Last updated: September 11, 2020

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 new, optional Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) for the 2020–2021 school year.

TFAR is an optional tool to supplement and support existing district resources and formative assessment practices. Formative assessment occurs in many ways throughout a lesson and throughout the school year. While TFAR is not designed to replace formative assessment practices, it is a resource that can be used by educators to supplement existing classroom formative practices to inform teaching decisions and improve instructional supports. TFAR is completely optional, not tied to accountability, and is available at no cost to districts and open-enrollment charters. This FAQ will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

1. **What is the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR)?**

TFAR is a new, optional, online tool that consists of a Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) aligned item bank, test-builder, and data reports. TFAR works best when used within a coherent instructional framework to support formative assessment practices.

Districts and educators can use none, part, or all of the functionalities within TFAR, for example:

- **Item bank, test-builder, and data reports:** teachers can engage with the full TFAR functionality to pull items from the TEA-provided item bank, create quizzes, assign quizzes to students to take online and track student content mastery using data reports
- **Item bank and test-builder:** teachers can select items from the TEA-provided item bank, build quizzes, and download those quizzes to use in their classroom outside of the TFAR platform
- **Item bank only:** teachers can download items from the TEA-provided item bank to use in their classroom outside of the TFAR platform
- **Test-builder and data reports:** teachers can create their own TEKS-aligned items in the TFAR platform, build quizzes, assign quizzes to students and track student content mastery using data reports
- **Test-builder only:** teachers can create their own TEKS-aligned items, build quizzes, and download those quizzes to use in their classroom outside of the TFAR platform

2. **How does TFAR differ from other initiatives such as the Beginning-of-Year (BOY) assessments and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Interim Assessments?**

TFAR is one of many optional assessment resources that will be available to support districts and educators in the 2020–2021 school year. Unlike the BOY assessments and STAAR Interim Assessments, which measure a broader span of student expectations, TFAR should be used to measure student performance on specific student expectations to inform a teacher's instructional choices, such as making immediate adjustments to unit and lesson plans. Quizzes built by this tool should be part of a broader set

of classroom formative practices (e.g., checks for understanding, presentations, discussions).

	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PURPOSE
Texas Formative Assessment Resource	New, optional, online tool consisting of a TEKS-aligned item bank, test-builder, and data reports	Frequently throughout the school year	• Support teachers in building and administering classroom quizzes to inform and adjust instruction • Supplement existing teacher formative assessment practices
Beginning-of-Year (BOY) Assessments	New, optional assessments created in response to COVID-19 and the cancellation of STAAR for spring and summer 2020	Once at the beginning of the school year	• Gauge where students are in their understanding of the TEKS covered in 2019–2020 as they begin the new school year • Measure gaps in student learning arising from the COVID-19 disruption to instruction
STAAR Interim Assessments	Optional interim assessments that mirror the blueprint of the STAAR and are administered on the same platform as STAAR	Once or twice during the school year (recommended in November and February)	• Monitor student progress • Predict student performance on STAAR • Identify students for intervention

3. **How can TFAR be used?**

This tool can be used to create and deliver assessments that are aligned and connected with existing instructional plans, lessons, and curriculum. TFAR can be used to help create formative class assessments as part of a broader student progress monitoring system below:

Assessment Type	Sample frequency	Sample make-up
✓ Mini-quiz	Every 2–3 days	About 4–5 questions covering 1–2 content standards
✓ Weekly quiz	1 time per week	About 7–10 questions covering 3–4 content standards
✓ Monthly assessments	Every 3–4 weeks	About 15 questions covering about 10 content standards
✓ Warm-up ✓ Exit ticket	While warm-ups and exit tickets may occur daily, it is important to note that class period time constraints often only allow for a single question tied to a single standard. A teacher should review the cumulative reporting of a standard to understand a student's progress towards mastery.	

Given the limited number of items in the bank, the data analysis and reporting functionality, and best practices for formative assessments, this tool is not meant to:

- ✖ Provide independent practice
- ✖ Assign homework
- ✖ Serve as proof of attendance during remote learning
- ✖ Administer assessments that are disconnected from instructional plans, lessons, and curriculum

4. What types of supports and trainings for users are available for TFAR?

Essential, Recommended, and Supplemental training and materials are available on an educator's TFAR home screen. It is highly advised that educators complete the Essential training prior to using TFAR. Continued professional education (CPE) credit is awarded for the main training module. To view these trainings outside of the TFAR platform, visit the [TFAR](#) webpage.

5. When will TFAR be available this school year?

TFAR opened for districts and teachers to access beginning August 31, 2020.

6. On what platform will TFAR be housed for the 2020–2021 school year?

TFAR will be located on Schoolnet, which launches assessments using a browser-based version of TestNav. Because optional End-of-Year (EOY) and BOY assessments are also housed on Schoolnet, historical student data for those assessments will be available for students and teachers to view.

7. What is the registration process?

A district that participates must register by providing a data file that includes information connecting students directly to teachers. A campus or teacher that would like to register and implement this resource should contact their district testing coordinator. Registration opened on August 27, 2020. Additional information regarding registration is available on the [TFAR webpage](#) .

8. What grades and subjects will be available?

For the 2020–2021 school year, all STAAR tested grades and subjects will have items available in TFAR. Those grades and subjects are:

- grades 3–8 mathematics
- Spanish grades 3–5 mathematics
- grades 3–8 reading
- Spanish grades 3–5 reading
- grades 5 and 8 science
- Spanish grade 5 science
- grade 8 social studies
- Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History

9. What type of items will be available in the TEKS-aligned item bank?

Items available in August 2020 will be multiple choice and griddable STAAR released items. Over time, new items aligned to the TEKS and reviewed for quality will be added to the TFAR item bank. These items may include non-multiple-choice items.

10. Reading Language Arts TEKS have been updated. Are the STAAR released items aligned to the new standards?

For grades 3-8 RLA, the items in TFAR have been realigned to the new standards. For English I and English II, standards are aligned to the overlap standards.

11. What accommodations will be provided?

Available accommodations will mirror those from the previous EOY and BOY assessments. Users may determine which accessibility tools are most appropriate for their students. Teachers may want to refer to the Accessibility Features that are available for STAAR. Most of the standard accessibility tools (e.g., highlighter, color contrast, and magnifier) that students are used to seeing in an online testing environment will be available in TestNav.

10. Can a teacher or administrator create their own items and share with their colleagues?

Yes. A teacher or administrator can create their own assessment item(s) and quiz(zes) in the TFAR platform and administer them to students. To accommodate the current use of campus common assessments and PLCs, teachers and campus officials will be able to share items and assessments among campuses within their own district.

11. What type of information is reported?

Teachers will be able to see how each student and each class performed by item or by standard. District or campus administrators will be able to see standard-level information at the campus or district level.

NOTE: If a student's responses are not submitted into the TFAR platform, student data will not be provided. For students with disabilities that prohibit access to an online assessment, teachers may have a student complete a paper copy of the formative assessment and submit those responses in the platform. Teachers can also upload student responses through a document camera.

12. How quickly is assessment data reported?

Student assessment data is reported instantly on the Schoolnet platform post-administration.

13. Who can see reported data?

A role and permissions matrix is available on the TFAR webpage. Teachers will only be able to access data for students assigned to their roster.

14. Can TFAR be accessed as part of asynchronous instruction?

Yes. Because TFAR is offered on an online platform, teachers may use this resource to support student assessment as a part of asynchronous instruction. Like all formative assessments, TFAR should be used as part of a coherent instructional framework. Given the limited number of items in the bank and the data analysis and reporting functionality, TFAR is not meant to be used for independent practice or homework

15. Will TEA offer a webinar so that districts can learn more about TFAR?

The TFAR General Webinar was intended for district and campus administrators interested in learning more about the Texas Formative Assessment Resource, including how to register. The webinar took place on August 24, 2020, at 1:00 pm. A recording is available on the Texas Formative Assessment Resource webpage following the webinar.

Demonstration webinars detailing TFAR navigation and registration occurred on September 3rd and 10th, 2020. The registration is available on the Student Assessment Correspondence webpage. Recordings are released on the Texas Formative Assessment Resource webpage.

16. Who should I contact for more information and assistance?

For technical questions related to registration or reports of student performance, contact Pearson at 800-627-0225. For all other questions about TFAR, please submit your questions via the Student Assessment Help Desk.