

# Don't burn those TAKS tests yet

"Miss Ardis, have you heard?" a group of my students asked me two weeks ago. "Heard what?" I asked. "This is the last year we're going to have to take the TAKS!" I hated to squash my students' excitement, but I warned them this debate was ongoing and no final decision had been rendered.

I'm aware that the Legislature has been discussing the issue of TAKS this session, but I hadn't heard anything concrete, so I decided to contact the Austin office of State Rep. Veronica Gonzales. Before any districts

plan a bonfire for all of your TAKS materials, be sure you read this.

Senate Bill 1031 was voted out of the Public Education Committee



**CHRIS ARDIS**

## COMMENTARY

of the House last week. It is expected to go before the full house this week, and Gonzales believes there is strong likelihood it will pass. For many educators, students and parents, this is great news. My students will not be rejoicing, however. If the bill passes, it will not take effect until the 2011-12 school year. Even then, it will

courses: Algebra I and II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, II and III, world geography, world history and U.S. history.

In order for students to earn a high school diploma under the plan being considered in the House, they must perform satisfactorily on the following: English III, either Algebra II or geometry, either biology, chemistry or physics and either world geography, world history or U.S. history. The bill allows for satisfactory performance on an Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Standard Achievement Test (SAT) or other test the commissioner of education deems at least as rigorous as the EOC to be used in place of the EOC. There are rumors circulating that it will be a cumulative score.

However, according to Gonzales' staff, because the House made changes to the bill, it will have to go to a conference committee before the final draft is drawn.

It will be mandatory for EOCs to account for 15 percent of the student's final grade in all of the courses that have one. The tests cannot be administered until the first full week of May, with the exception of the spring administration of English I, II and III EOCs.

A change to EOCs would not mean the end to all standardized testing. SB 1031 also would require all eighth graders to take an "established valid, reliable and nationally norm-referenced preliminary college prep assessment instrument for the purpose of

diagnosing academic strengths and deficiencies" in the spring. Tenth graders also would take a standardized test to measure their progress toward college and workplace readiness. During the spring of 11th grade or during 12th grade, students would have the option of taking a standardized college admissions test.

SB, TAKS, EOC, TEA, AP, IB and SAT. Now that I have shared my educational alphabet soup with you, here is the bottom line. Students currently in seventh through eleventh grades are stuck with the TAKS the way it looks right now. Current fifth graders may be the lucky ones. Now we have to see how the TEA develops the tests and if the students will finally be given the opportunity to truly learn and explore content instead of being taught a test. With the help of Gonzales and her staff, I will keep you posted.

*Chris Ardis is a teacher for the McAllen school district. To reach her, send e-mail to [Cardis1022@aol.com](mailto:Cardis1022@aol.com).*