In 2011-12 the State Board of Education oversaw the rewriting of math standards. This process, more than any prior math standards (TEKS) process, brought input from a large pool of math leaders and teachers. Literally hundreds had input via the internet. As the groups assembled in Austin to produce these new TEKS they relied upon a number of sources….Singapore math, the current TEKS, etc. They even looked at Common Core Math Standards. Pulling ideas from a variety of sources they have produced the new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills….while they were adopted in 2012, the date for when districts must be teaching the new TEKS was in the fall of 2014, done to coincide with a new math textbook or instructional materials adoption.

Anything new is a challenge. The Commissioner recognized this which resulted in the moratorium on counting the grade 5 and grade 8 STAAR results in the accountability system. The new TEKS are more robust than the previous ones, education should not be static, we need to raise the bar which is exactly what has been done with the new TEKS. The new TEKS are much more conceptually based which by all accounts of the leaders in the math world is the direction that our students should take. That is possibly why American students have fallen behind the international students in the field of mathematics.

There have been complications which I would like to innumerate:

* The gaps in instruction-for example….in the old TEKS a concept may have been taught in Grade 4, now it is in Grade 3…..placing a burden on the teachers to make sure that both the Grade 4 and Grade 3 student are taught the concept. For a couple of years this will be an added burden but it will soon work itself out.
* SB6 totally altered the textbook adoption and purchasing process in Texas. It is a misnomer to think that textbooks are written for the Texas market. This is simply no longer true, publishers find it more lucrative to write books for a larger market-40 states who adopted Common Core.
* SB6 created a unique problem-while a local school board and superintendent are held accountable to adopting materials that meet 100% of the TEKS, a single product to do that is not easy to find. Materials that meet the majority of the TEKS are augmented with other materials or teacher/district developed strategies.
* HB462 (?) states that Common Core may not be taught in Texas. That is very clear mandate. It would be ludicrous for a school to teach the Common Core Standards when the students will be tested on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Please allow logic to prevail. Why would any district not use the standards by which their students will be tested.

(I would like to write a personal aside about Common Core-It is not being used in Texas and I would oppose it with every bit of energy that I could muster-not necessarily because of the make-up of the Common Core as it suffices to say-Texas has their own standards, somewhat more rigorous than Common Core and it is a home grown-not a federal creation. I am all about education being a function of the state, not the federal government. No Child Left Behind in Texas was great for Texas but once it was taken to Washington D.C. we lost control of it and in many ways it has become a hindrance to improving Texas public education. Common Core is not a Texas problem-the SBOE, the Legislature and the Governor had assured us of that. One aspect of that which is somehow overlooked-5x5=25 in both the TEKS and Common Core. There is some commonality in the nature of math that is true no matter what standards are being used. No program owns the math facts.)

In case you did not know the days of borrowing and carrying are gone-we are now regrouping. Has third grade left you behind? I will freely admit it has. This does not mean that I cannot help a third grader with their multiplication tables-that would be a core skill always needed to be successful in the field of math. Let the experts in the field of mathematics who possess the understanding that many of us lack give our children the background to be successful in mathematics.