to be saying that their entitlement to taxpayer funds should not depend on strict compliance with state rules governing their academic and financial performance and practices. Mere "administrative error" should not be the basis for adverse state regulatory action, several said. Texas AFT's Quinzi pointed out that in several respects the proposed rules already appear to make it easier for charter operators to comply with state standards, not harder. For instance, Quinzi called for tightening the rules to ensure that only truly high-performing charters receive approval based on a stated commitment to locate and serve students in high-need areas.

Quinzi also stressed that the advantageous "high-performing" designation should be reserved for charter entities that have genuinely earned it. As previously reported in the Hotline, Commissioner of Education Michael Williams rankled State Board of Education members and raised new doubts about his judgment earlier this month by granting a waiver and giving "high-performing" designation to an out-of-state charter operator called Great Hearts despite its uneven record in other states and its lack of any record of success at all in Texas. The commissioner used the waiver to bypass the State Board's veto last November of the Great Hearts application for a charter to operate in the Dallas area.

The public-comment period on the commissioner's proposed charter rules will last until August 18. Texas AFT will supplement today's testimony with more comprehensive written comments before that deadline and will provide you with an opportunity to submit comments of your own.

See more at: <http://texasaftblog.com/hotline/?p=3899#sthash.qXcLGcAy.dpuf>

### **A FEW MORE WORDS**

**We do want to remind public school teachers that you have a real contract. In a charter school the teacher can be let go with two weeks notice. You may be given a laptop and a cell phone, but you must submit required daily reports every night by 9 p.m. You are also required to fund raise for the school.**

**Many of the charter schools are not doing well academically, and they are trying to hide this information. A few McAllen AFT members went to charter schools, but most left because of the two week notice.**