



2021–22 Optional Beginning-of-Year Assessments

Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of this document is to provide Texas school districts and open-enrollment charter schools guidance on the most frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the optional Beginning-of-Year (BOY) assessments for the 2021–22 school year. BOY assessments can help schools gauge students’ understanding of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), as they begin the school year. BOY assessments have been built using released State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) test questions that measure the TEKS.

While the optional BOY assessments will be administered in early fall 2021, they are designed to diagnose students’ understanding of the TEKS from the previous school year. Therefore, the grade level of each student’s BOY assessment should be aligned to a student’s grade level from the previous school year. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) will not use data from the BOY assessments for any accountability purposes. This FAQ document will be updated as needed.

1. Are the BOY assessments a new testing requirement for fall 2021?

No. The BOY assessments are being provided as an optional resource for schools to measure students’ understanding of the TEKS as they begin the school year.

2. What grades/subjects and courses are being provided for the BOY assessments?

The optional BOY assessments cover the same grades/subjects and courses that are provided for STAAR. They will include grades 3–8 mathematics and reading, grades 4 and 7 writing, grades 5 and 8 science, grade 8 social studies, Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History.

Spanish versions of BOY assessments will also be available for grades 3–5 mathematics and reading, grade 4 writing, and grade 5 science. Writing assessments will not include a writing prompt and will be multiple-choice only.

3. How are the BOY assessments meant to be administered?

The BOY assessments are meant to serve as a diagnostic starting point for the 2021–22 school year that helps inform instructional choices. To assist districts in measuring students’ understanding of the TEKS from the previous school year, BOY assessments are best administered to students based on their 2020–21 enrolled grade level and will be offered to students registered in this manner by system default (e.g., a student entering 4th grade in fall 2021 could be administered the grade 3 math and grade 3 reading BOY tests).

For high school students moving to the next course in their sequence, districts may find value in administering the BOY assessment for the course they completed during the 2020–21 school year. For example, many districts offer Geometry after Algebra I. Students enrolled in Geometry for the 2021–22 school year may be administered the Algebra I BOY assessment in early fall 2021. Alternatively, districts

may want to administer BOY assessments to students who did not successfully complete a course in the 2020–21 school year and are repeating the course in fall 2021.

4. When is the registration window, and when will BOY assessments be available?

The registration window opens to local education agencies (LEAs) on Friday, July 31, 2021, and will remain open until Friday, October 8, 2021. Districts may administer the BOY assessments from August 16, 2021, until October 15, 2021.

5. In what format will the BOY assessments be available?

The optional BOY assessments will be available online and on paper (through a printable PDF). Students will take the online tests by launching the Student Interface in Cambium’s Test Delivery System (TDS). Students may also access the online tests at home using conventional browsers, such as Chrome, Firefox, and Edge. The test administrator will need to provide the student with the Session ID and test link to access the test through a conventional browser. Districts may also provide printed PDF versions of the tests to their students; however, answers must be entered manually by a district to receive a student’s reported data and will be available only for students with a disability that prohibits the student from interacting with an online assessment. Paper requests for BOY assessments are conducted in Cambium’s Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE).

6. Are the BOY assessments former released STAAR tests?

No. The optional BOY assessments are built from previously released STAAR test questions. Although they include test questions released in the past, the BOY assessments are test forms that combine items from all years available across hundreds of questions to match the current STAAR blueprints. In this way, the tests are beneficial measures of student understanding.

7. Since the TEKS assessed on some of the released STAAR tests have been revised or streamlined, will the BOY assessments be aligned to the current TEKS?

Yes. The optional BOY assessments will be aligned to the TEKS in place for the 2020–21 school year since they are designed to diagnose learning acquired during that year.

8. How many test questions are on the BOY assessments?

The optional BOY assessments are designed to mirror the blueprints for the STAAR tests. Each BOY assessment will have the same number of test questions as its related STAAR test. The BOY assessments for writing and Reading Language Arts (RLA) will not include writing prompts.

9. How much time do students need to complete the BOY assessments?

The BOY assessments mirror the STAAR tests, so students should need only a few hours to complete each test. However, since these are optional assessments, districts may set their own timing to fit their needs.

10. What accessibility tools will be available for the BOY assessments?

Districts may determine which accessibility tools are most appropriate for their students, whether the students are testing online or on paper. Districts may want to refer to the Accessibility Features that are available for STAAR. For online testing, most of the standard accessibility tools (e.g., highlighter, color contrast, and magnifier) that students are used to seeing in the STAAR online testing environment

will be available in TDS.

11. What accommodations will be available for the BOY assessments?

Whether the students are testing online or on paper, districts should determine which accommodations their students routinely and effectively use during classroom instruction and classroom testing. For online testing, some of the accommodations or designated supports (e.g., text-to-speech or content and language supports) that students are used to seeing in the STAAR online testing environment will be available in TDS. Braille and online American sign language (ASL) versions will not be available.

12. Will districts need to register or sign up to use the BOY assessments?

Yes. A district that chooses to provide the optional BOY assessments in any available grade/subject or course must register by uploading student information in Cambium's Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE). Registration is required for both online and paper testing.

13. Can teachers administer the BOY assessments 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.

14. How quickly can districts see students' test results for the BOY assessments?

For students who take the BOY assessments online, districts will be able to see the test results immediately after the test is submitted. Results will be available in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS) and will show how a student performed overall on the test, how he or she did on each test question, and the correct answer to each question. Note that student results for the BOY assessments will not be available in the Student Portal on the Texas Assessment website. For students who take the BOY assessments on paper, the timing of the test results will vary based on when the test is entered into the Data Entry Interface (DEI); once submitted, student scores will be available in the CRS.

15. What types of scores will be available for the BOY assessments?

Student reports will include an overall raw score (the number of items a student answered correct), scale score aligned to STAAR performance levels, points earned out of points possible by reporting category, the question, student response, and the student expectation for each question.

Roster, campus, and district reports will include a percent correct, scale score aligned to STAAR performance levels, points earned out of points possible by reporting category, the question, student response, and the student expectation for each question.

Users also have the capability of downloading reporting information to Excel, .csv, or .txt file.

16. How will districts receive reporting information for students who take the Boy assessments online?

Districts will have access to reporting files similar to those used for STAAR. A district may download the data files into its data processing systems or view reported information directly in the CRS. Custom layout files will be available in CRS beginning on August 30, 2021.

17. How should districts use the student performance data from the BOY assessments?

The BOY assessments may be helpful for district and campus leadership as they are analyzing the degree to which student learning was impacted by the disruption of COVID-19. Districts may use the student performance data from the optional BOY assessments as one of several data points to evaluate where their students are at the beginning of the 2021–22 school year. As these assessments are comprised of previously released STAAR test questions and answers that are publicly available, the student performance data is not intended to be used for purposes such as accountability, staff performance, or compensation measures.

To learn more about BOY assessments, please view the overview training video to be released on July 30, 2021, located in the [Texas Learning Management System](#). For questions related to the BOY assessments, please contact TEA's [Student Assessment Help Desk](#).