

Governor Perry signs sweeping education bill

Written by Jonathan Tilove
Wednesday, 12 June 2013 13:48

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Ending days of speculation, on Monday, Gov. Rick Perry signed education reform legislation that will roll back the number of high-stakes tests and seek to provide greater opportunities for students who are not college bound.

House Bill 5 was one of six education reform bills that Perry signed Monday that he said together, “strike an appropriate balance between our need for rigorous academic standards and the students’ need for flexibility.”

The new law will reduce the number of end-of-course exams needed to graduate from high school from 15 to five, and replace the uniform 4x4 graduation plan — four years each of math, science, social studies and English — with more flexible options.

House Public Education Chairman Jimmie Don Aycock, R-Killeen, the chief architect of the reform, said fears that it would undermine rigor for college-bound students were unfounded, and the beneficiaries would be more than 40 percent of high school students in Texas who are not headed to college but need training to pursue successful careers.

There was speculation in recent days that Perry might veto the bill, and Aycock admitted to some nervous moments.

“You never know,” said Aycock. “It only becomes law when the ink is dry.”

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And he said, after the signing, in the case of HB 5, “the ink is dry — thank the Lord.”