

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Summary of Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) provide a snapshot of students' academic characteristics based on performance on a given STAAR assessment. PLDs are statements that describe the specific knowledge and skills students typically demonstrate at each performance level: Level III—Advanced Academic Performance, Level II—Satisfactory Academic Performance, and Level I—Unsatisfactory Academic Performance. They translate the general policy definitions of the STAAR performance categories into grade- or course-specific descriptions of student achievement.

In advance of setting performance standards for STAAR, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in conjunction with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), convened committees comprised of Texas K–12 and postsecondary educators with specific content knowledge to develop PLDs in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. In the process of developing PLDs, committee members considered the performance labels and policy definitions, the assessed curriculum, and the culminating skills for each assessment. Culminating skills represent the content and skills that are associated with satisfactory performance. The committee began with Level II—Satisfactory Academic Performance, worked up to Level III—Advanced Academic Performance, and then worked down to Level I—Unsatisfactory Academic Performance. Finally, the committee members reviewed the three levels of PLDs for each assessment and made adjustments, as necessary, to reflect student performance across the performance categories.

PLDs are linked to the state-mandated content standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Therefore, they are used by standard-setting committees to help ground committee members in the content standards and guide them as they make their recommendations for the scores needed to achieve Level II and Level III on each STAAR assessment. Each committee used the PLDs to engage in a general discussion of the knowledge and skills that students at each performance level should be expected to demonstrate. These discussions resulted in a common understanding of expectations for student performance at each performance level, which in turn informed the committee's cut-score recommendations. At the end of the standard-setting meeting, committee members were given the opportunity to recommend changes to the PLDs based on the committee's deliberations about cut scores.

In addition to being used in the standard setting process, PLDs serve a number of purposes. They can be used as a tool in classroom instruction because they assist teachers and schools in better understanding a student's performance on a given STAAR assessment. PLDs can also enhance parents' understanding of their child's academic strengths and weaknesses and can help the community at large better understand state test scores and the level of performance required of students on STAAR. Finally, PLDs are required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in their review and approval process of state assessments.

PLDs for STAAR end-of-course assessments were developed by committees of educators in November 2011. PLDs for STAAR grades 3–8 were developed by committees of educators in June 2012. PLDs for each STAAR assessment can be found at the links in the tables below.

STAAR	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Grades 3–5	Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5	Grade 5	---
Grades 6–8	Grade 6 Grade 7 Grade 8	Grade 7	Grade 6 Grade 7 Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade 8
EOC	English I English II English III	English I English II English III	Algebra I Geometry Algebra II	Biology Chemistry Physics	World Geography World History U.S. History