Texas Formative Assessment Resource

Educator Guide

TFAR®
Texas Formative Assessment Resource

Information about the Texas Assessment Program can be found on the Student Assessment website.

Texas Educator Committees

The Texas Education Agency is encouraging highly qualified educators to apply to participate in educator committees for the Texas Assessment Program. Click the link or scan the QR code for more information.

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Table of Contents

Resources **4**

Overview **5**

Training **7**

Administration Information **8**

Tasks 8

Authoring Questions 9

Accommodated Questions 11

Sharing Test Content 12

Testing Systems Information **15**

System Requirements 15

Secure Browsers 15

Technical Tasks 15

Resources

- Texas Assessment Program
- Texas Formative Assessment Resource
- Testing Personnel
- *District and Campus Coordinator Resources*
  - *Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) User Guide*
  - *Test Delivery System (TDS) User Guide*
  - *Centralized Reporting System (CRS) User Guide*
- Learning Management System
- Setting Up TDS Workstations

Overview

The Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) is a platform that allows educators to create and share formative assessments free of charge. Educators can choose from a bank of released State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) questions or a bank of other Texas items or they can author questions themselves. These assessments can be administered to students through the Test Delivery System (TDS), which includes accommodations, or they can be exported as PDFs to be printed and administered on paper. All assessments administered online will generate data accessible to the educator through the Centralized Reporting System (CRS). Educators can also share the items or assessments they create in TFAR with other educators in their district or in the workgroups to which they belong.

TFAR is one of a number of optional assessment resources available to support districts and educators throughout the school year. Unlike STAAR Interim Assessments, which measure a broad span of student expectations, formative assessments created in TFAR should be used to measure student performance on specific student expectations to inform a teacher's instructional choices, such as adjusting unit and lesson plans. Assessments built using this tool should be part of a broader set of classroom formative practices (e.g., checks for understanding, exit tickets, discussions).

Teachers who would like to use TFAR should contact their district or campus testing coordinator to ensure that all relevant Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE)–related tasks have been completed.

Released test questions are available in TFAR for all the subjects, grades, and courses that STAAR summative assessments test, including the following:

- grades 3–8 mathematics and reading language arts (RLA)
- grades 3–5 Spanish mathematics and RLA
- grades 5 and 8 science
- grade 5 Spanish science
- grade 8 social studies
- Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History

TFAR can be used to create assessment items that are aligned and connected with existing instructional plans, lessons, and curricula. It can be used to help create formative class assessments as part of a broader student progress monitoring system, as presented in the following table.

Assessment Type	Sample Frequency	Sample Composition
Mini assessment	Every 2–3 days	4–5 questions covering 1–2 content standards
Weekly assessment	Once a week	7–10 questions covering 3–4 content standards
Monthly assessment	Every 3–4 weeks	About 15 questions covering about 10 content standards
Warm-up Exit ticket	While warm-ups and exit tickets can occur daily, it is important to note that class time constraints often allow for only a single question tied to a single standard. A teacher should review the cumulative reporting of a standard to understand a student's progress toward mastery.	

Training

Trainings for TFAR are posted on the Learning Management System (LMS), which can be accessed on the Educators page of the Texas Assessment website. The recorded trainings focus on formative assessments and technology and system resources. Technology- and system-specific recorded trainings can also be accessed through LMS. Trainings include:

- Technology Requirements for the Texas Assessment Program
- The Centralized Reporting System Overview
- Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) Overview
- TFAR Authoring system modules

In addition to reading this guide, district and campus testing personnel administering assessments through TFAR can review the resources available online to familiarize themselves with current testing guidelines and procedures.

Title	Audience
Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) User Guide	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers
Test Delivery System (TDS) User Guide	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers
Setting Up TDS Workstations	Testing Coordinators
Centralized Reporting System (CRS) User Guide	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers

Administration Information

TIDE is the user and student management system for the Texas Assessment Program. Users must be added to TIDE before they can access any other Texas Assessment Program system.

Assessments are administered through TDS, which comprises two components: the Test Administrator Interface and the Student Interface. The Test Administrator Interface is used to schedule or start student testing, and the Student Interface, accessed via the secure browser or in-browser options, allows students to access the formative assessments.

Reports for the formative assessments are available in CRS. Access to student data reports is controlled by a user's role in TIDE. Teachers must have a roster association with students to view student results. Teachers who would like to use TFAR should contact their district or campus coordinator to ensure that rosters are created in TIDE so that data are available in CRS.

Test administrators should familiarize themselves with the *TIDE User Guide*, the *TDS User Guide*, the *CRS User Guide*, and the tasks that must be completed during testing.

Tasks

A district that chooses to use TFAR must connect students directly to teachers in TIDE by taking the following steps:

- **Add or Update Users—**Educators need a TIDE account in order to administer the formative assessments or review results. Instructions on how to upload users can be found in the *TIDE User Guide*. All users who were in the system for the previous school year must reset their passwords to regain access. District personnel should take this opportunity to remove any users who should no longer have access for the current school year.
- **Add Students—** Students who are registered in TIDE will be able to log in to a TFAR assessment with the correct session ID. No additional registration steps are necessary. More information on creating session IDs can be found in the *TDS User Guide*.
- **Create and Modify Rosters—**Rosters representing classes or other groups of students are created in TIDE. Refer to the How District-level Users Manage Rosters topic in the *TIDE User Guide* for instructions on how to create and modify rosters. Teachers must be linked to these rosters to access their students' scores in CRS.

The following steps must be taken in order to author and administer assessments in TFAR:

- **Create Questions—**Educators use the Authoring system to create questions aligned to standards and can use these questions and any from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) question banks to construct formative assessments. Educators can share questions and assessments they have created with other users within a workgroup. Refer to LMS for modules with information on accessing and navigating the Authoring system, creating questions, and building formative assessments.

- **Create Assessments—**Educators may create assessments using questions from the STAAR Released Items Library or the Other Texas Items Library or questions shared by other users or created by the educators themselves.
- **Schedule or Start a Test Session—**Once students are registered in TIDE and the assessment is created in TFAR, the educator must schedule a test session using TDS.
- **Print Test Tickets—**Authorized TIDE users can print test tickets and monitor test progress. The teacher must provide the session ID or test link to the students so they can join the session when it starts.
- **Launch TDS—**Educators must ensure that the secure browser application is launched on each student's device or that they have accessed the district test link on the ticket. (Educators must create a session before students can log in.) The educator must first join a proctored session to be able to approve student requests to join. Refer to the *TDS User Guide* for more information.
- **Assist Students with Logging In—**Students must have the test session ID and their test tickets to log in to the assessment.
- **End Testing—**Students must click *Submit Test* for their results to appear in CRS.
- **Review Results—**Soon after assessments are submitted, CRS displays district-, campus-, roster-, student-, and question-level reports. Users can filter results by specific student demographics. This feature displays the student's score, the student's responses, and the student expectation for each test question. The student-level report also includes each test question. If an assessment contains constructed-response questions, scores will not be available in CRS until these questions have been scored. To access constructed-response questions, users must click the *Tests to Score* notification at the top of the page while logged in to CRS.

Authoring Questions

The Authoring system allows users to create their own questions that can be used in test construction and shared with other educators in the user's district and workgroups. These assessments can be administered throughout the year and do not have to be administered at a specific time. The following thirteen STAAR redesigned item types are available as templates.

Question Type	Question Type Description
Passage set (Stimulus)	The student reads a passage or reviews a multimedia resource and responds to a set of associated items.
Multiple Choice	The student selects a single answer from a list of options.
Multiple Select	The student selects more than one correct answer from a set of possible answers.
Hot Text	The student cites evidence by selecting highlighted text in a sentence, paragraph, or extended reading.
Hot Spot	The student responds by selecting one or more specific areas of a graphic.
Edit Task	The student responds by editing words or phrases in a sentence.
Edit Task Inline Choice	The student selects the correct answers from one or more dropdown menus.
Simple Text Entry	The student responds by writing a brief string of text such as a number, word, or phrase.
Embedded Text Entry	The student responds by writing an answer in one or more blank text boxes that appear in a sentence.
Text/Image Drag and Drop	The student evaluates a given number of options (e.g., words, numbers, symbols) and chooses which responses to drag to a given area (e.g., a diagram, map, chart).
Table Match	The student matches statements or objects to different categories presented in a table grid.
Equation Response	The student can write responses in the form of fractions, expressions, equations, or inequalities.
Multipart	The student responds to a multipart question where each part is scored separately.

Questions with Spanish content can be created using the Authoring system. For more information about creating Spanish content, refer to Creating Spanish Items and Assessments on the Texas Formative Assessment Resource webpage. STAAR Spanish released questions are available in the STAAR Released Items and Other Texas Items shared libraries.

Accommodated Questions

TDS Student View templates are available in the Authoring system. Users can select subject-area or course-specific options from the *TDS Student View* dropdown by navigating to the *Test Properties* menu while adding items from a library to a new test. If accommodations are set in TIDE and an educator uses a TFAR template, the test attributes would appear as they do for STAAR. Test attributes are entered in the subject-specific columns in the *Test Attributes* portion of the *Student Information* task.

In order for a student to receive a Spanish version of a user-authored test, the test must be created in Spanish. Even if *Presentation* is set to "Spanish" in TIDE, if a test is constructed in English, the test content will only be available in English.

Most of the standard accessibility tools (e.g., highlighter, color contrast, magnifier, graphing and drawing tool) that students regularly use in an online testing environment will also be available on assessments created in TFAR. Most STAAR accommodations and accessibility tools, including content and language supports, will also be available for questions in the STAAR Released Items Library. Questions created by users are not tagged for accessibility.

The embedded supports for STAAR released items that are available when a TDS Student View template is selected in TFAR are as follows:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Content and language supports
- Word prediction (Co:Writer)*
- Speech-to-text (STT)*
- Text-to-speech (TTS)*
- Auto TTS

*Co:Writer, STT, and TTS are also available for user-authored items.

Tools available for user-authored items and released STAAR items during test construction include the following:

- Basic calculator
- Graphing or scientific calculator
- Periodic table
- Thesaurus
- Dictionary (also available in Spanish for Spanish language test)
- Ruler (customary and metric)
- Mathematics reference materials*
- RLA writing checklists*
- Science reference materials

*Mathematics reference materials and RLA writing checklists are also available in Spanish.

The following global tools are available in TFAR:

- Highlight
- Sticky notes
- Graph/draw
- Line reader
- Mark for review
- Item tutorials*
- Strikethrough (multiple choice)
- Select previous version (constructed response)

*Item tutorials are only available for released STAAR items and are not available for user-authored items even if a template is used.

Students can select the following editable test settings from the Test Settings menu in the Student Interface:

- Color setting
- Large mouse pointer
- Zoom

When a template is in use, a paused assessment resumed within eight hours will be resumed where the student left off, and the student will be able to change any previously answered questions. After eight hours, the assessment will resume where the student left off, but the student will not be able to change any previously answered questions. Skipped questions will be marked unanswered. Student accommodations will be honored when test attributes are entered in TIDE. The STAAR eight-hour pause rule, ability to skip a question, and student accommodations will **NOT** be honored if TDS Student View templates are not used when users are creating assessments.

If templates are not used, the time limit to resume a paused assessment and change previous answers shortens to 20 minutes. Students are not able to skip questions during the assessment if templates are not used; each question must be answered before the student can proceed to the next question.

Refer to the Upload Student Information into TIDE page of the *District and Campus Coordinator Resources* for more information on entering student accommodations.

Sharing Test Content

Within the TFAR platform, there is a new Test Sharing capability. This feature has two sharing destinations, *Share in Authoring* and *Share to TDS*. *Share in Authoring* allows other users to see, edit, or publish the test being shared. *Share to TDS* allows other users to administer the test being shared. When sharing with other users, recipients can be found by region, district, and

institution. When searching for recipients, users can also be broken down into individuals, workgroups, and institutions. In the *Share to TDS* option, a test window can be selected for the test being shared.

Users can share items and tests created with other users on their campus and with users in a shared workgroup. Users added to workgroups can expand sharing capabilities beyond their campus to everyone in their workgroup.

User Roles:

- TE: Teacher
- CTC: Campus Testing Coordinator
- DTA: District Testing Assistant
- DTC: District Testing Coordinator
- DCU: District Content User
- RCU: Regional Content User
- ERS: ESC Region Staff

The table below indicates which users can share educator-created test content with other users.

Sharing and Administering Tests and Questions with Other Users								
The Below Roles Can Share or Administer with:	**TE**	**CTC**	**DTA**	**DTC**	**DCU***	**RCU***	**ERS**	**Institution**
TE	✓	✓	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup
CTC	✓	✓	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup
DTA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	✓
DTC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	✓
DCU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Only via Workgroup	Only via Workgroup	✓
ERS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RCU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The table below indicates which users can access specific features and tasks within the TFAR Authoring system.

Accessing TFAR Resources							
	ERS	**RCU***	**DTC**	**DTA**	**DCU***	**CTC**	**TE**
Access Authoring System	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access LMS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Add RCU Accounts	✓						

*DCUs and RCUs do not have access to student data in TIDE or Test Administration in TDS.

Testing Systems Information

System Requirements

Test administrators must have a supported browser installed on their computer to use Cambium Assessment, Inc. systems. Refer to the Technology Resources page of the Texas Assessment website and the Minimum System Requirements page of the *Coordinator Resources* for a detailed list of system requirements, including supported operating systems and web browsers. Test administrators should be familiar with a spreadsheet application to effectively use file uploads and extracts.

Secure Browsers

Students using personal computers running Windows, macOS, Ubuntu, Fedora, or Chrome OS should download and install either the Chrome or Firefox web browsers; Internet Explorer is not supported. Refer to the Setting Up TDS Workstations webpage for a complete list of supported browsers. **NOTE:** Browsers should be set to full screen for optimal rendering of test content during testing.

Technical Tasks

The following is a list of tasks that campus technology staff must complete:

- **Set Up the Administrator Device—**Approved browsers must be installed on devices used for test administration. Refer to the Technology Resources webpage for more information.
- **Set Up Student Devices—**Secure browsers must be installed on devices used for testing. The application is available for download from the Secure Browsers webpage. Alternatively, students can access the assessments via the in-browser option by entering the following URL into the browser URL search bar: https://tx.cambiumtds.com/student.

  NOTE: For assessments with questions in Spanish, ensure that Spanish voice packs are downloaded and set up in advance of the testing day for any student using the text-to-speech accommodation.
- **Prepare Network for Online Testing—**Several network configuration tasks must be completed before testing, such as allow listing, configuring filter systems, and enabling domain name resolution. Technology staff should refer to the Setting Up TDS Workstations webpage for directions.
- **Run the Network Diagnostic Tool—**Proper configuration must be ensured by running the diagnostic tool on each device students will use for testing.

TEXAS ASSESSMENT