

TAKS Successes

Percentage of Texas Students Passing Reading and Math Remains High

Texas students continue to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams in both reading and math in very high percentages, according to recent statistics released by the Texas Education Agency.

TAKS Reading

Eighty-nine percent of Texas students who took the TAKS reading test passed, which means they have cleared a key promotion requirement. Texas students must pass the state's third-grade reading TAKS, fifth-grade reading and math TAKS, and eighth-grade reading and math exams to be promoted to the next grade under the Texas School Success Initiative requirement.

Forty-six percent of the 315,727 students who took the third-grade exam in English received a Commended Performance designation because they earned a scale score of 2,400 or higher. A passing score on TAKS is 2,100.

Among the 34,941 third-grade students who took the TAKS in Spanish, 83 percent passed the reading test—and 29 percent earned Commended Performance.

Fifth-grade students who were tested in English had an 83 percent passing rate on the reading exam. This test was taken by 322,982 students in March. Thirty percent of these students reached the Commended Performance level.

Among the 7,720 fifth-grade students who took a Spanish language reading test, 68 percent passed and 18 percent earned the Commended Performance designation.

In eighth grade, 319,292 students took the reading test. This class posted the highest passing rate, with 93 percent passing the test. Forty-eight percent reached the Commended Performance level. There is not a Spanish-language test available at this grade.

TAKS Math

Eighty-four percent of fifth-grade students and 79 percent of eighth-graders passed the TAKS math test on the first administration.

At fifth grade, 84 percent of the 327,055 students who took the TAKS math test in English passed, and 44 percent earned Commended Performance.

Of the 4,627 students who took the TAKS fifth-grade math exam in Spanish, 45 percent passed—and 13 percent performed at the Commended Performance level.

Among eighth-grade students, 79 percent of the 317,830 students tested passed the math TAKS, and 24 percent earning Commended Performance. There is not a Spanish language test available in this grade.

Under state law, students who fail these exams must be



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given extra instructional help. If a student is in jeopardy of being retained, parents can appeal the retention to a Grade Placement Committee, which consists of parents, the child's teacher, and the principal. If in unanimous agreement, the committee may promote the child to the next grade, but additional instructional help must be provided.

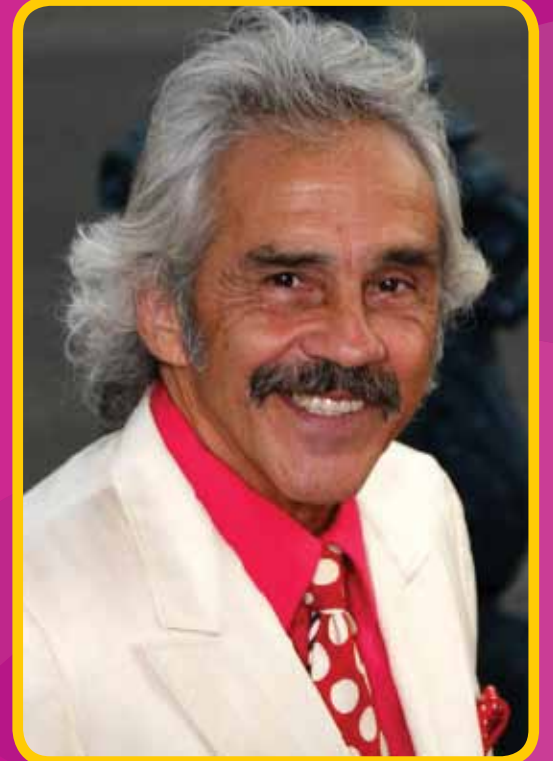
Bills under review by the Texas Legislature propose repealing the promotion requirements tied to testing.★

Pepe Serna

W.B. Ray High School
Corpus Christi ISD

Raised in Corpus Christi, where he was classmates at W.B. Ray High School with future actress/model Farrah Fawcett, actor Pepe Serna went to Hollywood in 1969 after the Mexican premiere of the Broadway musical "Hair" was shut down by Mexican officials after one performance. Serna's first break in movies came in 1970 on the Roger Corman-directed film *Student Nurses*. Serna has since appeared in more than 100 films, most notably *Car Wash* and Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. He has also appeared on stage and presented workshops on acting improvisation to schoolchildren.

Serna has been honored by the League of United Latin American Citizens, and he has received the Screen Actors Guild Heritage Achievement Award and the prestigious Estrella Award for Arts & Culture from the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Serna's paintings, which reflect themes and styles of Mexico, have been collected widely, and he has received various significant commissions. Serna and his wife, Diane, live on Balboa Island, California.



"My drama teacher was Mrs. Betty Hughes, and my choir teacher was Mrs. Aurelia Scoggins. They were both very positive and inspirational. My mom was my biggest supporter, along with my whole family. Farrah Fawcett was a year behind me, and she was already the most beautiful and popular girl in school. I would love for us all to send her our prayers."