

2020–2021 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Progress Measure Questions and Answers

Defining the 2020–2021 STAAR Progress Measure

1. What is the STAAR progress measure?

The STAAR progress measure provides information about the amount of improvement or progress a student has made in a content area. The STAAR progress measure is calculated based on a student's gain score—the scale score difference between the current accountability year and the previous accountability year(s). Since STAAR testing was canceled for spring and summer 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, the STAAR progress measure calculation in the 2020–2021 accountability year differs slightly from previous years and measures progress across *two* years, from 2018–2019 to 2020–2021. Individual student progress is then categorized as *Limited*, *Expected*, and *Accelerated* progress.

2. How is the 2020–2021 STAAR progress measure used?

While 2020–2021 STAAR progress measure outcomes will be provided on STAAR data files, STAAR will not be used for accountability purposes. As a result, TEA will not issue A–F ratings for the 2020–21 school year. The 2020–2021 STAAR progress measure will also be included on STAAR Report Cards and in the Student Portal to help parents gauge their child's academic performance from 2018–2019 to 2020–2021. When interpreting this year's STAAR progress measure outcomes, districts and parents should be mindful of the unusual instructional and learning conditions of the 2020–2021 school year, as well as that this year's STAAR progress measure calculation varies from the traditional prior year to current year methodology. Further, districts should exercise caution when using this year's outcomes for evaluation or planning purposes (e.g., district/campus goal setting) and should use this data point in conjunction with other, more stable data points.

Districts should not use this data point to measure student growth for the Teacher Incentive Allotment.

3. What is an Accountability Year?

When current and previous years are referenced in the STAAR progress measure, they are accountability years. An accountability year generally refers to the time frame from the previous July to the current May.

For STAAR grades 3–8, the 2020–2021 accountability year includes the spring 2021 grades 3–8 administrations.

For STAAR EOC assessments, the 2020–2021 accountability year includes the December 2020 administration and the spring 2021 administrations.

4. How are progress measures different from performance levels?

Performance levels describe and classify students' performance in the current year. The STAAR performance levels are:

- Masters Grade Level
- Meets Grade Level
- Approaches Grade Level
- Did Not Meet Grade Level

In contrast, progress measures provide information about the improvement or progress that students have achieved between the previous years and the current year within the same content area. Individual student progress is compared to progress targets so that progress can be classified as *Limited*, *Expected*, or *Accelerated*.

5. For what grades, content areas, and language is progress measured for 2020–2021 STAAR?

In 2020–2021, progress measures are available for English mathematics and reading in grades 5–8, Spanish mathematics and reading in grade 5, Algebra I, and English II.

6. How are the STAAR Progress Measure classifications (*Limited*, *Expected*, and *Accelerated*) determined?

The STAAR progress measure classifications are determined by comparing a student's gain score — the difference between the student's 2020–2021 scale score and 2018–2019 scale score — to a progress target.

The progress measure and progress targets are grounded in the STAAR performance standards. They are also grounded on the goals of having all students achieve at or above *Meets Grade Level* performance and having high-performing students maintain their achievement at *Masters Grade Level* performance.

The *Expected* progress target is defined as the distance between the *Meets Grade Level* performance standards from the lower grade-level tests and the higher grade-level tests in the same content area, in the same language for grades 3–5. This definition is based on the goal that students in the *Meets Grade Level* and *Masters Grade Level* performance levels will maintain their respective academic achievement. For example, if a student is currently in the *Meets Grade Level* performance level for STAAR grade 3 English reading, the expectation is that the student will at least maintain the *Meets Grade Level* performance level for the STAAR grade 5 English reading test. This means that the student who scored at least a 1468 on STAAR grade 3 English reading (based on the *Meets Grade Level* standard) would need to earn a score of 1582 on the STAAR grade 5 English reading test (based on the *Meets Grade Level* standard) or higher to maintain the *Meets Grade Level* performance level in grade 5 English reading. From grade 3 to grade 5, if the student's score increased by 114 points ($1582 - 1468 = 114$), then the student would have maintained *Meets Grade Level* performance. Therefore, a student who was in the *Meets Grade Level* performance level in grade 3 English reading would need to increase his or her score

by 114 points or more in grade 5 English reading to have the *Expected* progress. Because the *Meets Grade Level* performance standards are not the same across grades, content areas, and language (i.e., they do not have the same numerical value), the *Expected* progress across grades, content areas, and language (for grades 3–5 reading) target value will differ from grade to grade and across content areas.

The same concept applies to students who were in the *Masters Grade Level* performance level in 2018–2019. For these students, the *Expected* progress from grade to grade, across content areas, and language (for grades 3–5 reading) target is defined as the distance between the *Masters Grade Level* standards in the 2018–2019 test and the 2020–2021 test in the same content area.

Students who were in the *Did Not Meet Grade Level* or *Approaches Grade Level* in the previous year have the same progress targets as students who were in the *Meets Grade Level* performance level.

The *Accelerated* progress target is a designation reserved for those students who have demonstrated significant progress over the course of two years, beyond that of the *Expected* progress range. The *Accelerated* progress target defines the upper limit of the *Expected* range and is determined by calculating the distance between the *Meets Grade Level* standard in the 2018–2019 accountability year and the *Masters Grade Level* standard in the current year. For example, the *Meets Grade Level* standard for STAAR grade 3 English reading is 1468 and the *Masters Grade Level* standard for STAAR grade 5 English reading is 1667. Progress greater than this 199-point increase ($1667 - 1468 = 199$), which is significantly larger than the 114-point progress targets for *Expected* progress, would be classified as *Accelerated* progress. Because the *Meets Grade Level* and *Masters Grade Level* standards are not the same across grades, content areas, and language (i.e., they do not have the same numerical value), the *Accelerated* progress target value will differ from grade to grade as well as across content areas.

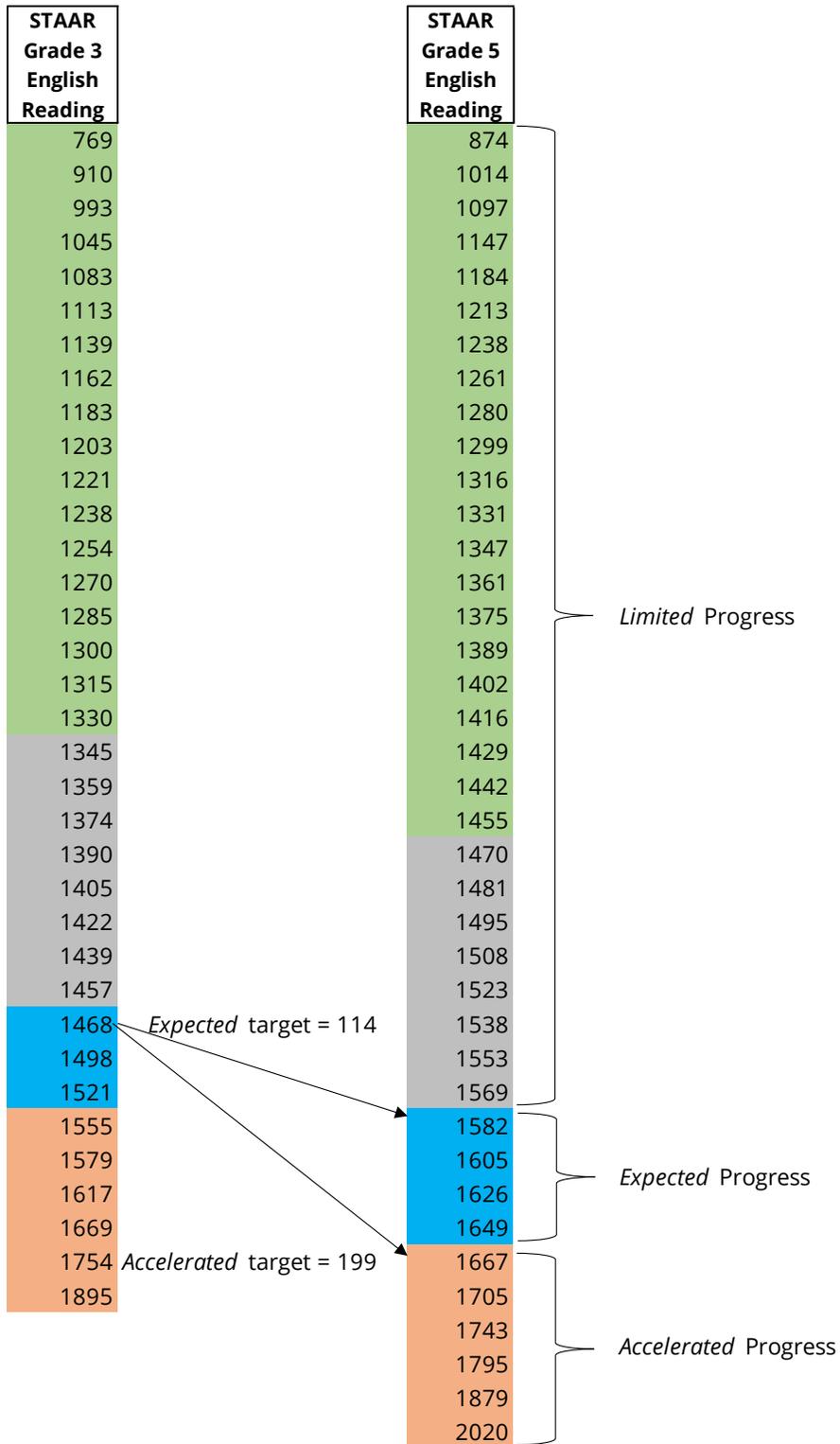
The diagram that follows uses two pseudo conversion tables to illustrate how the *Expected* and *Accelerated* targets are determined. The diagram shows the *Expected* and *Accelerated* targets, represented by the arrows, as well as the progress classifications for a grade 5 English reading student who had a scale score of 1468 on STAAR grade 3 English reading.

If the student has a gain score less than the *Expected* progress target of 114, the student is classified as having *Limited* progress.

If the student has a gain score greater than or equal to the *Expected* progress target of 114, and less than or equal to the *Accelerated* progress target of 199, the student is classified as having *Expected* progress.

If the student has a gain score greater than the *Accelerated* progress target of 199, the student is classified as having *Accelerated* progress.

For more details regarding the progress classifications, including the progress targets for all grades, content areas, and language, see [Calculating the 2020–2021 STAAR Progress Measure](#).



Note: The conversion tables used here are for illustration purposes and do not correspond to the actual ones used to report students' scores.

7. *Are there any exceptions to the Expected and Accelerated definitions described above?*

Yes, there are some places on the STAAR scale, specifically at the extreme high and low ends of the scale, where the application of the *Limited*, *Expected*, and *Accelerated* definitions would not be appropriate. At the extreme ends of the scale, unlike the rest of the scale, answering one more question correctly results in large differences in scale scores. For this reason, several places on the scale have been identified as exceptions to the *Limited*, *Expected*, and *Accelerated* definitions.

- All students scoring at the three highest raw scores in the current year will be classified as having *Accelerated* progress.
- Students who maintained *Masters Grade Level* performance from the previous year to the current year will be classified as having *Expected* or *Accelerated* progress based on their gain scores. (The *Limited* classification will not be applied to these students.)
- Students scoring at or below chance in the current year will be classified as having *Limited* progress.

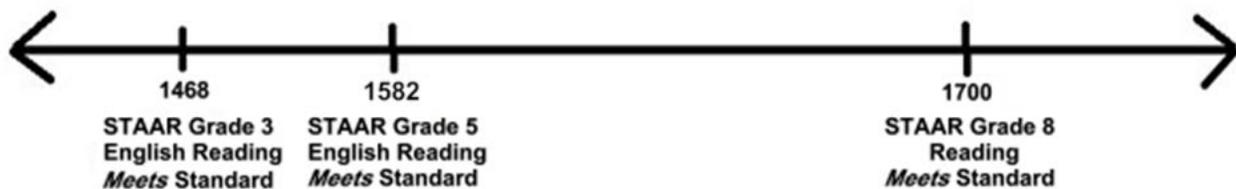
Chance represents the raw score that could be reasonably obtained through guessing alone. For the reading and mathematics tests, “chance” is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the multiple-choice questions (i.e., not including griddable questions for math tests). The English I and English II end-of-course (EOC) assessments include multiple-choice questions and essays. Chance on these tests is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the possible multiple-choice raw-score points, plus the weight (2) times the sum of the lowest non-zero score (1) students can get from each of the two raters (e.g., $2 \times 2 = 4$) on the written composition. Chance score is rounded to the smallest integer.

All students, including those that meet the exceptions defined above, must meet several criteria in order to receive a progress measure. See question 16 for these criteria.

8. *Why are some of the progress targets zero?*

It is possible to have zero value for the *Expected* progress target with assessments reported on horizontal scales. For grades 3–8 reading and mathematics, scores are reported on a vertical scale. This means that one continuous scale is used to report scores for all tests within the same content area for grades 3–8. The lower end of this scale includes the scores for the lower-grade tests (grades 3 and 4), while the higher end of the scale includes the scores for the higher-grade tests (grades 7 and 8). As an example, the *Meets Grade Level* standard for STAAR grade 3 English reading is 1468, and the *Meets Grade Level* standard for STAAR grade 5 English reading is 1582. Because of the vertical scale, the higher value in grade 5 reflects increased learning and performance expectations as compared to grade 3. The *Meets Grade Level* standard for STAAR grade 8 reading is larger still, 1700, again reflecting increased learning and performance expectations within the same vertical scale.

Because scores on a vertical scale increase across grades, progress target values are positive. For example, the *Expected* progress target for STAAR grade 5 English reading for students who achieved *Meets Grade Level* performance on STAAR grade 3 English reading is 114 ($1582 - 1468 = 114$).



In contrast, the EOC assessments are reported on horizontal scales. For the tests that use horizontal scales, the progress targets may be zero. For example, the *Meets Grade Level* standard for both English I and English II is 4000. The *Expected* progress target for English II for students who achieved *Meets Grade Level* performance on English I is 0 ($4000 - 4000 = 0$).

While it may seem odd to have progress targets that are zero, these values are an expected result of a horizontal scale. Despite the small values of some progress targets, they still represent increased performance from year to year because of the increased difficulty in content reflected on the assessments.

9. Can a high-achieving student still demonstrate progress?

Yes, students who consistently earn high scores, even those in *Masters Grade Level* performance level, have the opportunity to earn the *Expected* or *Accelerated* progress classifications. Exceptions to the *Expected* and *Accelerated* definitions have been developed specifically for high-performing students. These exceptions are as follows:

- All students scoring at the three highest raw scores in the current year will be classified as having *Accelerated* progress.
- Students who maintained *Masters Grade Level* performance level from the previous year to the current year will be classified as either having *Expected* or *Accelerated* progress based on their gain scores (the *Limited* progress classification will not be applied to these students).

10. Can a student have increased performance levels but not have Expected progress?

Yes, a student can move to a higher performance level without having *Expected* progress. Typically, this occurs when a student earns the highest score in a performance level in 2018–2019 and then earns the lowest score in the next performance level in the 2020–2021. In these cases, while the student crosses the threshold and achieves the higher performance level, the gain score (the difference between the 2020–2021 score and the 2018–2019 score) is not greater than or equal to the *Expected* progress target.

11. Does the STAAR progress measure change a student’s passing status on STAAR?

No, passing status, which is determined by performance level, is independent from the progress measure.

Applying the 2020–2021 STAAR Progress Measure

12. Is progress measured the same way for all students in Texas?

Progress is measured differently for different assessments. Progress for students who take STAAR or STAAR Spanish is measured in the same way for all students, including English learners (ELs). Progress for students who take STAAR Alternate 2 is measured differently by the STAAR Alternate 2 progress measure.

13. How is progress measured for students who take STAAR Alternate 2?

Because of the unique characteristics of STAAR Alternate 2 and the students who take it, a different progress measure is developed specifically for this population. For more information about the STAAR Alternate 2 progress measure, see [STAAR Alternate 2 Progress Measure](#).

14. How is progress measured for ELs?

Beginning in 2018, progress for students who take STAAR or STAAR Spanish is measured in the same way for all students, including ELs. Prior to 2018, qualifying ELs who tested in English received the ELL progress measure rather than the STAAR progress measure.

15. How can I calculate my student's STAAR progress measure?

In order to calculate a student's progress measure, the following information is needed:

- Test information from the 2020–2021, including
 - record update indicator (RUI)
 - grade level
 - content area
 - test language (English or Spanish)
 - scale score
 - raw score
 - performance level
- Test information from the 2018–2019, including
 - record update indicator (RUI)
 - grade level
 - content area
 - test language (English or Spanish)
 - scale score
 - performance level
- Gain score = 2020–2021 scale score – 2018–2019 scale score

If a student retested in the 2018–2019 STAAR grade 5 or grade 8, the higher valid scale score between the primary administration and May retest administration is used for their progress measure calculation. If the student took the test in multiple grades (e.g., grade 6 math and grade 7 math), then the higher-grade test score is used in the calculation.

For an EOC assessment, regardless of whether a student retested in the 2018–2019 year, the scale score of the student's first test attempt in 2018–2019 is used to calculate progress.

For step-by-step instructions for calculating STAAR progress using this information, see [Calculating the 2020–2021 STAAR Progress Measure](#).

16. Why do some students not receive a progress measure?

Students will not receive a STAAR progress measure in 2020–2021 if they do not meet ALL of the following criteria within the same content area (mathematics, reading, or English):

- Record update indicator (RUI) is '0' for 2018–2019 year and 2020–2021 year, meaning no record update is needed for the student in both years.
- Took a STAAR assessment in 2018–2019 and a STAAR assessment in 2020–2021
- Have a valid score from 2018–2019 and 2020–2021
- Has tested in lower-grade or course levels in 2018–2019 than in 2020–2021; Students who took the same grade-level or EOC assessment in 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 will not receive a progress measure. Students who take STAAR assessments and have skipped grade level(s) between 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 will receive a progress measure.
- For STAAR reading assessments, took tests in the same language in 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (i.e., English or Spanish)
- For STAAR English I in 2018–2019 and STAAR Algebra I and English II in 2020–2021, the student took the test for the first time (not a retest)

If a student does not meet any one of these criteria, the student will not receive a progress measure. Some students may meet the criteria and receive a progress measure for one content area but not another.

17. Do students receive a progress measure for retests?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, student success initiative (SSI) promotion/retention and retesting requirements have been waived for the 2020–2021 accountability year. For EOC assessments, progress measures are reported only for the Algebra I and English II first time test takers in 2020–2021 (even if a student takes an EOC assessment for the first time in the June or December administration). For English II, only the English I test that a student first took in 2018–2019 is used in the progress measure calculation. That is, progress would be calculated from the first time the student takes English I to the first time the student takes English II; retest results are not used to compute progress measures for English II. A student who takes both English I (e.g., December 2020) and English II (e.g., April 2021) for the first time in the same accountability year won't receive a progress measure. For Algebra I, the mathematics test in grades 3–8 that a student took in 2018–2019 is used in the progress measure calculation. If a student took more than one mathematics test in different grades (e.g., grades 7 and 8 mathematics tests) in the 2018–2019 accountability year, only the highest-grade mathematics test (e.g., grade 8 mathematics test) is used in the progress measure calculation.

If a student retested in grade 5 or 8 in the 2018–2019 accountability year, the higher scale score of the primary or May administration is used in the progress measure calculation.

18. Why does it appear as if more progress is required from grade 8 mathematics to Algebra I?

The number of scale-score points needed to have *Expected* progress is defined in the same way for all grades and content areas and references the number of scale-score points needed to move from the *Meets Grade Level* standard at one grade to the *Meets Grade Level* standard at the next grade (or in some

cases *Masters Grade Level* to *Masters Grade Level*). This is true as we look at STAAR grade 8 mathematics to Algebra I. The difference between the *Meets Grade Level* standards for grade 8 mathematics and Algebra I is 2300 scale-score points. While for grades 3–8, the biggest difference between the *Meets Grade Level* standards for the adjacent grades is around 100. The change from a vertical scale at grade 8 (*Meets Grade Level* standard = 1700) to a horizontal scale at Algebra I (*Meets Grade Level* standard = 4000) is largely responsible for these differences.

Interpreting the STAAR Progress Measure

19. How is the STAAR progress measure useful to parents, teachers, and administrators?

Scale scores and performance levels convey information about how a student performed in the current year. Progress measures provide additional information by communicating how much the student has improved from 2018–2019 to 2020–2021. When used together, this information provides a more complete picture of the student’s achievement.

For example, while a student may have achieved the *Approaches Grade Level* standard and passed the test, the student may not have met the *Expected* progress target. This information could help parents, teachers, and administrators identify students for early interventions to prevent them from falling behind in the future.

In contrast, a student may not have achieved the *Approaches Grade Level* standard, but the progress measure may indicate that the student made significant gains from 2018–2019 to 2020–2021. The progress measure allows parents, teachers, and administrators to recognize such gains.

20. If state, district, or campus pass rates haven’t changed from 2018–2019 to 2020–2021, does that mean that students did not make progress?

Not necessarily, STAAR performance levels and progress measures provide different information about student performance. Pass rates indicate the percent of students who achieved *Approaches Grade Level* performance or above on a test in a particular accountability year. In comparison, progress measures indicate the amount of improvement or progress that students have made between the 2018–2019 and the 2020–2021. Students may make progress but remain in the same performance level. In this case, pass rates may not change even though students have made progress.

Development of the STAAR Progress Measure

21. Why did Texas develop and implement a measure of student progress?

Progress measures are legislatively mandated for the STAAR program ([Texas Education Code §39.023](#), [§39.034](#), and [§39.053](#)). To meet these requirements, Texas developed the STAAR progress measure. In doing so, the goal was to provide additional information about student performance that is easy to understand and helpful to students, parents, and teachers.

The STAAR progress measure may also be used within accountability, allowing campuses and districts to receive credit for students who have made progress even if they have yet to achieve *Approaches Grade Level* performance. In this way, the STAAR progress measure credits the hard work of teachers, campuses, and districts who have helped students improve from one accountability year to the next.

22. What process was used to develop the STAAR Progress Measure?

The development of the STAAR progress measure began before the first STAAR tests were administered. A thorough research of progress measures was done to review the various approaches that could be used to measure student progress. As part of the development of the STAAR progress measure, many factors were considered, including the following:

- Different models for measuring student progress to determine the model best suited for STAAR
- Content relationships among STAAR tests to determine where progress measures are appropriate
- Federal and state requirements that determine how progress measures can be used for accountability
- Reporting options that allow information about progress to be communicated most effectively

Throughout the development of the STAAR progress measure, advice was sought from a number of advisory groups, including the Texas Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), a group of national psychometric experts. In addition, progress measures were discussed with the Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) and the Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC), which are groups made up of educators from various Texas campuses and districts as well as parents, higher education representatives, and legislative representatives.

From this research and advice, the STAAR progress measure was developed and refined. The goal of providing additional information about student performance that was both meaningful and easy to understand was at the forefront of all development activities.