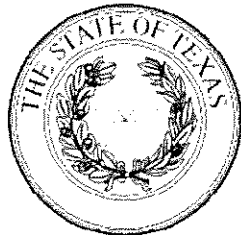


# State Board of Education

1701 North Congress Avenue

Austin, Texas 78701-1494

(512) 463-9007



Barbara Cargill  
Chair

The Woodlands, District 8

Thomas Ratliff  
Vice Chair

Mt. Pleasant, District 9

Lawrence A. Allen, Jr.  
Fresno, District 4

Donna Bahorich  
Houston, District 6

Erika Beltran  
Dallas, District 13

David Bradley  
Beaumont, District 7

Ruben Cortez, Jr.  
Brownsville, District 2

Martha M. Dominguez, Ed.D.  
El Paso, District 1

Patricia Hardy  
Fort Worth, District 11

Tom Mavnard  
Florence, District 10

Sue Melton-Malone  
Waco, District 14

Ken Mercer  
San Antonio, District 5

Geraldine Miller  
Dallas, District 12

Marisa B. Perez  
San Antonio, District 3

Marty Rowley  
Amarillo, District 15

February 13, 2015

Commissioner Michael Williams  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin TX 78701-1494

Dear Commissioner:

Over the last several months, we have had numerous communications with concerned parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and school board trustees all over the state of Texas regarding the new K-8th math standards implemented with the 2014-15 school year. As a result, the State Board of Education held a public hearing on November 20, 2014 to recap the history of how the math standards were developed, listen to concerns and understand the challenges associated with the implementation. As a result of our communications and investigations, we believe a necessary and vitally important transition period regarding accountability for math must take place for the 2014-15 school year and possibly 2015-16 for 3rd-8th grade students.

Before we list our considerations for requesting a transition period, it is important to highlight the history of the evolution of the new K-8th math Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The original TEKS were implemented in 1998-99. The 2014-15 implementation encompasses the first full-scale revision in sixteen years. During that sixteen years, much had changed in the rigor and relevance required for math instruction to align with college and career readiness standards. As a result, the TEKS from the 1998-99 standards were not used as the beginning document for this major revision.

A group of thirteen Texas math experts, known as the Commissioner's Mathematics Advisory Group, were assembled by previous Education Commissioner Scott and charged with reviewing current research and resources and to develop recommendations for the next generation of math standards. In addition, the recommendations of the advisory group were reviewed by another group of nine experts, again selected by the commissioner, the National Review Team. The result of this work was "The Commissioner's Draft of Texas Mathematics Standards." In the Commissioner's Draft, some of the knowledge



and skills were shifted from one grade to another based on the research and benchmarks in the 2008 Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel commissioned by President George W. Bush. The Commissioner's Draft is where our regular TEKS review panels and the seven experts appointed by the State Board of Education began their work. **After two years of work by state and national experts, the math standards were approved in 2012.**

We believe that learning our new Texas math standards will place our students in a good position to compete nationally and internationally. However, it is important to list the major considerations bringing us to the need for a reasonable period of transition for students, parents and teachers:

- The math terminology in the revision is so vastly different that an interactive math glossary has been published by the agency to be sure that teachers have a good resource to learn the math language expected in the classroom.
- The terminology and expectations are so different that teachers, students and parents cannot just rely on what they were taught or learned previously. Students must learn required process standards to develop a strong understanding of numbers and number sense. We want our students to not only know their facts but to understand numbers in a “second nature” way.
- Though the standards were approved in 2012 and a time of transition was envisioned until 2014, **teachers and students were still assessed on the old standards in 2012-13 and 2013-14, not the new standards.** Trying to prepare for the upcoming expected changes in standards while still being held accountable for the old standards is unrealistic given the crowded time in a typical math class, especially for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **Importantly, the instructional materials (IMs) related to the new standards were not approved and ready for use until the 2014-15 school year.** Teachers had no IMs, even if they found some time to work in the new standards.
- While professional development is called for and has happened in various parts of the state, it has not been nearly enough or nearly as universally strong as it needs to be to ensure teachers are ready and able to teach our students. Further, in many instances over the past several years, the numbers of instructional supervisors in mathematics were reduced due to budgetary constraints.
- **Many standards have changed and moved grade levels to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment with college and career readiness standards and international benchmarks.** The percent of new content for each grade level ranges from 26% for 4<sup>th</sup> grade to as high as 55% in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **Finally and most crucially, the original plan for accountability assessments was to test the overlap between the old and new standards for each grade this year. However, there was such a minimal overlap that any test would be statistically invalid, having insufficient numbers of questions for many grades. If ever a transition time was needed, it is for our math standards right now.**

We believe our math standards are important and worth supporting without the counterproductive pressure for students and teachers during the transition. Many skills for the new standards were not covered in last year's math classrooms. However, due to the realignment of content across grade levels, the new standards assume previous coverage. Teachers are working diligently to help their students catch up and fill in the gaps. We are very concerned that the current accountability requirements are working against an effective implementation and having a detrimental impact on teachers who are responsible for filling in the gaps as well as teaching this year's grade-level requirements. Filling in the gaps is critical to all student-learning in math as they progress to higher level courses. Can we afford to allow students to have any gaps? Filling the gaps takes the time and space to do so. **We feel it is more than appropriate, in fact called for, to allow such a time and space. We must offer teachers and, most importantly, the students the support and time needed to ensure real learning can take place.**

As to support, the agency has already assembled a one-stop webpage to help districts, teachers, parents and students find available math resources. **We request an additional specific focus on other ways the agency could support and work with districts and education service centers to ensure the high quality, content-specific professional development for teachers necessary over the next two years for a successful math standards implementation.** In the end, it must be about doing all we can to make sure our students have every opportunity to acquire essential skills in math. Appropriate teacher support and preparation is absolutely critical in this effort.

Accountability, including assessments of students, is and will continue to be an important gauge to make sure our students are progressing toward expectations. **However, a "safe passage" is in order during this transition with our new math standards.** The individual members of the State Board of Education signed below support a "report only," "hold harmless" or other equally helpful relief from accountability requirements for math grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> for the 2014-15 school year. **Assessment results will still be vital for professional development and instructional purposes.** In the case of the "hold harmless" solution, if a campus or a district meets standards with the assessment of the new 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> math standards, then that rating would stand. However, if a campus or district did not meet standards, we request removing the 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> math scores and issuing a campus or district rating without the math scores, whatever the rating may be. We request that you consider using the calculation reports that would be able to show results with and without math 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. As mentioned below, the System Safeguards would remain the same for federal purposes.

Regarding federal accountability requirements, a campus or district's System Safeguards are where the 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> math scores would have an impact. Considering the need for these results to be included in a campus action plan (CAP) to meet federal requirements, we do not see a need to change reporting for federal requirements.

Thanks for your hard work on behalf of all the students in Texas. We appreciate you and look forward to your timely response to this request.

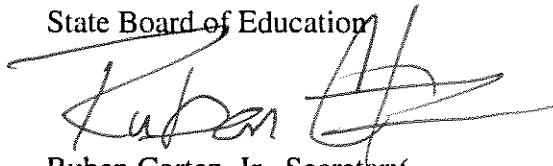
Respectfully,



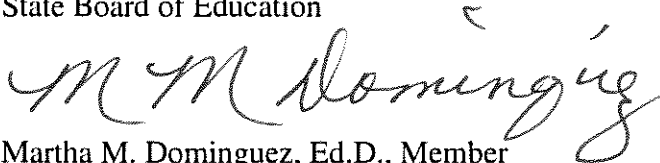
Barbara Cargill, Chair  
State Board of Education



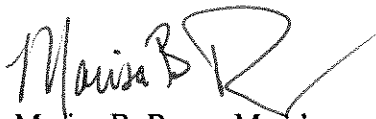
Thomas Ratliff, Vice Chair  
State Board of Education



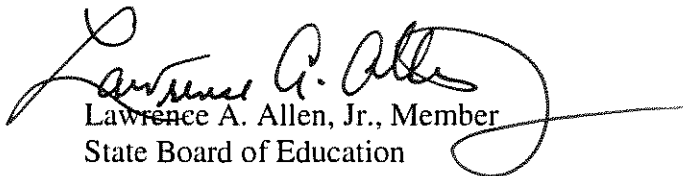
Ruben Cortez, Jr., Secretary  
State Board of Education



Martha M. Dominguez, Ed.D., Member  
State Board of Education



Marisa B. Perez, Member  
State Board of Education



Lawrence A. Allen, Jr., Member  
State Board of Education



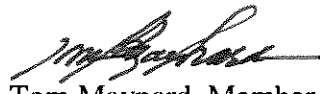
Ken Mercer, Member  
State Board of Education



Donna Bahorich, Member  
State Board of Education



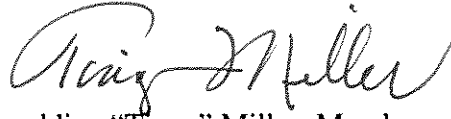
David Bradley, Member  
State Board of Education



Tom Maynard, Member  
State Board of Education



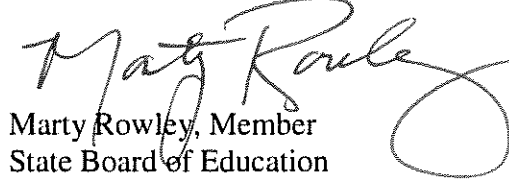
Pat Hardy, Member  
State Board of Education



Geraldine "Tincy" Miller, Member  
State Board of Education



Sue Melton-Malone, Member  
State Board of Education



Marty Rowley, Member  
State Board of Education