



P.O. Box 232  
MT. PLEASANT, TX 75456

THOMAS RATLIFF  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEMBER, DISTRICT 9

TEL: (903) 717-1190  
WWW.THOMASRATLIFF.COM

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Contact: Thomas Ratliff  
(903) 717-1190

### COME ON, MAN!

The sports broadcast, ESPN, has a segment called "Come on, man!" where they talk about various sports highlights. Some of these highlights showcase unbelievable talent, while other highlights show examples of poor sportsmanship or other bad ideas.

After reading the proposed rulemaking released today from the Texas Education Agency regarding alternatives to the state's End Of Course (EOC) testing regime, I find myself saying, "Come on, man!" Let me explain.

First, I want to say "Way to go, man!" to TEA for proposing a rule to implement a law that was passed over 4 years ago. This rule is long overdue and I fear this kind of delay is the result of having an agency's staff cut back to the point where they are no longer able to adequately accomplish their mission as defined by the Texas Legislature. But, nevertheless, this is a step in the right direction.

Now, regarding the specifics of the rule, I have to transition to "Come on, man!" In this rule, TEA acknowledges that other tests like the Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests can adequately measure student performance. But, in Section 101.4002 of the proposed rules, the agency requires a student who takes one of these tests to ALSO take Pearson's test! Why? Colleges around the state and country recognize the AP and IB tests as accurate predictors of college readiness. Why doesn't the agency that oversees our public schools? This is a prime example of having a system that is so rigid that it is no longer meeting the needs of employers or colleges because we are choosing to assess our students in a way that is meaningless to both. Does TEA think Pearson's tape measure is better than the one used by everyone else? If so, why don't employers, colleges and universities use it?

Unfortunately, I also have to say, "Come on, man!" when I look at the passing standards proposed by TEA. If a high school student takes the AP or IB test to receive course credit and indicate college readiness, TEA wants that student to achieve a 4 out of a possible 5 on the test. This standard is as high, or higher, than Colleges and Universities require for a student to receive college CREDIT for many courses. TEA's passing standard should only be a way to measure college READINESS, not to receive college CREDIT!

With regards to TEA comparing the STAAR test to the AP or IB test for “comparable rigor,” I suggest that we cannot simply compare one test to the other without taking into consideration the “passing” or “strike” score on those tests. It is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that a passing score on the AP test isn’t at least as rigorous as the current strike score in the 35-45% range for the STAAR test. Simply making a test hard doesn’t indicate readiness. We must look at the student performance on the test in order to gather meaningful information for employers, taxpayers, and institutions of higher education.

This kind of artificial barrier hurts kids, angers parents, and confuses policymakers at all levels. I will do whatever I can to address this issue at the Legislature, the State Board of Education, or the court of public opinion. This kind of punitive policymaking has got to stop.

I look forward to TEA being receptive to input in this rule-making process and making the necessary changes to ensure our testing and accountability system are in line with the goals of a K-12 education.

The link to the TEA proposed rule can be found here:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147510593>