Texas Formative Assessment Resource Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

Authoring – TFAR Platform. Educators can use thirteen different templates to create TEKS-based formative assessment items. These authored items are then bundled to create tests.

Create Tests – Educators can use the items created in Authoring or from any Item Bank to construct assessments.

Data – Student results from tests created in TFAR and administered online through the Student Interface will be added to the Centralized Reporting System (CRS). Data reports are not generated or saved in the TFAR platform.

Item Banks – Educators have access to Four Item Libraries. Educators can select items from any library to build assessments.

1. *Items I Created* – User-created items

2. *Items Shared with Me* – Items shared from other educators

3. *STAAR Released Items* – Items used during STAAR administrations. These items have been field-tested and their TEKS alignment is statistically valid

4. *Other Texas Items* – TEA created items released as the new item samplers and online practice tests. These items have never been used during a STAAR administration and their TEKS alignment has not been statistically validated

Share – Users can share items and tests created with other users on their campus and with users in a shared workgroup.

Workgroup – Users added to workgroups can expand sharing capabilities beyond their campus to everyone in their workgroup.

SECTION 2: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **What is the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR)?**

TFAR is an optional, online tool that consists of a TEKS-aligned item bank, item templates to create new items and

an assessment builder. TFAR works best when used within a coherent instructional framework to support formative assessment practices. Districts and educators can use all, or part of the functionalities within TFAR.

2. What are the differences between diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments?
- Diagnostic assessments measure student knowledge and skills on any variety of student expectations before a new instructional cycle or year to inform instructional plans and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students (Examples: Beginning-of- Year assessment, Early Reading Assessment).
- Formative assessments measure student performance on specific student expectations throughout the year to inform a teacher's instructional choices, enable timely adjustments to unit plans, and guide changes to lesson plans (Examples: class quizzes, exit tickets).
- Interim assessments measure student understanding of a broader span of student expectations at checkpoints during the year to monitor progress, predict summative performance, and identify students for intervention (Examples: benchmarks, STAAR Interim Assessments).
- Summative assessments measure student mastery of a broader range of student expectations at the end of an instructional unit or course. They enable comparison of academic growth and performance to determine program effectiveness (Examples: student portfolios, STAAR summative assessment).

3. Does my district need permission to participate in formative assessments?
No. Permission or confirmation from TEA is not required. TFAR is free and available to any Texas public school or open-enrollment charter school to use at their discretion.

4. Who provides access to TFAR at each campus or district?
Contact your testing coordinator. A district or campus testing coordinator manages student registration. If a district chooses, it can grant teachers access to the TFAR authoring system and student data in the CRS. Be sure to view the training videos in the Learning Management System (LMS).

5. As a testing coordinator, how do I register my students?
Students are registered in TIDE through a student data file upload or manual additions of individual students. Districts should verify that all test attributes and demographic values have been updated in the system for all tests prior to administering the first online assessment. Districts needing to make updates to a student record after an online test has started may do so manually in TIDE.

6. How are the TFAR assessments administered to students?
The TFAR assessments are delivered online through the *Test Deliver System (TDS).* Once a test is published, it is automatically pushed to TDS and found in the *Tests I've Created* folder. Published assessments shared with you are in the *Tests Shared with Me* folder in TDS.

7. What TEKS are available in TFAR to create items and formative assessments?
Currently:
- Chapter 110: English Language Arts (RLA)
- Chapter 111: Mathematics (M)
- Chapter 112: Science (S)
- Chapter 113: Social Studies (SS)
- Chapter 114: Languages Other than English (LOTE)
- Chapter 115: Health Education (HE)
- Chapter 116: Physical Education (PE)
- Chapter 117: Fine Arts (FA)

- Chapter 118: Economics (ECO)
- Chapter 126: Technology Applications (TA)
- Chapter 127: Career Development (CD)
- Chapter 128: Spanish Language Arts & Reading (SRLA)
    - English Learners Language Arts (ELLA)
    - English 1 for Speakers of Other Languages (E1.SOL)
    - English 2 for Speakers of Other Languages (E2.SOL)
    - English Learners Development and Acquisition (ELDA)

SECTION 3: TFAR ITEMS

8. What types of items are in TFAR?

TFAR currently contains STAAR-released questions, and non-released STAAR-like questions from TEA new item samplers and online practice tests.

9. Can TFAR item banks be searched by a specific TEKS?

Yes, there are different ways to search the item bank for a specific TEKS.

1. Select *Find Items by Standard* on the Dashboard and the *Item Filters* will open.

    a. Auto select: Open *Standards* panel in top right corner. Select Content and additional use icons to drill down to desired standard. Click on (…) icon to open menu. Note *Copy Standard Code* can be used to hand enter TEKS code in *Filter* or *Test Generator Wizard*.

    b. Hand entry: In *Item Filters*, add TEKS in this example format, *"M.6.4.A" "SUBJECT ABBREVIATION. GRADE LEVEL. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL. STUDENT EXPECTATION"'*

2. When using the *Test Generator Wizard*, it will pull all the items from ALL the libraries for the TEKS you specify during setup.

10. What item type templates are available in TFAR?

Thirteen STAAR redesigned Item types are available as templates. They include, *Passage set (Stimulus), Multiple Choice/Select, Hot Text/Spot, Edit Task, Edit Task Inline Choice, Simple/Embedded Text Entry, Text/Image Drag and Drop, Table Match, Equation Response*, and *Multi-Part*.

11. What item type templates are NOT available in TFAR?

Currently there are three math related item types NOT available as TFAR templates to create teacher authored items. These are number line, graphing, and fraction model. However, *STAAR Released* and *Other Texas Item* library samples of these item types can be added to formative assessments.

12. Can items be authored/translated to Spanish?

Yes. Items authored in English can be translated to Spanish by selecting the "ES" icon in an item's dropdown menu. During the preview, items can be edited, reset, and saved. Spanish items can be added to tests after they are saved. When using the embedded translation feature, users should employ best practices for quality control and review translations to ensure accuracy.

13. Are simple/embedded entry items (ECR, SCR) graded in TFAR?

No. Simple/embedded entry items are hand graded in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS). After logging into CRS and accessing *Authoring* in the Dashboard, select the yellow *Tests To Score* at the top of the screen. A chart will populate with all the items to score. In the chart, select each item and use the prompts on the screen to view the student's response and score the item. After scoring the item click submit. Once an item has been submitted the item cannot be rescored. Note that the complete data from a test is not reported until all items have been scored.

14.   Can other item types be hand scored in CRS?
Yes. When using the *Multi-Part* item template, you can select to hand score any item. For example, providing partial credit for a complicated *Drag and Drop* may be easier to hand scored than setting up all possible answers for machine scoring in the grading rubric.

15.   Is there a way to randomize items or their answers within an assessment to avoid 'student sharing information' during administration?
No, that capability is not available in TFAR.

16. Can an item or a test be previewed prior to administering to students?
Yes. Items and tests can be previewed by selecting *Preview* from the ellipsis ("…") action icon left of the name. Scoring of the item can also be previewed by selecting the *Item Score* icon in the upper left of the preview screen to ensure accuracy within the scoring section.

SECTION 4: TFAR TESTS

17. Can a formative assessment be created that combines STAAR Released and Teacher Authored Items?
Yes, when creating a test, items from any item bank can be used.

18.   Can access to the Open Educator Resources (OER) Amplify RLA and Eureka Math TEKS edition curriculum assessments occur through TFAR?
No. Assessments within OER curriculum can be found within the *Text Delivery System (TDS)* or *the Data Entry Interface (DEI)*. They can also be viewed through the *OER-Assessment Viewing Application (AVA)* under *Prepare for Testing* on [*TexasAssessment.gov*](TexasAssessment.gov).

19. Can an assessment be printed?
Yes. Within the *Test Actions* menu ("…") select *Build Booklet*. You can preview and generate a PDF of a Student and/or a Teacher Edition of the assessment. Complete all information in each section of the *Test Booklet Generator* and select *Generate PDF*. The PDF(s) will be added to your *Secure Inbox*. The PDF can also be viewed before downloading.

20. What is the TDS Student View in Test Properties?
When setting the *Test Properties* for a TFAR assessment, new *TDS Student View* templates are available under the *Test Tools* section. By selecting a template, it aligns your assessment with TIDE and STAAR test attributes. This alignment provides students with their STAAR accommodations listed in TIDE, a full 8-hour pause and the ability to skip items. Without template student accommodations are not connected; items cannot be skipped, and students only have a 20-minute pause.

21. Can students take a formative assessment with TEKS from different grade levels?
Teachers can create and publish tests in TFAR with different TEKS, different grade levels AND even different

content. Tailoring the formative assessment to the actual teacher instruction is easily accomplished with TFAR.

22. Why do RLA assessments published prior to October 31, 2022, need to be republished?
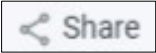
RLA items that were not honoring text to speech and content and language supports on reading passages were removed from the STAAR Released Library on or around October 28, 2022, but may still remain in teacher authored tests. To ensure that students receive proper accommodations, users wishing to administer these Teacher Authored Tests using items from the STAAR Released Library from tests published prior to October 31, 2022, will need to follow the instructions in this [Republishing a Teacher Authored Test](#) document.

23. How long can a TFAR test be paused?

The time length of the pause depends on the test settings prior to publishing. If a test template is added to the assessment within the *TDS Student View* under *Test Properties*, that TFAR assessment with 'act like STAAR" and have the 8-hour pause. However, if a test template is **not** used then the assessment only has a 20-min pause.

24. How can I share a common assessment to be administered on my campus?

After publishing an assessment:

1. Select [< Share] in the assessment's test actions.

2. Choose *Share to TDS* as the *Sharing Destination*.

3. Search and select recipients.

4. Set dates for the *Test Window.*

5. Select *SAVE*. This will populate your test based on your scheduled test window in *TDS* for your recipients. The end date in the test window will also remove the assessment from *TDS*.

25. What accessibility tools are available in TFAR?

Standard accessibility tools (e.g., highlighter, color contrast, line reader, notepad, stickie notes, graph/draw, and magnifier) that students see on STAAR will be available in the TFAR platform.

26. What other accommodation 'tools' are available for TFAR assessments?

Under the *Test Tools* tab when setting test properties, tools such as calculator, periodic table, thesaurus, dictionary, ruler, and reference charts can be added to tests.

SECTION 5: TIDE ACCOMMODATIONS AND TFAR

27. How are item specific student accommodations in TIDE pulled into TFAR assessments?

When setting the *Test Properties* for a TFAR assessment, *TDS Student View* templates are available under the *TDS Student View* tab in the *Test Tools*. This selection connects TFAR with students' STAAR testing attributes listed in TIDE.

28. Will a test published prior to September 2023 provide students with their TIDE accommodations?

No. All tests published prior to the release of the TDS Templates must be Copied, Re-named and *TDS templates* added in *Test Properties*. With the removal of the TFAR column in TIDE, all tests requiring student accommodations MUST use a test template.

29. When using a template, are TIDE accommodations for supplemental or calculation aids provided to only

those students?

No. Only item specific accommodations in TIDE such as auto TTS, TTS, etc. are connected by the templates. Calculators, graphic organizers, number charts, etc. should continue to be physically provided to students.

30. Are Text-to-Speech and Content Language supports available for TEA Released Items?

Yes, when using TEA released items and it's corresponding *TDS Student View template*, student accommodations in TIDE connect and provide text-to-speech and content language supports those items.

31. Are Text-to-Speech and Content Language supports available for Teacher Authored Items when I use a template?

When using a *TDS Student View template* with teacher-authored items, content language support is not available. However, text-to-speech, if indicated in TIDE, will read the entire question for each student.

32. Is American Sign Language and Speech-to-Text available when using a template?

Yes, for Released STAAR items only, American Sign Language (ASL) videos and Speech-To-Text are available when a *TDS template* is indicated under *Test Properties*.

SECTION 6: FUNCTIONALITY OF ITEMS OR TESTS

33. How are published items or tests edited?

Since published tests are automatically listed in the *Test Delivery System (TDS)* it is not possible to edit a published test. Items also become 'published' when they are within a published test. If edits are needed, the test must be copied which brings it back to the "draft" status. Once copied, the test and items can be edited. Note, copying the test DOES NOT create a copy of each item. Editing the item within that test copy will affect the original version of the item. Since your edits are NOT a copy of the item, the item will be edited within your bank and on every test, it is located on.

34. Does the name of a copied test or item need to be changed?

When a test or item is copied, the name is automatically changed to 'COPY OF… ". This name can be adjusted within the item or test properties.

35. Is the data of the copied test compiled with the original assessment's data?

No. Once the assessment is copied it will generate separate data reports. The data from the two assessments cannot be combined within CRS.

36. Can TFAR items and/or assessments be shared with other people?

Yes, you can share your TFAR authored items and assessments with other educators, and with a group of educators in your workgroups. Sharing items and tests gives permission for a selected co-author to edit the content, use the content for themselves, or administer your original tests to their students. User permissions are set prior to sharing.

SECTION 7: TFAR AND CRS

37. What reports on TFAR student performance are available?

The *Centralized Reporting System (CRS)* will display district-, campus-, roster-, student-, and item-level reports for all assessments including TFAR. 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 item.

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Results can also be downloaded as excel, csv or .txt files that can be imported into local student information systems.

38. Who has access to the student data reports?
Teachers who have been granted access to CRS and have their students rostered have access to student data for only their students. Additionally, district and campus leaders can also access and track TFAR student data.

39. Does the district need to roster teachers in CRS?
For classroom teachers to view data in CRS, including TFAR data, rosters must be up to date in CRS. Once uploaded, campus administrators can create 'custom' rosters (such as by class periods) to enable quicker data analysis.

SECTION 8: TFAR TRAINING AND RESOURCES

40. Are there resources available for TFAR?
Yes. You will find links and downloadable resources on the TFAR Website.

41. Are there asynchronous training courses available for TFAR?
Asynchronous trainings for all Texas assessments programs are posted and accessible through the *Learning Management System (LMS)*. The LMS can be accessed by going to the Educators or Testing Personnel pages on *TexasAssessment.gov*.

42. Are there synchronous training courses available for TFAR?
A current list of available TEA trainings via ZOOM or TEAMS are listed on the TFAR website. Contact the Student Assessment Help Desk to request scheduling a training.

43. Can I schedule a custom district training for TFAR?
Contact the Student Assessment Help Desk to request scheduling a training.

44. Where can I find a Cambium Help Guide for TFAR?
You can access it here or after logging into TFAR, the "Help" Link is in the upper right corner.