Understanding the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Accountability System
Heightening Title 1 and non-Title 1 Elementary School Performance

Understanding the TEA accountability system is but a small part of the equation with regard to student outcomes. The TEA accountability system only measures the academic performance of a campus. On the other hand, if a campus principal understands the rudimentary process to effectively raise student achievement, then the new TEA accountability system is an asset to the campus, not a barrier. This two part document describes the three (3) TEA accountability domains' basic meaning as well as analyzing the TEA Domains to determine a pedagogical domain layering to increase student performance at either a Title 1 or non-Title 1 elementary campus.

PART 1: Three (3) Domains of TEA Accountability System – TEA Domains Defined**

Domain 1 - Student Achievement**

Measures how well students performed on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). This component is based on how many students are approaching, meeting and mastering grade level expectations.

Domain 2 – School Progress**

Consists of two subcategories. 'Academic Growth' measures how many students demonstrate a full year of academic growth in reading or math on STAAR. 'Relative Performance' is based on a comparison of students in comparison to students at other campuses with similar percentages of low-income students. Only the subcategory with the higher score will count toward the school progress score. Finally, *the higher grade* in the ***'school progress'*** or the ***'student achievement'*** category counts toward the overall campus grade. That higher grade counts for 70 percent of the overall campus grade.

Domain 3 – Closing the Gaps**

Measures performance gaps between different groups of students. The 'closing the gaps' domain ensures attention is given to each and every student. While grades in the other domains are based on all students together, this domain looks at groups of students separately. Groups include students of the same race, income level or special education status. Higher grades are awarded if all groups of students are doing well in terms of academic growth and student achievement. The '***closing the gap'*** score counts for 30 percent of the overall campus grade.

** TEA – "Answers in About a Minute" ~ A – F Accountability

PART 2: The order of the Three (3) Domains is One-Directional

Domain 1 is 'Student Achievement.' However, ***with regard to performance outcomes***, Domain 1 is a *dependent* variable of Domain 3 'Closing the Gaps' – the *independent* variable. The manner to impact student achievement on STAAR – can only be accomplished via foundational skill layering and narrowing any student's prior grade academic skill gaps. The order in which the gaps can be correlated and connected to student achievement flow *only* in one direction. The academic skill gaps must be narrowed and closed for a student to be prepared to achieve more than a grade level in academic progress. Then and only then, will 'Student Achievement' on a grade level STAAR examination be fully realized. This Domain sequencing is illustrated by inserting an electrical diode in the process. A diode allows electricity to flow in *only* one direction – symbolized in a circuit as a triangle pointing in the direction of the current flow. This analogy is shown in Figure 1 below using the 3 TEA Domains and 2 triangular diodes to illustrate that the campus work flow must be *directionally* linear.

Figure 1

In Part 1, 'Closing the Gaps' is described as factors that may affect learning based on student income, race, or special education status. These student factors are nothing more than computing student STAAR

achievement gap differences between student group classifications. Hence, the 'Closing the Gap' TEA score may be viewed as an achievement gap between two student classifications or it may viewed as an academic literacy or numeracy skill gap on a STAAR reading or mathematics assessment. In short, the academic literacy and numeracy gaps must be narrowed and closed (TEA Domain 3), or there cannot be student progress (TEA Domain 2) that yields higher STAAR grade level student achievement (TEA Domain 1). A student must possess fundamental discrete skill proficiency to relate a combination of those skills in a dependent application. If the academic skills gaps are not directly addressed, students will struggle academically, and all three (3) TEA Domains will be adversely affected.

For example, on a third grade STAAR mathematics examination, a student is given a word problem to compute the estimated difference between two (2) – two (2) digit numbers. However, the student is unable to complete the problem accurately due to prior or current grade level mathematics skill gaps. Those gaps may be in the following numeracy areas: whole number magnitude/mental fixity, place value, rounding whole numbers to the nearest ten, subtraction conceptualization or subtraction fact mastery. These numeracy skill deficiencies may be singular or in combination; however, those numeracy math gaps prevent a third grade student from consistently completing estimated difference problem correctly. If the regular education student is attending a Title 1 elementary school and he or she is classified as a non-Anglo and/or economically disadvantaged, then the TEA Domain 3, 'Closing Gaps' is also depressed. In effect, TEA Domain 3 score is lowered according, and in turn, TEA Domains 1 and 2 are also depressed. *Simply put, if Student Progress and Student Achievement (i.e. Domains 1 and 2) are to be heightened, then the academic literacy and numeracy gaps must be closed, first!*

If a Title 1 elementary school possesses the stop-gap resources to narrow and close the academic skill literacy and numeracy gaps, then the campus' TEA Domain 3 "Closing the Gaps" will be significantly heightened. Hence, a student is academically on grade level, and the daily core lessons utilizing grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) is viable without significant interventions. Consequently, the student is in the expected academic position to master grade level TEKS. With effective bridge resources, the student may readily apply grade level TEKS to proficiency in the TEKS student expectation of grade level rigor. Hence, TEA Domain 2 'Student Progress' is heightened as well as TEA Domain 1 'Student Achievement' – both STAAR metrics.

In conclusion, the key to heightened campus performance in the TEA Accountability System begins and end with closing the academic skill gaps or student group gaps. If this objective is not accomplished, then student progress and student achievement will be correspondingly depressed as well. For instance, Graham Elementary in the Austin Independent School District (Austin, Texas) utilizes free and inexpensive stop-gap resources that directly affect TEA Domain 3. Graham's 2017-18 STAAR performance is shown below in Figure 2. Graham's TEA Domain 3 score was 100 for 'Closing the Gaps.' Consequently, the campus' daily core lessons are highly effective and efficient since the students are accelerated back to grade level academics – academic skill gaps were narrowed and closed. With the use of bridge resources to apply *grade level TEKS* in a rigorous student expectation to STAAR, Student Progress and Student Achievement Domain scores were 90/92 and 91, respectively. Finally and of paramount importance, if a campus principal chooses ***not*** to directly address students' academic literacy and numeracy skill gaps, then his or her school will continually score a depressed TEA rating year after year. The TEA accountability system *only measures* a campus' academic efficacy in raising student outcomes and closing the achievement gap. It is the principal that focuses the campus' academic plight on success with deliberate and intentional actions that improves or does not improve student performance outcomes.

Graham Elementary - Austin ISD

EE – 5th Grade - 83.1% Economically Disadvantaged

Overall Score	Student Achievement	School Progress		Closing the Gaps
		Academic Growth	Relative Performance	
94	91	90	92	100

Figure 2