

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guidance is to provide Texas school districts and open-enrollment charter schools with information related to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Interim Assessments for the 2020–2021 school year. STAAR Interim Assessments are an optional tool schools can use to gauge student understanding of the statewide curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). STAAR Interim Assessments inform intervention and predict performance on the STAAR summative assessments. STAAR Interim Assessments are untimed, not part of the accountability system, and are available at no cost to districts and open-enrollment charters.

## 1. What are the STAAR Interim Assessments?

The STAAR Interim Assessments are offered as a free optional online tool for school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. The tool provides actionable data to help educators monitor progress and predict student performance on the STAAR summative tests.

### The STAAR Interim Assessments are:

- ✓ a way to monitor academic improvement, especially for students who are consistently performing below grade-level,
- ✓ a tool to inform interventions for students or groups of students based on predictions of STAAR performance, and
- ✓ a benchmarking instrument.

### The STAAR Interim Assessments are NOT:

- ✗ an item bank intended for building classroom quizzes and assignments,
- ✗ a source of test questions for tutoring or small-group instruction, or
- ✗ a classroom formative assessment tool designed to provide performance data on specific student expectations.

NOTE: For a resource that addresses formative assessment needs, see the [Texas Formative Assessment Resource \(TFAR\)](#) to learn more.

## 2. What are the differences between formative, interim, and summative assessments?

**Formative assessments** measure student performance on specific student expectations to inform a teacher's instructional choices such as making immediate adjustments to unit and lesson plans (examples: class quizzes, exit tickets, Texas Formative Assessment Resource).

**Interim assessments** measure student understanding of a broader span of student expectations to monitor progress, predict summative performance, and identify students for intervention (examples: benchmark tests, STAAR Interim Assessments).

**Summative assessments** measure student mastery of a broader span of student expectations at the end of an instructional unit to determine the effectiveness of the program (examples: student portfolios, STAAR summative assessment, end-of-year assessments).

### **3. Does my district need permission to participate in STAAR Interim Assessments?**

No. Permission or confirmation from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is not required. The interim assessment tool is free and open for any district or open-enrollment charter school to use at their discretion. STAAR Interim Assessments can be made optional for schools and teachers.

### **4. Can teachers administer the STAAR Interim Assessment without the district?**

Yes. Teachers who choose to administer these assessments when not required by their district are not subject to the twice-per-school year benchmark limitation.

### **5. Who should I contact at my district or campus to learn about STAAR Interim Assessments?**

Contact your testing coordinator. A district or campus testing coordinator manages student registration. If a district chooses, it can grant teacher access to the student data in the Online Reporting Suite (ORS). Be sure to view the training videos, the Interim Assessments User Manual, and many other resources.

### **6. How are the STAAR Interim Assessments administered at school?**

The STAAR Interim Assessments are delivered in an online format through the STAAR Online Testing Platform (SOTP), the same platform students use to take STAAR summative assessments. To administer STAAR Interim Assessments, schools or districts should: (1) check that their device and online network systems are adequate for testing, (2) install and configure the Secure Browser for testing devices, (3) review testing resources, (4) register students for interim testing, (5) print or distribute test tickets, and (6) prepare students for testing. For detailed information, see [Section 4.1 of the Interim Assessments User Manual](#).

### **7. Can students take the STAAR Interim Assessments at home due to Covid-19?**

Yes. To better support students and educators across different school models, TEA has developed additional support for participants who wish to administer STAAR Interim Assessments at home during the 2020–2021 school year. Guidance, new in-browser functionality, and support for the distribution of test tickets is available in Section 10: Covid-19 Administering Interim Tests at Home of the [Interim Assessments User Manual](#).

### **8. How can districts enhance the validity of STAAR Interim Assessments if they are administered at home?**

STAAR Interim Assessments are low-stakes tests and not tied to accountability. But, because they predict student performance on the STAAR summative assessments, it is important that schools speak with students and parents about expectations for completing a STAAR Interim Assessment at home. To assist, TEA has added support materials in Section 10: Covid-19 Administering Interim Tests at Home of the [Interim Assessments User Manual](#).

## 9. What grades and subjects are tested?

Two testing opportunities (available during Opportunities 1 and 2)	One testing opportunity (available during Opportunity 2 only)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>grades 3 through 8 reading</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>grade 5 science</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spanish grades 3 through 5 reading</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spanish grade 5 science</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>grades 3 through 8 mathematics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>grade 8 science</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spanish grades 3 through 5 mathematics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>grade 8 social studies</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Algebra I</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Biology</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>U.S. History</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>English I</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>English II</li></ul>

## 10. Why do some subjects have two opportunities while others have one?

TEA is only offering one testing opportunity for science and social studies and recommends that it is administered after the majority of TEKS have been covered. Unlike the TEKS for reading and math that tend to include similar skills but build in complexity, the science and social studies TEKS most often contain discrete skills, facts, and concepts. For English I and English II, only one opportunity is available due to the revision of the reading language arts TEKS.

## 11. What are the registration and testing timelines for the STAAR Interim Assessments?

First testing window (Opportunity 1)	Second testing window (Opportunity 2)
Registration Opens: August 10, 2020	Registration Opens: November 2, 2020
Assessment Window: August 17, 2020–March 31, 2021	Assessment Window: November 23, 2020–March 31, 2021

TEA recommends testing in November for Opportunity 1 tests and February for Opportunity 2, tests but teachers should consider local scope and sequence when scheduling STAAR Interim Assessments. STAAR performance predictions are more accurate when assessments are administered during the recommended months.

## 12. What type of questions are on the STAAR Interim Assessments?

STAAR Interim Assessments include test questions developed with Texas teachers and STAAR summative test questions from previous years. The test questions have been field tested and are fully aligned to the TEKS. The STAAR Interim Assessments use mostly multiple-choice questions and some griddable questions (in certain mathematics and science assessments only).

## 13. Are there blueprints to the STAAR Interim Assessments?

Yes. Visit the [STAAR Interim Assessments](#) webpage to view the assessment blueprints.

## 14. What online supports are available?

The STAAR Interim Assessments include online content and language supports, the same pop-ups, rollovers, prereading text, and supplementary materials available on STAAR summative tests. Text-to-speech and refreshable braille (for reading/language arts and social studies only) are also available. American Sign

Language (ASL) videos and speech-to-text are not available for interim assessments. For STAAR Interim Assessments, local committees do not need to meet to establish eligibility criteria. Districts should determine which accommodations their students routinely and effectively use during classroom instruction and classroom testing.

#### **15. As a testing coordinator, how do I register my students?**

Students can be registered in the STAAR Assessment Management System through a student data file upload or through individual registrations for each student. Specific instructions for registering students for STAAR Interim Assessments are included in [Section 3 of the STAAR Interim Assessments User Manual](#).

Once a student has started any online test within an opportunity, student demographic and test information may not be edited via upload (grades 3–8) for any other test within that opportunity. Districts should verify all personal needs preferences, online groups, and other 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 already been started may do so manually in the system.

#### **16. Are there trainings available for STAAR Interim Assessments?**

Yes. Webinar trainings specific to STAAR Interim Assessments are recorded and available on the [STAAR Interim Assessments](#) webpage and the [assessment trainings page](#).

#### **17. What reports of student performance are available?**

Immediate results for the STAAR Interim Assessments are available in a special section of the Texas Assessment Management System called the Online Reporting Suite (ORS), a dynamic real-time reporting system. Immediately after tests are submitted, the ORS will display district-level, campus-level, roster-level, and student-level reports with user-friendly graphs and customization. Users can filter results by specific student groups. The student-level report allows educators to perform item analysis based on individual student or group-level performance. This feature displays the student's score, the student's responses, and the student expectation for each test question. The student-level report also includes pop-up windows showing each test question and a percentage probability of a student achieving Approaches, Meets, and Masters Grade Level on STAAR. To see examples of student reports view [Section 8 of the Interim Users Manual](#). Results are also available via weekly district downloads that can be imported into local student information systems. See the courtesy [data file schedule](#).

#### **18. Who has access to the student data reports?**

Access to student data reports are controlled by a user's role in the STAAR Assessment Management System. Those with authorized roles in the Assessment Management System may access and view student reports in the ORS with the exception of the teacher role, which must also be associated with a reporting roster in order to view any student performance data. User accounts and role assignments are established by a testing coordinator or administrator. Reference the [STAAR Assessment Management System User Roles and Permissions Matrix](#) for a full list of system roles and corresponding permissions. Parents do not have access to the reports online but may speak with their student's school for a report.

### **19. How should districts interpret results from the STAAR Interim Assessments?**

For guidance on how to interpret results from STAAR Interim Assessments, see [Section 8 of the Interim Assessments User Manual](#).

### **20. Are the STAAR Interim Assessments part of STAAR accountability?**

No. The STAAR Interim Assessments are a tool that districts and educators can use to improve outcomes for students in Texas. The optional assessments include a percentage likelihood of achievement on STAAR, but the assessments are NOT tied to accountability.

### **21. What will TEA do with the data from the STAAR Interim Assessments?**

TEA does not have access to student performance data. TEA can access an overview of schools and districts that are participating but does not receive specific score information or any student-level data.

### **22. Who can I contact for more information about interim assessments?**

For technical questions related to registration in the Assessment Management System, using the STAAR Online Testing Platform (SOTP), or reports of student performance, contact the Texas Assessment Support Center at 855-333-7770 or [STAAR3-8@ets.org](mailto:STAAR3-8@ets.org). For all other questions about interim assessments, contact the Student Assessment Division [HelpDesk](#).