



## House measure to kill TAKS moving forward

Web Posted: 05/14/2007 10:27 PM CDT

**Lisa Sandberg**  
**Austin Bureau**

AUSTIN — Texas House members on Monday gave tentative approval to a bill that would eliminate the high-stakes, highly unpopular Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in grades 6 through 12.

Instead, high school students would be required to take 12 standardized end-of-year exams in four core courses. But in a dramatic overhaul to the state's 20-year-old testing requirements one amendment would allow students to graduate from high school without passing the exams.

The exams instead would be 25 percent of a student's grade in each course.

The bill's author, Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, was quick to dispel any suggestion that his proposal would weaken academic standards.

"We're intensifying standards," Eissler said, by encouraging teachers to focus on their subject areas and "teach to content, not teach to the test. Teachers can go into greater depth and rigor."

The bill is expected to get final passage in the House today.

Last month, the Senate passed a bill that also would replace the 10 TAKS with 12 exams.

But the Senate bill, by Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, would begin in stages in 2009, two years before the House plan, and apply only to high school students; TAKS would continue to be administered to sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

The end-of-year tests would be 15 percent of a student's overall grade. To graduate, students would need a cumulative passing score of 840 points. It's the equivalent of 70 on each exam, but students could fail some tests and still graduate if they did well on others.

Shapiro said she had not had time to study the amendments on Eissler's bill but indicated she would oppose many of them should the bill land in conference committee.

Eissler appeared ready to negotiate. The Senate "may say absolutely no (to the amendments). I'm open," he said, adding that he accepted every one of his colleagues' nine amendments because he wanted to see the bill reach the conference committee.

For 20 years, Texas high school students have been required to pass assessment tests as a condition for graduation. Parents and educators have complained that too much classroom time is spent preparing students for the tests.

Brooke Terry, an education expert with the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation, said her group doesn't like the TAKS but thinks the House bill goes too far.

"So if you don't have to pass the test, how do we have any way of knowing if the students have mastered the material?"

---

*lsandberg@express-news.net*

---

Online at: [http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA051507.08A.taks\\_bill.33e83d2.html](http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA051507.08A.taks_bill.33e83d2.html)