

**Curriculum Theory Assignment:
Ideology Analysis of TEKS and Texas A-F Accountability System**

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Scholar Academic Ideology

Scholar Academic Ideology	
Aims:	The main goal of schooling is to transmit the knowledge and ways of thinking that academic disciplines have developed over time. Schools exist to bring students into the world of scholarly thought, preserving and carrying forward cultural and intellectual traditions into the next generation.
Child:	Children are seen as minds waiting to be developed. They come to school as intellectual works-in-progress who need to be introduced to disciplinary knowledge by those who already possess it. Their job is to receive and internalize what the discipline has to offer.
Learning:	Learning happens when students absorb content and ways of thinking from the discipline. Ideally, students begin to feel like scholars in that field, asking questions, using the discipline's methods, and gradually building a deeper understanding of its core ideas.
Teaching:	Teachers are expected to be deeply knowledgeable in their subject area, almost like junior scholars. Their role is to present the discipline clearly and accurately, using tools like direct instruction, guided discussion, and practice to help students understand and internalize the material.
Knowledge:	Knowledge worth teaching is that which belongs to a recognized academic discipline. It should reflect both the content of the field and the methods scholars use to generate and verify that content. It needs to be objective, teachable, and grounded in the discipline's structure.
Evaluation:	Assessment should be objective and tell us how well students have absorbed the discipline's knowledge. Tests are used not just to determine who passed, but to rank students and schools from highest to lowest performance, which drives competition and motivates improvement across the board.

Social Efficiency Ideology

Social Efficiency Ideology	
Aims:	The purpose of education is to prepare students to function effectively as adults in society. Schools should identify the skills people need to live and work successfully, then teach those skills as efficiently as possible so that graduates can contribute to the broader functioning of their communities.
Child:	Children are seen primarily in terms of what they will become as adults. Childhood is a period of preparation, not something valuable in itself. The

	focus is on building the behaviors and competencies the child will need later, with the adult role always serving as the target.
Learning:	Learning means that a student's behavior has measurably changed. If a student could not do something before instruction and can do it after, learning has occurred. Skills are broken into small steps, practiced repeatedly, and built up gradually until they become second nature.
Teaching:	The teacher's role is more that of a manager or coach than a knowledge expert. Teachers set up the learning environment, keep students moving through the material, provide feedback, and make adjustments as needed. Their success is measured by how much their students actually learn.
Knowledge:	Knowledge is practical and action-oriented. It's not enough to know something in theory—students need to be able to use it. The most valuable knowledge is what allows people to perform the tasks society needs them to perform, and it can be broken down into specific, teachable skills.
Evaluation:	Assessment is about checking whether students can actually do what they were taught to do. Results are used to hold teachers, schools, and districts accountable for student performance. Data drives decisions about where to focus resources and how to improve outcomes for all students.

Alignment with Scholar Academic Ideology

When examining the Texas A-F accountability system through the lens of curriculum ideology, the Scholar Academic framework emerges as a dominant influence. The connection becomes clear when looking at how the system prioritizes academic content mastery, structures performance hierarchies, and uses comparative ranking to drive school improvement.

The accountability system reflects Scholar Academic values from the ground up. The 2024 Accountability Manual describes the system as being shaped by input from "educators, school board members, business and community representatives, professional organizations, and legislative representatives from across the state" (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2024, p. 3). The Student Achievement domain, the first and most heavily weighted domain, evaluates "campus performance based on student achievement in three areas: performance on STAAR assessments, College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) indicators, and graduation rates" (TEA, 2024, p. 13). Placing standardized academic test performance at the center of how schools are evaluated reflects the Scholar Academic belief that curriculum must be derived from and measured against recognized academic disciplines. As Schiro (2013) explains, Scholar Academics insist that "the only source for curriculum content is the discipline itself" and that standards should reflect "the most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the underlying principles" within each field (p. 32).

The STAAR component's structure makes the Scholar Academic alignment even more explicit. Student performance is measured across three ascending tiers: Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level, which are weighted and averaged to produce a domain score (TEA, 2024, p. 13). This tiered hierarchy of mastery reflects the Scholar Academic understanding that knowledge must be measured objectively and that students should be evaluated on how deeply they have internalized disciplinary content. The higher tiers (Meets and Masters) are weighted more heavily in the scoring formula, prioritizing genuine disciplinary mastery over minimal proficiency; consistent with the Scholar Academic view that students should learn "in a manner that parallels the way in which the discipline obtains new knowledge" (Schiro, 2013, p. 46).

The A-F rating structure itself is the most unmistakable evidence of Scholar Academic ideology. The manual states that "districts and campuses receive an overall rating, as well as a rating for each domain," with letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F assigned based on performance thresholds (TEA, 2024, p. 4). This creates a public ranking system in which every school is positioned on a visible hierarchy; not just pass or fail, but graded on a scale that allows direct comparison across campuses, districts, and the state. Schiro (2013) notes that Scholar Academics "believe in aggregating student scores on high-stakes testing and using the results to compare schools and school districts" specifically to "stimulate competition between school systems and thereby improve their rankings" (p. 52). The A-F system operationalizes this philosophy precisely.

The system's consequences for low performance reinforce this Scholar Academic logic. The manual specifies that TEA tracks "consecutive years of F or Improvement Required overall ratings" beginning with 2014 ratings, and that persistent low performance triggers escalating state sanctions and interventions (TEA, 2024, p. 101). A rating of A, B, or C resets the count, while sustained D or F ratings accumulate toward mandatory intervention (TEA, 2024, p. 101). This structure treats academic performance data as the authoritative measure of a school's worth. It uses it to determine real institutional consequences, reflecting the Scholar Academic

conviction that "testing and assessment results are our greatest single source of information on academic performance" (Schiro, 2013, p. 52).

There is also a self-reinforcing feedback loop embedded in the system. Because STAAR assessments are designed to evaluate mastery of TEKS content across academic subject areas (TEA, 2024, p. 13), schools that want to improve their A-F ratings must keep disciplinary academic content at the center of instruction. This is exactly what Scholar Academics endorse. As Schiro (2013) observes, from their perspective, "teachers and schools will be encouraged to 'teach to' them" because "preparing students for these exams will comprise a sizable portion of what schools do" (p. 53). The accountability structure, in other words, ensures that the Scholar Academic priority of academic content transmission remains the dominant purpose of schooling in Texas.

The evidence for Scholar Academic alignment throughout the accountability system is substantial. The Student Achievement domain elevates STAAR-based academic performance as the primary measure of school quality (TEA, 2024, p. 13). The A-F grading structure creates visible hierarchical rankings that drive competition among schools (TEA, 2024, p. 4). Consequences for sustained underperformance hold institutions accountable to academic standards through state intervention (TEA, 2024, p. 101). Together, these design features position mastery of academic content, assessed objectively and ranked comparably, as the core purpose of public education in Texas.

Alignment with Social Efficiency Ideology

While the Scholar Academic ideology shapes much of the accountability system's competitive ranking structure, examining the same policies through a Social Efficiency lens reveals an equally powerful layer of ideological influence, one focused on measurable behavioral outcomes, efficient production of workforce-ready graduates, and data-driven institutional accountability.

The most direct evidence appears in how the accountability system operationalizes student performance. The STAAR component measures students against three discrete, criterion-referenced performance tiers: Approaches Grade Level or above, Meets Grade Level or above, and Masters Grade Level (TEA, 2024, p. 13). Each tier represents a defined behavioral threshold; students either demonstrate the specified competency or they do not. This is not a holistic evaluation of student understanding; it is a precisely engineered system for determining whether students have reached predetermined performance benchmarks. Schiro (2013) identifies this as a defining feature of Social Efficiency curriculum design, which relies on "activity analysis," the decomposition of complex learning into "specific, atomistic skills" that can be assessed objectively and arranged hierarchically (p. 64). Every domain in the accountability system produces a numerical score derived from these threshold measurements, creating data that can be compared, tracked over time, and used to engineer institutional improvement.

The accountability system's overall design makes its Social Efficiency orientation explicit. The manual states that the system evaluates performance according to three domains: Student Achievement, School Progress, and Closing the Gaps (TEA, 2024, p. 3). Each domain produces quantifiable data that flows into a formula generating letter grades for schools and districts (TEA, 2024, p. 4). The system is built around the assumption that educational quality can be precisely measured, that those measurements should be used to hold institutions accountable, and that schools will respond predictably to the resulting rewards and consequences. As Schiro (2013) explains, Social Efficiency educators "hold themselves accountable to their clients" and demonstrate that accountability "by evaluating the efforts of curriculum developers and teachers to produce evidence that the needs of the curriculum client have been fulfilled" (p. 94). The public A-F rating system makes this evidence transparent and consequential.

Nowhere is the Social Efficiency ideology more explicitly embedded than in the CCMR component. The manual defines CCMR as measuring "graduates' preparedness for college, the workforce, or the military," with qualifying indicators including meeting Texas Success Initiative (TSI) criteria, earning industry-based certifications (IBCs), completing dual credit hours, passing AP or IB examinations, earning an associate degree, completing OnRamps dual enrollment, or enlisting in the armed forces (TEA, 2024, pp. 16–17). These indicators are not measures of broad intellectual development; they are specific, verifiable credentials tied to identifiable adult social and economic roles. This directly enacts the Social Efficiency ideology's central aim: "to prepare the individual to lead a meaningful adult life in society" (Schiro, 2013, p. 70). The CCMR framework embodies Bobbitt's foundational claim that "education is preparation for life, and life is a series of activities" (as cited in Schiro, 2013, p. 70).

The consequences system described in Chapter 9 of the manual further demonstrates Social Efficiency logic. The manual states that TEA tracks consecutive years of "F or Improvement Required overall ratings" and that persistent low performance escalates into mandatory state interventions, including accreditation review and potential campus restructuring (TEA, 2024, p. 101). A third consecutive D triggers sanctions equivalent to those applied after

sustained F ratings (TEA, 2024, p. 101). Conversely, schools earning A, B, or C ratings have their consecutive count reset; a built-in reward that encourages improvement. This stimulus-response architecture, where institutional behavior is shaped through calibrated rewards and penalties, reflects the Social Efficiency view that "causation is conceived within a context in which cause and effect, action and reaction, or stimulus and response are linked together in a deterministic pattern" (Schiro, 2013, p. 76).

The School Progress domain adds a temporal dimension to this Social Efficiency framework. Part A: Academic Growth measures the "percentage of students who grew at least one year academically as measured by STAAR results" (Annual Growth) alongside the percentage who moved from Did Not Meet Grade Level in the prior year to Approaches Grade Level or above in the current year (Accelerated Learning) (TEA, 2024, p. 25). This is a direct measure of behavioral change over time, the central criterion of learning in Social Efficiency ideology. Schiro (2013) defines Social Efficiency learning as "a change in behavior" that is observable and quantifiable (p. 88). The growth model does not ask what students know in the abstract; it asks whether specific, predetermined performance thresholds have been crossed from one year to the next.

The Social Efficiency ideology's influence on the Texas accountability system is unmistakable and thoroughly documented in the manual itself. STAAR performance is measured against discrete behavioral thresholds at three tiers (TEA, 2024, p. 13). Three domains generate quantifiable data to hold institutions accountable to societal clients (TEA, 2024, p. 3). CCMR indicators prepare graduates for specific workforce, college, and military roles (TEA, 2024, pp. 16–17). Consecutive rating tracking and escalating sanctions engineer institutional behavior through stimulus and response (TEA, 2024, p. 101). Academic growth is measured as observable behavioral change year over year (TEA, 2024, p. 25). Together, these design features position Texas schools as instruments for efficiently producing adults equipped with the competencies society needs; precisely what the Social Efficiency ideology envisions.

References

Schiro, M. S. (2013). Curriculum theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Texas Education Agency. (2024). 2024 accountability manual for Texas public school districts and campuses.

<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/2024-accountability-manual>