

Student Assessment Advisory Committee Report Spring 2008

Introduction

The Student Assessment Advisory Committee (SAAC) met for the second time on April 17, 2008. During the first meeting of this committee in March 2007, a commitment was made to meet in 2008 to address additional student assessment topics that were of most concern to the districts. The goals of the second meeting were to review the recommendations concerning field testing identified at the first meeting, to update the committee on the development of a growth measure for reporting in 2009, to discuss the transition from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) at high school to end-of-course (EOC) assessments, and to review the TAKS-Alternate (TAKS-Alt) and Texas English Language Assessment System (TELPAS) assessments.

In the first meeting the SAAC focused on field testing. The goal of the March 2007 meeting was to obtain specific recommendations for improving field-testing procedures. The April 2008 meeting covered four topics, and the committee was asked to provide specific recommendations on current assessments and general guidance on upcoming assessments.

During its April 2008 deliberations the advisory committee was asked to

- assume that the state assessment system for 2007–2008 and beyond will be implemented under current federal and state statute,
- ensure that recommendations are in compliance with agency interpretation of current federal and state statute,
- ensure that the validity and integrity of the state testing program are not compromised, and
- ensure that the state testing program is legally defensible.

Overview, Discussion Points, and Next Steps

For each of the discussion topics, Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Pearson staff provided background information and an overview of the topic. Committee members offered comments on the topics and then the committee, TEA, and Pearson discussed possible next steps. The following sections summarize the overview and main discussion points as well as present next steps on each topic.

Field Testing

As state and federal testing requirements have continued to grow, TEA has become increasingly aware of the need to keep district field testing to a minimum while maintaining the high quality of the student assessment program. TEA continues to evaluate field-testing participation for districts, implement steps to minimize it, and reduce the amount of time that classroom instruction is interrupted for field-testing purposes.

In March 2007 the committee addressed district concerns about field testing and identified options for further reducing district field testing. These concerns were organized into three general categories: when to field-test, who to field-test, and how to field-test. TEA proposed 26

actions designed to address the committee’s concerns. The categories below represent TEA’s response to these actions to date:

- **Completed/In Progress**—Responses in this category included responses that addressed the action or those that were planned to address the action in the future. For future responses, the implementation date was listed.
- **Decision Pending**—Responses in this category were those still under consideration.
- **Not Implemented**—Responses in this category were those not implemented. The reasons were documented.

Completed/In Progress	Decision Pending	Not Implemented
23	1*	2

Note. Since the SAAC meeting, a decision has been made on one of the pending items. Specifically, there will be no separate TAKS Spanish field testing for grades 5 and 6 in 2009.

After discussing each action and TEA’s response, the committee expressed support for the progress TEA had made on improving field testing. They discussed four issues related to field testing. Specifically, the committee:

- Encouraged TEA to further evaluate ways to reduce field testing in alternate education campuses and campuses implementing state or federally required interventions due to academic performance concerns. Timing issues around communicating field-test participation for 2008 did not allow a thorough investigation around methods for reducing field testing in these types of campuses for the 2007–2008 school year. The committee discussed potential next steps, which included an exploration of options for eliminating some or all of these campuses for 2009 and future field testing.
- Offered a recommendation for improving the tracking of field-test participation and the selection of field-test samples. Since field testing in one or more grades has the potential of impacting the entire campus at the high school level, the committee recommended that the unit of greatest importance should be the campus as a whole and not the grade level within the campus. TEA and Pearson’s next steps will be to evaluate methods for tracking participation and for identifying sampling strategies that focus on campuses at the high school level.
- Noted that since Texas does not implement a time limit on field or operational tests, the time needed to test is likely greater than if there were time limits placed on the tests. Because many campuses have found it difficult to test large numbers of students online when testing time is unlimited, setting time limits on tests might help campuses test more students online. Committee members asked about the potential to move to timed testing conditions for some assessments, thereby allowing improved scheduling of online testing sessions. However, committee members pointed out the importance of considering the implications of this change for students prior to taking any action on this topic. The committee suggested that first steps related to this topic would be to review the research on timed versus untimed tests and to collect and evaluate data on this issue for Texas assessments.
- Discussed field testing for EOC assessments in 2009. TEA and Pearson shared some sampling options with the committee. The options demonstrated ways to select field-test samples that balanced (1) the number of students tested at each campus, (2) the number of total campuses that participated in field testing, and (3) whether campuses would field-test one or both EOC assessments in 2009. After reviewing the options, the committee supported the option that would

- require that almost all high school campuses participate in field testing,
- minimize the maximum number of students needed to test at each campus, and
- require campuses to field-test in only one course.

This option would allow the greatest number of campuses to gain experience in online field testing and would also minimize the number of students needed to field-test at each campus.

Growth Model Pilot

Texas is currently evaluating possible approaches for measuring annual student improvement to satisfy House Bill 1, Senate Bill 1031, and federal requirements for including a growth measure in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations. Many possible methods could be used to measure student annual improvement; however, most methods are of two general types—the transparent methods and statistically complex methods. Each of these types is currently under consideration in Texas, as these two approaches are well matched to the data conditions in Texas, offer the flexibility to potentially satisfy more than one requirement for growth measures, and can be adapted when the EOC assessments are used for graduation purposes for ninth grade students beginning in the 2011–2012 school year. TEA is conducting a pilot study that will compare results from the two general types of growth models. The TEA, with the assistance of advisory groups, will evaluate the results from these studies and make a decision about which general approach will be used. After a decision is made about the type of growth model, decisions will need to be made about the specific calculation and how growth will be reported and used.

The first approach is a proportional growth model called the Reaching the Standard (RTS) model. The second approach involves regression-based models and is called the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). In the pilot study, statewide TAKS data in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science from grades 3–11 from 2004–2007 will be used. The goals of the pilot study are to compare the two methods with regard to practical features, technical features, the extent to which students would have met growth expectations in 2007, and reporting options. The analyses and final report will be completed summer 2008, and the decision about which type of method Texas will adopt will be made by the end of summer 2008.

The committee supported the study plans and made several suggestions for the study. First, the committee encouraged TEA to evaluate district and campus results in addition to state results. Second, the committee stressed the importance of clear communications about whichever method is selected. Since student growth is a new measure for Texas, it will be necessary to consider how best to share information to facilitate understanding for a variety of audiences. Finally, several members stressed that transparency is an important feature of a growth model.

End-of-Course Assessments

Senate Bill (SB) 1031 mandates the development of EOC assessments for secondary-level courses in Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and United States history. The purpose of the new EOC assessments is to measure students' academic performance in core high school courses and to meet the graduation requirements starting with the freshman class of 2011–2012. In addition, the score a student achieves on each EOC assessment will be used to calculate 15% of the student's final grade for that course.

TEA's Student Assessment Division is currently developing seven of these assessments and will develop the additional five assessments during the next four years. At this time the EOC assessments are administered online only on a voluntary basis.

The EOC Implementation Schedule for 2007–2008 through 2013–2014 outlines a year-by-year plan for field testing and test administration. A summary of this schedule is presented below. Factors considered when developing this schedule included:

- the State Board of Education (SBOE) schedule for revisions to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- the schedule for adoption of college readiness standards
- the current trends in course sequencing
- the stand-alone field-test burden on districts

EOC Assessment	Spring 2007	Spring 2008	Spring 2009	Spring 2010	Spring 2011	Spring 2012	Spring 2013
Algebra I	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Geometry	Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Biology	Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Chemistry		Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
US History		Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Physics			Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
World Geography			Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
English I				Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Algebra II				Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
English II					Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
World History					Field Test	Operational	⇒ ⇒ ⇒
English III						Field Test	Operational

Academic achievement standards, or cut points, on the EOC assessments need to be set. Issues associated with setting standards on the EOC assessments were reviewed and discussed by the committee. Specific points discussed and the advantages and disadvantages of each included the following:

- *Standards set as tests become operational:* Standards could be set after the first operational administration of each EOC assessment.
 - a. *Advantages*
 - i. Performance standards would be in place early, as the assessments are rolled out.
 - b. *Disadvantages*
 - i. Changes are likely in some of the assessments from the time the first operational administration occurs and the assessments are used for graduation. For example, revisions to the TEKS could necessitate revisions to the assessments. Likewise, the introduction of special

- purpose questions could also result in refinements to the assessments. Therefore, standards would likely need to be reviewed and possibly revised after the changes are made to the assessments. Student performance based on the original standards may not be a good predictor of student performance based on the revised standards.
- ii. Multiple standards could be confusing.
 - iii. The Commissioner of Education would set the initial standards, whereas the SBOE would set the standards when the assessments are used for graduation purposes.
- *One set of standards set later:* Because changes are expected in the EOC assessments over time, standards might be set only once to prevent the confusion of having to review and possibly change standards.
 - a. *Advantages*
 - i. Having only one set of standards would assist in the appropriate interpretation of student performance.
 - b. *Disadvantages*
 - i. The timing for setting these standards would need to be close to when the assessments are used for graduation; therefore, when these assessments are given initially, no standards would be in place.
 - *Consistency of standards for assessments within a content area:* Since the scores on the three assessments within a content area (e.g., Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II) will be combined in the cumulative score, there would be more flexibility to consider the standards in relation to the cumulative score if the standards are set for all assessments within a content area at one time.
 - a. *Advantages*
 - i. Information about how standards for all assessments in one content area relate could be considered in the standard-setting process.
 - b. *Disadvantages*
 - i. Field-testing in the three assessments within a content area would need to be conducted prior to setting the standards.
 - ii. The development and field-testing of some assessments (e.g., English III) would need to be moved up by a year or more.
 - *Relationship of standards across content areas:* Because students will need to reach the cumulative score requirements for the assessments in all four content areas for graduation purposes, the maximum amount of information would be available for evaluating the relationship of the standards across all 12 assessments if they are set at one time.
 - a. *Advantages*
 - i. Information about how standards for all assessments relate could be considered in the standard-setting process.
 - b. *Disadvantages*
 - i. Field-testing in all assessments would need to be conducted prior to setting the standards.
 - ii. The development and field-testing of some assessments (e.g., English III) would need to be moved up by a year or more.

- *Standards for college readiness:* Because there will need to be standards established that will measure college readiness, cut points for college readiness should be set in relation to the met standard and commended cut points.
 - a. *Advantages*
 - i. Reasonableness of cut points for college readiness, met standard, and commended performance could be evaluated in the standard-setting process.
 - b. *Disadvantages*
 - i. The timing for setting these standards would need to be close to when the assessments are used for graduation; therefore, when these assessments are administered initially, no standards would be in place.

After the Student Assessment Advisory Committee reviewed background information on the EOC program and discussed considerations for standard setting, they recognized the challenges faced by the state in determining a timeline for setting appropriate achievement standards. The committee made the following observations. The committee acknowledged that setting standards on tests as they are implemented would likely mean that the achievement standards would be subject to review and possibly change as they became high stakes and counted for graduation. The committee suggested that the achievement standards be evaluated in relation to all assessments at some point. In order to accomplish this, the group acknowledged that the English III development and field testing may need to occur one year earlier than is currently planned. The committee also recommended investigating the feasibility of setting time limits for the administration of the EOC tests.

Testing Special Populations

TAKS–Alternate (TAKS–Alt)

TAKS–Alt is an assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards and is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the participation requirements. Unlike other statewide assessments in Texas, TAKS–Alt is not a traditional paper, or multiple-choice, test. Instead, the assessment involves teachers observing students as they complete teacher-designed activities that link to the grade-level TEKS curriculum. Teachers then score student performance using the TAKS–Alt rubric and submit results and evidence through an online instrument. TAKS–Alt is administered for

- Grades 3–9 reading
- Grades 3–11 mathematics
- Grades 4 and 7 writing
- Grades 10 and 11 English language arts (ELA)
- Grades 5, 8, 10, and 11 science
- Grades 8, 10, and 11 social studies

The committee provided feedback they had received within their districts regarding the TAKS–Alt program. Several members noted that the TAKS–Alt program has been burdensome on staff. The committee, in general, encouraged TEA to find ways to address concerns about the burden on teachers. Members also noted comments from district staff who felt that the TAKS–Alt program has led to an improvement in instruction for this group of students by setting higher expectations for them and allowing teachers to become more familiar with the TEKS.

During the discussion the committee made a number of specific recommendations regarding policies, practice, and functionality of the TAKS–Alt system. The committee recommended the following:

- TEA develop guidance on an inter-district transfer policy regarding students who are assessed under the TAKS–Alt system. For example, guidance could be provided for districts that have students who transfer in near the time when the assessment window is ending and when there is limited time to evaluate students.
- Authorized district staff be allowed to enter student testing data into the TAKS–Alt system, with teachers verifying the accuracy of the data.
- District staff should be given the ability to preview student test data prior to submission to the state.
- TEA might consider including a training refresher module to the online training system that would allow experienced raters to meet training requirements in the future.

The committee also recommended that TEA review how other states are assessing this population and share those findings with the committee.

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)

TELPAS is designed to assess the progress made by K–12 English language learners (ELLs) students in learning the English language. This assessment measures English language proficiency in the language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Multiple-choice Assessment	TELPAS includes a multiple-choice reading assessment for ELLs in grades 2–12.
Holistically Rated Assessments	Holistically rated assessments are used to measure the listening, speaking, and writing of K–12 ELLs, and reading of K–1 ELLs. Assessments enable teachers to holistically rate a LEP student’s English language proficiency based on daily interactions and observations of the student during classroom instruction. These observation protocols are administered for Grades K–1 reading, listening, speaking, and writing Grades 2–12 listening, speaking, and writing

The committee provided feedback they had received within their districts regarding the TELPAS system. In general, experience with the online reading assessment this spring was positive. The group did not recommend that the state should slow down full online test implementation for next year, but asked TEA to consider whether responses to the online technology survey under SB 1031 could be used to inform the decision of whether to move to offering the test exclusively online in 2009. It was noted that the training materials and manuals for the 2-12 reading test and holistically rated components were of high quality but that there were too many manuals. Members also reported that the training requirements are complex and some teachers were confused about which training they needed to complete.

The committee made recommendations regarding TELPAS training and administration materials. The committee recommended that

- TEA review the manuals and evaluate whether the number of required manuals could be reduced
- TEA continue to work on making the online training requirements and processes as straightforward and user friendly as possible
- TEA explore the feasibility of extending the testing window a week and/or moving the testing window to a different time frame (e.g., move the window to a different time period in spring or to a fall testing window)

Committee Recommendations for Topics to Address at Future Meetings

The committee offered recommendations for topics for future meetings. These recommendations include:

- Results of the growth model pilot study
- Additional discussion prior to the 2009 legislative session concerning the implementation of EOC assessments under SB 1031
- Results of the technology survey
- Implementation of the vertical scale for TAKS 3-8 reading and mathematics
- Research findings and options for administering timed assessments

**Student Assessment Advisory Committee Meeting
April 17, 2008**

Attendees or Substitutes Provided

- David Anthony, Superintendent, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
- Sara Arispe, Director of Assessment and Accountability, Fort Worth ISD
- David Baum, District Testing Coordinator, Abilene ISD
- Paula Beaty, District Testing Coordinator, Port Arthur ISD
- Wally Carter, Supervisor of District Testing Coordinators, Arlington ISD
- H.D. Chambers, Superintendent, Stafford ISD
- D.S. Elliff, Superintendent, Corpus Christi ISD
- Roberto Fernandez, Superintendent, San Felipe-Del Rio CISD
- Gena Gardiner, Assistant Superintendent, Highland Park ISD
- Joe Garrison, District Testing Coordinator, Tyler ISD
- Keith Haffey, Executive Director of Accountability and Assessment, Spring Branch ISD
- Roland Hernandez, Superintendent, Waco ISD
- Rick Howard, Superintendent, Comanche ISD
- Pam Leftwich, Student Assessment Coordinator, Lubbock ISD
- Richard Middleton, Superintendent, North East ISD
- Thomas Negri, District Testing Coordinator, Alief ISD
- Kaye Orr, Coordinator of Accountability, Region 18 ESC
- Judy Pollan, Superintendent, Pittsburg ISD
- Sandra Poth, Director of Testing and Evaluation, Northside ISD
- Rod Schroder, Superintendent, Amarillo ISD
- Ann Smisko, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Austin ISD
- Don Stockton, Superintendent, Conroe ISD
- Sue Thompson, Director of Assessment and Accountability, Ysleta ISD
- Martha Vannoy, Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Garland ISD
- Aaron Ware, Director of Local Assessments, Dallas ISD
- Leland Williams, Superintendent, Dickinson ISD

Non-attendees

- Cathy Bryce, Superintendent, Highland Park ISD*
- John Folks, Superintendent, Northside ISD*
- Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent, Dallas ISD*
- Hector Montenegro, Superintendent, Arlington ISD*
- Sylvia Reyna, Assistant Superintendent, San Antonio ISD
- Pat Schmitz, District Test Coordinator, San Antonio ISD*

*Substitute Provided