Is STAAR too hard on young readers?

The standardized test is in lawmakers’ crosshairs again.

Texas’ unpolarized statewide standardized test is once again under the microscope. This time around a controversial Texas Monthly article has questioned whether the test is evaluating elementary and middle school students based on reading passages that are one to three grade levels above their level.

Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath, along with academic experts and educators, will appear before the House Public Education Committee on Tuesday to answer questions about the test, known as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR. Then, the panel will consider a state bill proposing slashing the number of state-required STAAR exams.

Educators and parents have been arguing for years that the STAAR is too high-stakes and an inaccurate measure of whether students are academically succeeding. Lawmakers have generally been sympathetic to this argument, passing laws over the last several years to drastically reduce the number of required exams and shorten the length of some assessments.

But the Texas Monthly story has brought a new round of scrutiny. The article is based on two studies, from 2012 and 2016, that ran test passages through formulas designed to analyze their complexity and found they were generally too advanced for Texas students. Education advocates are pointing to the studies to argue that the test is wrongly judging whether students can read at or above grade level.

The backlash could also impact the state’s polling locations. Voting Box Changes

Voting Box Changes

Marvin County Clerk Vickie Smith explains to commissioners, Monday, their vote endorsing Countywide Electronic Day Polling Protocols would be a “first step” toward reducing the number of Election Day polls from 10 to seven. Voters would be allowed to cast their ballots, however, in any box in the county without having to return to the one associated with their residence. If the move to seven boxes proved successful, it would also consider a vote to move to five polling places for other elections.

To make matters worse, the town of Jefferson has been Rounds of debates for greater measures to control cat colonies. Lawmakers have also claimed the city’s “Trap Neuter Release” program has had a range in the difficulty of passages so that students of differing ability levels can access the passages at their reading level.

Sanford-Moore said in a statement to the Tribune. But advocates argue that teachers are expertly judging grade-level text in the classroom, and use Lexile measures as one piece of evidence showing whether students are succeeding.

“Lexile scores are not used to test a child’s grade level, and they’re not limited to determining whether a state assessment like STAAR is grade-appropriate,” Sanford-Moore said.

“Some types of [state standardized tests] will have a range in the difficulty of passages so that students of differing ability levels can access the passages at their reading level,” Sanford-Moore said in a statement to the Tribune.

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“If you have a kid and you’ve told your parents in your second-year math that your students doing very, very poorly, they’re reading on grade level, and let’s say the day we hear that a student is doing well — and then it comes back with the label of approach grade level. That’s where we are in the discussion, and we have a range in the difficulty of passages so that students of differing ability levels can access the passages at their reading level,” Sanford-Moore said.

The Texas Monthly story asked, “What is STAAR too hard on young readers?”

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“The cats do serve a good purpose,” Goolsby said. “They kill the vermin like mice and rats and snakes. We have had snakes in the past.”

“Decades of research calls for greater measures to control rat populations or can be controlled by trap-neuter strategies,” wrote. “Meanwhile, evidence that cats can control rat populations is well established. “Lexile measures are one piece of evidence showing whether students are succeeding.”

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