

## A Comparison of Assessment Attributes Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Assessment Attributes	TAKS Assessment Program	STAAR Assessment Program
Assessed Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o During initial TAKS development, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) student expectations to be assessed were determined by Texas educators.</li> <li>o Test objectives that matched the student expectations were developed.</li> <li>o Blueprints for each assessment—the number of items per objective and on the overall test—were developed, with test lengths ranging from 30–60 items.</li> <li>o At grades 3–8, content areas assess grade-specific content, with the exception of science at grades 5 and 8, which assess multiple grades of science curriculum.</li> <li>o At grades 9–11, grade-level assessments assess content from multiple courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Educator committees identify which TEKS cannot be assessed on a paper/pencil assessment, which TEKS should be emphasized because they are necessary both for success in the current subject/grade or course and for preparedness in the next subject/grade or course, and which TEKS are considered supporting and should be assessed but receive less emphasis.</li> <li>o New test blueprints will emphasize the assessment of the curriculum standards that best prepare students for the next grade or course.</li> <li>o The assessments will encompass only the curriculum for that grade or course, with the exception of science at grades 5 and 8. The science assessments at these two grades will emphasize the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum standards that best prepare students for the next grade or course; in addition, these assessments will include curriculum standards from two lower grades (i.e., grades 3 and 4 or grades 6 and 7) that support students' success on future science assessments.</li> </ul>
Rigor of Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The item-development process has been consistently followed once item-writer guidelines were developed in 2001.</li> <li>o Performance standards were recommended by standard-setting committees and approved by the SBOE in November 2002.</li> <li>o Because performance standards have remained consistent since the first operational administration in 2003 and after the phase-in of standards, students have “outgrown” the assessments.</li> <li>o Measuring students' growth within the “Commended” performance category is difficult because too few items are rigorous enough to reflect this performance category</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Assessments will increase in length at most grades and subjects.</li> <li>o Overall test difficulty will be increased by including more rigorous items.</li> <li>o The rigor of items will be increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity. In this way, the tests will be better able to measure the growth of higher-achieving students.</li> <li>o In science and mathematics, the number of open-ended (griddable) items on most tests will increase to allow students more opportunity to derive an answer independently.</li> <li>o Students will be required to respond to two writing tasks (including personal narrative, literary, expository, persuasive, and analytic) rather than one task.</li> <li>o Performance standards will be set using empirical data gathered from studies that link performance year to year from grades 3–8 to high school and from specific courses to college and career readiness.</li> <li>o Empirical studies will be conducted comparing students' performance on</li> </ul>

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	<p>and many students "top out" on the assessments.</p>	<p>the new assessments with nationally norm-referenced assessments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Performance standards will be reviewed at least once every three years and, if necessary, adjusted to ensure that the assessments maintain a high level of rigor.</li> <li>o Performance standards will be set so that they require a higher level of student performance than is required on the current TAKS assessments.</li> </ul>
Field-Testing Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o From 2003–2007, stand-alone field testing for grades 4 and 7 writing, grade 9 reading, grade 10 and exit level English language arts, (ELA), and grade 5 Spanish reading and mathematics occurred annually; however, in 2008, stand-alone field testing moved to every other year.</li> <li>o For all other subject areas, field-test items have been embedded in operational assessments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o For grade 7 writing and for each end-of-course assessment, there is a one-time only stand-alone field test.</li> <li>o Once STAAR assessments are operational, all field testing will be embedded, with the exception of grade 4 writing, which will require an abbreviated stand-alone field test every three years.</li> </ul>
Performance Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Performance standards were set separately for each grade and subject.</li> <li>o Performance standards were set based on the examination of test content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Performance standards will be set as an aligned system across grades and courses within a content area (from grades 3–8 through high school).</li> <li>o Performance standards will be set based on data from empirical studies of other state, national, and international assessments as well as on the examination of test content.</li> </ul>
Test Administration Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o All assessments are currently administered within a one-day time frame.</li> <li>o Online testing is offered for exit-level retests only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Grades 4 and 7 writing as well as English I, II, and III will be administered over two days to assess writing more comprehensively and allow for the inclusion of embedded field-test items.</li> <li>o End-of-course assessments will be made available on paper and online.</li> </ul>
Measures of Student Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Measures of student progress for the growth model were developed and implemented after the TAKS program was established.</li> <li>o Growth measures are projections to the "Met Standard" performance level at the next high-stakes grade (5, 8, and 11).</li> <li>o Growth measures provide information about whether students are on track to meet the passing standard in the next high-stakes grade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Measures of student progress for the growth model will be developed and implemented as STAAR assessments are developed and implemented.</li> <li>o Progress measures will be based on the new, more rigorous standards for STAAR assessments.</li> <li>o Progress measures will be phased in over several years as data for the new program become available.</li> <li>o Progress measures may provide an early-warning indicator for students that are not on track to meet the passing standard, may not be successful in the next grade or course, may not be ready for advanced courses in mathematics and English in high school, or may not be college or career ready in mathematics and English.</li> </ul>

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<p>Number of Testing Days</p>	<p><b>Total – 19 (27 with SSI retesting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Grade 3 – reading and mathematics (2 days)</li> <li>o Grade 4 – reading, mathematics, and writing (3 days)</li> <li>o Grade 4 – writing field test (1 day)</li> <li>o Grade 5 – reading, mathematics, and science (3 days; up to 7 days for SSI retesting)</li> <li>o Grade 6 – reading and mathematics (2 days)</li> <li>o Grade 7 – reading, mathematics, and writing (3 days)</li> <li>o Grade 7 – writing field test (1 day)</li> <li>o Grade 8 – reading, mathematics, science, and social studies (4 days; up to 8 days for SSI retesting)</li> </ul> <p><b>Total – 13 (25 with Exit Level retesting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Grade 9 – reading and mathematics (2 days)</li> <li>o Grade 9 – reading field test (1 day)</li> <li>o Grade 10 – ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies (4 days)</li> <li>o Grade 10 – ELA field test (1 day)</li> <li>o Grade 11 (Exit Level) – ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies (4 days; up to 16 days for retesting)</li> <li>o Exit Level – ELA field test (1 day)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Total – 19 (27 with SSI retesting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Grade 3 – reading and mathematics (2 days)</li> <li>o Grade 4 – reading, mathematics, and writing (4 days; writing now a 2-day administration)</li> <li>o Grade 5 – reading, mathematics, and science (3 days; up to 7 days for SSI retesting)</li> <li>o Grade 6 – reading and mathematics (2 days)</li> <li>o Grade 7 – reading, mathematics, and writing (4 days; writing now a 2-day administration)</li> <li>o Grade 8 – reading, mathematics, science, and social studies (4 days; up to 8 days for SSI retesting)</li> </ul> <p><b>Total – 15 (45 with retesting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o English I (2 days)</li> <li>o English II (2 days)</li> <li>o English III (2 days)</li> <li>o Algebra I (1 day)</li> <li>o Geometry (1 day)</li> <li>o Algebra II (1 day)</li> <li>o World History (1 day)</li> <li>o World Geography (1 day)</li> <li>o U.S. History (1 day)</li> <li>o Biology (1 day)</li> <li>o Chemistry (1 day)</li> <li>o Physics (1 day)</li> <li>o 2 additional testing opportunities per year</li> </ul>
<p>Assessments for English Language Learners (ELLS) at Grades 3–8 and High School</p>	<p>The majority of ELLs participate in TAKS in English (grades 3 through exit level) or TAKS in Spanish (grades 3–5)</p> <p><b>Grades 3–10:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Eligible recent immigrant ELLs may, however, be granted a limited English proficiency (LEP) exemption for up to three years under state law.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The vast majority of ELLs will participate in STAAR in English (grades 3 through high school) or STAAR in Spanish (grades 3–5).</li> <li>o State exemption policies and linguistically accommodated assessment methods for immigrant ELLs are under review, with the goal of expanding valid and reliable linguistic accommodation methods and including more recent immigrant ELLs in the state assessment system.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Students exempt under Texas law are required to test in federally mandated grades and subjects (grades 3–8 and 10 mathematics and reading; grades 5, 8, and 10 science). In these grades and subjects, they take TAKS with linguistic accommodations, as permitted by federal regulations. In other grades and subjects, they do not take TAKS while exempt under state law.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exit level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o ALL ELLs must pass exit level TAKS to meet graduation requirements. There are no exemptions.</li> <li>o Exit level testing, however, may be postponed during an eligible immigrant ELL's first 12 months in U.S. schools.</li> </ul>	
Assessments for Students Receiving Special Education Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Assessments for students receiving special education services—an accommodated form, a modified assessment, and an alternate assessment—were developed.</li> <li>o All these assessments are aligned to the TEKS as well as to the TAKS objectives, but the test blueprints for the modified and alternate assessments differ from TAKS.</li> <li>o Separate performance standards were set on the modified and alternate assessments. However, performance standards for the accommodated form are the same as TAKS.</li> <li>o These assessments were developed after the TAKS program was well established.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o For students receiving special education services, modified and alternate versions of the STAAR assessments will be developed, although it is possible that all 12 end-of-course assessments may not be developed due to the nature of the coursework actually taken by students who are eligible to participate in these assessments.</li> <li>o The modified and alternate assessments will be aligned to the TEKS as well as to the reporting categories for STAAR, although the test blueprints for these assessments will differ from the general assessments.</li> <li>o Separate performance standards will be set on the modified and alternate versions of STAAR.</li> <li>o The alternate assessments will be developed at the same time and in coordination with STAAR development activities, providing for greater continuity and alignment between the general and alternate assessments.</li> </ul>
Equating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The TAKS program has used both pre- and post-equating models to verify that the assessments maintain the same level of difficulty from year to year.</li> <li>o Post-equating has been done using the base test items as the linking items to maintain difficulty from year to year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o TEA is considering using both pre- and post-equating models to verify that the STAAR assessments maintain the same level of difficulty from year to year.</li> <li>o A new post-equating design that uses embedded linking items on a subset of test forms is being considered for assessments at grades 3–8 as well as for English I, II, and III.</li> </ul>

## STAAR

The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Most of the state standards, if they are eligible for assessment in a multiple choice/short answer format, will be assessed on STAAR.

STAAR is designed as a vertical system. Just as the TEKS are structured in a vertically aligned manner, so is STAAR. Learning from one grade level is aligned with learning at the next grade level. Some skills are developed over the course of a student's educational career from kindergarten through high school, while other skills and learning may begin at a particular grade level and serve as the foundation for later learning. STAAR is an assessment of academic readiness. In other words, we can sum up the variation between the current assessment program (TAKS) and STAAR by reframing the questions we are asking.

**TAKS:** TAKS was designed to help teachers answer this question:

- Did students learn what they were supposed to learn in the current year's grade?

**STAAR:** STAAR is designed to ensure that teachers answer these questions:

- Did students learn what they were supposed to learn in the current year's grade?
- Are students ready for the next grade?
- And are they also ready for the grade after that?

So what's the big deal about that shift? Fundamentally, it requires that teachers relook at curriculum and instruction in a very different way than they have under previous assessment systems (TABS, TEAMS, TAAS, TAKS). Not only are teachers required to have a deep understanding of the content of the grade level they are teaching, but they must also be firmly grounded in how the content of that current grade level prepares students for subsequent grade levels. Overemphasis on grade level attainment **ONLY** may create a context where teachers in subsequent grade levels have to reteach foundational skills to accommodate for the gap created by the lack of appropriate emphasis earlier. It may require students "unlearn" previous ways of conceptualizing content and essentially start all over.

### STAAR: focus, clarity, depth

[The TEKS] are designed to prepare students to succeed in college, in careers and to compete globally. However, consistent with a growing national consensus regarding the need to provide a more clearly articulated K–16 education program that focuses on fewer skills and addresses those skills in a deeper manner (TEA).

STAAR is designed around three concepts: focus, clarity, and depth:

**Focus:** STAAR will focus on grade level standards that are critical for that grade level and the ones to follow.

**Clarity:** STAAR will assess the eligible TEKS at a level of specificity that allow students to demonstrate mastery.

**Depth:** STAAR will assess the eligible TEKS at a higher cognitive level and in novel contexts.

## STAAR: the assessed curriculum – readiness, supporting, and process standards

A key concept that underpins the design of STAAR is that all standards (TEKS) do not play the same role in student learning. Simply stated, some standards (TEKS) have greater priority than others – they are so vital to the current grade level or content area that they must be learned to a level of mastery to ensure readiness (success) in the next grade levels. Other standards are important in helping to support learning, to maintain a previously learned standard, or to prepare students for a more complex standard taught at a later grade.

By assessing the TEKS that are most critical to the content area in a more rigorous ways, STAAR will better measure the academic performance of students as they progress from elementary to middle to high school. Based on educator committee recommendations, for each grade level or course, TEA has identified a set of readiness standards - the TEKS which help students develop deep and enduring understanding of the concepts in each content area. The remaining knowledge and skills are considered supporting standards and will be assessed less frequently, but still play a very important role in learning.

**Readiness standards** have the following characteristics:

- They are essential for success in the current grade or course.
- They are important for preparedness for the next grade or course.
- They support college and career readiness.
- They necessitate in-depth instruction.
- They address broad and deep ideas.

**Supporting standards** have the following characteristics:

- Although introduced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a subsequent year.
- Although reinforced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a previous year.
- They play a role in preparing students for the next grade or course but not a central role.
- They address more narrowly defined ideas.

**STAAR assesses the eligible TEKS at the level at which the TEKS were written.**

STAAR is a more rigorous assessment than TAKS (and TAAS, TEAMS, TABS before that). The level of rigor is connected with the cognitive level identified in the TEKS themselves. Simply stated, STAAR will measure the eligible TEKS at the level at which they are written.

The rigor of items will be increased by

- assessing content and skills at a greater depth and higher level of cognitive complexity
- assessing more than one student expectation in a test item

The rigor of the tests will be increased by

- assessing fewer, yet more focused student expectations and assessing them multiple times and in more complex ways
- including a greater number of rigorous items on the test, thereby increasing the overall test difficulty