

August 21, 2014

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Performance Standards for the STAAR Program

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) will be maintaining the initial performance standards for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR<sup>®</sup>) program for the 2014–2015 school year given the number of changes impacting the STAAR program during this time. Changes include

- implementation of the new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) mathematics curriculum,
- elimination of STAAR Modified,
- first administration of STAAR Accommodated, and
- first administration of the redesigned STAAR Alternate.

In addition, TEA will be proposing, through commissioner of education rules, changes to the existing plan to phase in performance standards for the STAAR grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessment programs.

The existing plan is being adjusted from two steps to three steps to allow for smaller, incremental movements toward the final performance standards. New performance standards will be established for the second phase-in and the newly established third phase-in prior to moving to the final recommended performance standards.

The timeline for the new three-step phase-in plan is outlined below.

- The current phase-in 1 performance standards will be maintained for the 2014–2015 school year.
- The new phase-in 2 performance standards will be implemented beginning in the 2015–2016 school year.
- The new phase-in 3 performance standards will be implemented beginning in the 2018–2019 school year.
- The final recommended performance standards will be implemented in the 2021–2022 school year.

The current policy regarding the way in which STAAR EOC performance standards are determined for each student will remain unchanged. Current Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 101.3022, Assessment Requirements for Graduation, specifies that the standard in place when a student first takes an EOC assessment is the standard that will be maintained throughout the student's school career. For example, if a student takes the STAAR Algebra I

assessment in grade 7 or grade 8 at the phase-in 1 standard, all other EOC assessments required for graduation will be scored at the phase-in 1 standard for that student (even if the standards increase during the student's high school career).

The primary reason for the change in the phase-in plan is to provide additional time for educators to adjust instruction to align with the more rigorous TEKS measured by the STAAR program. Additional time is being provided by

- maintaining phase-in 1 for an additional year due to significant changes to the assessment program in the 2014–2015 school year,
- including a three-step phase-in to allow for smaller incremental movements toward the final recommended performance standards, and
- lengthening each phase-in to allow time for students to benefit from adjustments in instruction.

While I firmly believe that our students are capable of reaching the high expectations reflected in the TEKS and the STAAR performance standards, moving to a three-step phase-in plan gives educators additional time to make the significant adjustments in instruction necessary to raise the level of performance of all Texas students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "W".

Michael Williams  
Commissioner of Education

Cc: District Testing Coordinator