



STAAR Faces Questioning From Lawmakers

by [Ben Philpott](#), Jan. 24, 2012

Texas lawmakers on Monday reviewed how schools are planning to implement a new standardized testing system, and they came armed with plenty of questions.

The new test is called [STAAR](#), which stands for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Questions mainly centered on the end-of-course exams that ninth-grade students will take in May.

Former state Rep. Jim Dunnam has one of those ninth graders at home. He came to the committee hearing because his daughter received a first-semester report card with no GPA and no semester grades for some of her classes.

“When I got it, I sort of scratched my head and didn’t think too much of it,” Dunnam said. “And then ultimately somebody reminded me that I voted for [House Bill 3](#). That made 15 percent of her GPA dependent on a test she’s going to take in May, that the school will score sometime in June. And then we’ll find out what she made last semester, next fall.”

He said the test will not affect students’ GPAs until lawmakers think the system is ready to face the state’s accountability system. STAAR will not count towards schools’ or school districts’ state rankings until 2013.

But that was just one issue.

Some also wanted to know if teachers would be ready, how much each end-of-course exam would count toward a student’s final grade, and how schools would pay for remediation when a student doesn’t pass the test.

And what happens if a student fails a test just days before graduation? Could that keep a student from graduating on time?

Gloria Zyskowski, the Texas Education Agency’s director of student assessment, says yes.

“If they, in fact, wait until their senior year to take physics, then you are correct,” Zyskowski said. “If they wait and they don’t finish the course until the second semester of their senior year, that is correct, that they would have that one administration before graduation.”

Students will begin taking the STAAR test in March. The first year of testing is expected to give administrators and lawmakers plenty to work on heading into the 2013 legislative session.