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**HISD moves away from high-stakes testing in**

**student grade-level promotion decisions**

*Board also approves 2017-2018 calendar that gives students and staff a full week off for Thanksgiving*

*Jan. 13, 2017* – The Houston ISD Board of Education voted Thursday to join with other school districts that only use students’ scores on high-stakes standardized tests for grade-level promotion decisions when doing so is required by Texas law. The decision is effective immediately for the 2016-2017 school year and beyond.

Texas law requires students to pass the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in math and reading in grades five and eight. The state also mandates that high school students pass STAAR end-of-course exams. Because this is state law, HISD students will still be required to pass these STAAR exams.

In the past, HISD has additionally required students in grades three, four, six and seven to pass STAAR reading and math exams in order to move along to the next grade level. But recent changes to the state’s testing calendar mean that results from these STAAR exams are not expected until mid-June, which is too late for schools and parents to know whether a child did not pass STAAR and needs to attend summer school.

In addition to the issues created by the later release of STAAR exam results, HISD and other school districts across the state have reported widespread problems with the state’s administration of STAAR exams. These problems have reduced public confidence in the integrity of the results.

On Thursday, HISD trustees also adopted a 2017-2018 academic calendar that won support from 89 percent of the 75,000 students, parents, employees and community members who participated in an online survey. The calendar grants students and staff a full week off for Thanksgiving. The 2017-2018 school year calendar includes the required 75,600 minutes of instruction and 13 service/preparation days for teachers. The first day of school will be Aug. 28, 2017; the last day of instruction will be June 1, 2018.