

April 22, 2011

To the Administrator Addressed:

SUBJECT: Information Regarding the Implementation of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™)

In order to fulfill the requirements of House Bill 3 passed by the 81st Texas Legislature and incorporated into Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 39, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is developing the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). STAAR is a more rigorous assessment program that will provide the foundation for a new accountability system for Texas public education. This letter provides implementation information to school districts and charter schools based on current legislation. However, with the 82nd Texas Legislature currently in session, the implementation of the STAAR program, as outlined below, may change.

STAAR will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) beginning in spring 2012. The STAAR program at grades 3–8 will assess the same subjects and grades that are currently assessed on TAKS. At high school, however, grade-specific assessments will be replaced with 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history.

In addition to the information provided in this letter, there are several other resources available regarding the new STAAR program.

- In December 2010, the *House Bill 3 Transition Plan* was posted on TEA's website, and it can be accessed at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/hb3plan>. This plan contains a detailed description of the process the commissioner of education is using to develop and implement the provisions of House Bill 3.
- STAAR Resources—Many resources are available on the STAAR webpage at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar>, including assessment attributes, assessed curriculum documents, and test blueprints. The STAAR webpage will continue to be the best source of information for the STAAR program; for example, in fall 2011 STAAR sample items will be posted on the resources page.

Test Administration Policies

With the new assessment program, current administration policies have been reevaluated and modified as necessary to ensure that they fit the new structure and purpose of the STAAR program. The information below provides updates to current policies and is intended to assist in preparations for the spring 2012 STAAR administrations. More information on each of these topics will be communicated when it is available.

- Assessment Availability and Mode—The chart in Attachment A outlines the assessments available in spring 2012. It also lists which assessments are offered on paper or online and includes assessment information for English language learners and students receiving special education services.
- Time Limits—Based on feedback received from school district personnel, TEA will establish a 4-hour time limit for both the STAAR EOC assessments and the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments for the 2012 spring test administration. A 4-hour time limit should provide sufficient time for the majority of students to complete the test. This policy will align Texas testing practices with other timed state and national assessments. For example, SAT, ACT, and AP examinations are all administered in timed settings so there is concern that high school students are not being adequately prepared for testing expectations in the future. In addition, placing time limits on the tests should help minimize local practices that promote the overuse of test-taking strategies by students that do not contribute significantly to how well they perform on the tests but significantly extend the amount of time it takes to complete the tests. Extended time accommodations for students with unique learning needs or circumstances will continue to

be offered. At the high school level, the 4-hour time limit will not preclude campuses from having two testing sessions within a given day. If two sessions are desired, early start times can be offered, sessions can overlap, or test sessions can extend beyond the typical school day. Most importantly, the TEA will review the 4-hour time limit for STAAR after the first administration in spring 2012 to determine if the policy needs to be reconsidered or adjusted for specific grades or subjects. In particular, the TEA will examine the amount of time necessary to complete assessments such as the writing sections of English I, II, and III.

- Make-up Testing—Current plans for the STAAR program include offering make-up testing opportunities for all grades and subjects, not just those used in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations. Make-ups are sometimes designated for particular days (e.g., English I) and sometimes are allowed over several days. Make-ups are planned for assessments given during all administrations, including summer administrations. Please note that the decision to allow make-up administrations in summer 2012 is different than what is currently indicated on the testing calendar.
- Dictionaries and Calculators—The STAAR program has new policies for dictionary and calculator use on the state assessments based on the new curriculum requirements. The calculator policies for chemistry and physics were previously communicated to districts in a letter dated September 18, 2009. See Attachment B for the dictionary and calculator policies. More information regarding dictionary and calculator use as an accommodation will be provided as soon as it becomes available.
- Embedded Reference Materials—Reference materials (e.g., formula charts) for STAAR mathematics and science assessments and graph paper for STAAR mathematics assessments will be included in test booklets. These materials will be printed on perforated pages so that students can remove them and use them during the test administration.
- Grade 3 Answer Documents—Students taking STAAR grade 3 reading and mathematics assessments will now record their responses on a separate answer document, as is done for other assessments. Grade 3 students will no longer record their answers to test items in a scorable test booklet.
- Dyslexia Accommodations—Current dyslexia accommodations for the TAKS program are limited to grades 3–8. However, for the STAAR program, TEA is expanding these testing policies to include high school students with dyslexia and other similar reading disabilities. Students will be allowed to take the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments as well as the grades 3–8 reading assessments with accommodations, such as the oral reading of item stems/answer options and extended time. These accommodations represent two of the three accommodations in the current dyslexia bundle. The only accommodation that will no longer be provided is the proper-nouns lists. More information about these accommodations as well as others that will be available to students will be provided in the future.

Assessments for Students Receiving Special Education Services

The STAAR program will include assessments for students receiving special education services. Accommodated forms will no longer be available, but format changes similar to TAKS (Accommodated) will be made to STAAR assessments for all grades and subjects. In addition, accommodation policies are being revisited to determine how they should be applied to the general assessment. STAAR Modified (similar to TAKS–M) and STAAR Alternate (similar to TAKS–Alt) assessments will be available, just as they were with the TAKS program. Beginning this fall for the 2011–2012 school year, STAAR Alternate will be the only alternate assessment offered for students with significant cognitive disabilities rather than continuing TAKS–Alt only for students in grades 10 and 11. For more information, refer to the special education assessments webpage at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/special-ed/>.

Assessments for English Language Learners

With the development of the new STAAR program, all aspects of linguistic accommodations are being reviewed, including student eligibility criteria, grades and subjects included in the linguistically accommodated version of STAAR, known as STAAR L, and the types of accommodations that will

be provided. The most important change for the STAAR program for English language learners is that linguistic accommodations will be available for most STAAR assessments, not just for those used in AYP calculations. Please note that there are no changes to the current TELPAS program and associated policies for the 2011–2012 school year.

Standard-Setting Activities

Standard-setting meetings for STAAR EOC assessments will take place in February 2012, prior to spring results being reported to districts. Performance standards for the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments will be set in fall 2012, so only raw scores will be reported following the spring 2012 administrations. A phase-in of performance standards is likely to be implemented.

STAAR performance labels and policy definitions, as well as the process used to develop them, can be found on TEA's website at the following link:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147496801>.

Student Success Initiative (SSI)

Because performance standards for STAAR grades 3–8 will not be set until after the spring 2012 administration, only raw-score information will be reported prior to the end of the school year. Therefore, SSI retest opportunities for STAAR grades 5 and 8 reading and mathematics will not be offered in May and June of 2012. For the 2011–2012 school year, districts will use other relevant academic information to make promotion/retention decisions. More information will be provided in the future.

2012 Sampling Plan

TEA has made a concerted effort over the past several years to minimize the amount of instructional time used for testing purposes, particularly stand-alone field testing. However, there may be a need for some mandatory sampling for several STAAR EOC assessments in 2012 in order to provide adequate data required for legislative studies and to build a sufficient number of test forms to allow for multiple administrations. Field-test data from a sample of students representative of the state are critical to the state's ability to build high-quality assessments.

STAAR Implementation Survey

TEA continues to work on the implementation of the new STAAR program. We are requesting information from those in the field to help guide STAAR decisions. Please go to the following link <http://www.texasassessment.com/STAARSurvey> to participate in a STAAR survey to assist us in this important work.

If you have questions or need further clarification about this information, please contact the Student Assessment Division. Additional information about STAAR will be provided as it become available.

Assessment Contact Information

Texas Education Agency

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Attachment A: Texas Assessment Program for 2011–2012

Attachment B: STAAR Dictionary and Calculator Policies

Attachment A

Texas Assessment Program for Spring 2012

Enrolled Grade	Assessment Program	Subjects Assessed	Mode of Assessment	Other Assessments Available
Grade 3 (English and Spanish)	STAAR	reading and mathematics	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 4 (English and Spanish)	STAAR	reading, mathematics, and writing	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 5 (English and Spanish)	STAAR	reading, mathematics, and science	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 6	STAAR	reading and mathematics	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 7	STAAR	reading, mathematics, and writing	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 8*	STAAR	reading, mathematics, science, and social studies	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for all subjects • STAAR Alternate for all subjects
Grade 9**	STAAR	Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history	paper or online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR L, subjects TBD • STAAR Modified for Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, world geography • STAAR Alternate for Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history
Grade 10	TAKS	English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAKS LAT for English language arts, mathematics, and science • TAKS–M for all subject areas • STAAR Alternate for Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history
Grade 11	TAKS Exit Level	English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies	paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAKS–M for all subject areas • STAAR Alternate for Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history
Grade 12	TAKS Exit Level Retests	English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies as needed	paper or online	N/A
Out-of-School	TAKS Exit Level Retests	English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies as needed	paper or online	N/A

* If a student enrolled in grade 8 or below is taking a course for which there is a STAAR EOC assessment, that student will be required to take both the applicable grade level STAAR assessments and the applicable STAAR EOC assessment.

** If a student is a repeating grade 9 student in 2011–2012, TAKS is still his or her assessment graduation requirement.

Attachment B

STAAR Dictionary Policies*

Dictionaries must be available to **all** students taking

- STAAR reading assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L) at grades 6–8
- STAAR writing assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L) at grade 7
- STAAR English I, II, and III assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L)

*One dictionary should be available for every five students.

STAAR Calculator Policies

Calculators must be available to **all** students taking STAAR Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, chemistry, physics, and biology assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR L).

- One graphing calculator required for each student taking
 - STAAR Algebra I assessment
 - STAAR geometry assessment
 - STAAR Algebra II assessment
- One scientific or graphing calculator required for each student taking
 - STAAR chemistry assessment
 - STAAR physics assessment
- One 4-function, scientific, or graphing calculator for every 5 students taking the STAAR biology assessment