

October 28, 2002

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Update on Alternate Assessment Option of the Student Success Initiative

This letter is to provide you with an update on implementation of the Student Success Initiative (SSI). The Texas Education Agency has published in the October 11, 2002, issue of the *Texas Register* a notice to test publishers that it is seeking assessment instruments (English and Spanish) for the alternate assessment option of the SSI. This notice is available on the agency web site located at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/>.

Section 28.0211(b) of the Texas Education Code (TEC) specifies: "A school district may administer an alternate assessment instrument to a student who has failed an assessment instrument specified under Subsection (a) on the previous two opportunities." To implement this law, the commissioner by rule shall provide annually to school districts and charter schools a list of state-approved group-administered achievement tests certified by test publishers as meeting the requirements of TEC, §28.0211. This list shall include nationally recognized instruments for obtaining valid and reliable data, which demonstrate a student's competencies in the applicable subject at the appropriate grade level range. (See 19 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 101, Assessment, Subchapter BB, Commissioner's Rules Concerning the Student Success Initiative, §101.2011.)

Both criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) and norm-referenced tests (NRTs) are eligible for inclusion on the commissioner's list of alternate assessments. Proposed assessment instruments will be selected based on criteria listed in this *Texas Register* notice. This criteria includes alignment and match to the domain of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the grade and subject area tested. Proposals must also provide a plan to establish a comparable "passing" performance standard to the TAKS passing standard scheduled to be set by the State Board of Education in November 2002. A preliminary list of commissioner-approved assessment instruments for the alternate assessment option of the SSI is expected to be made available to local school districts and charter schools in January 2003. However, the list will not be final until comparable "passing" standards for these tests are established through linkage studies to be done following the March 4 TAKS administration. It is therefore strongly advised that final decisions regarding alternate assessments should not be made until the list is finalized in May 2003.

Section 101.1011, Alternate Assessment, of 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 101, Assessment, Subchapter BB, Commissioner's Rules Concerning the Student Success Initiative, is available on the agency web site located at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/>. If you require additional information, please contact Don Long, Operations Manager, Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,

Paul Cruz, Ph.D.  
Deputy Commissioner  
Dropout Prevention and Initiatives