Student Assessment Newsletter

Office of Academics

Texas Education Agency

April 2018

Here's the Latest...

TELPAS Alternate

Texas is leading the nation in developing one of the first English language proficiency assessments for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) Alternate is designed as a holistic inventory based on language arts standards. As part of the test development process, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is conducting a pilot that will be administered from April 23 to May 4, 2018, to students in grades 3 through 12 who meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, TEA staff will be conducting cognitive labs to gather feedback from teachers on this new assessment. Results from the pilot test and cognitive labs will provide TEA with valuable information that will drive improvements in TELPAS Alternate. Please contact the Student Assessment Division to participate in this exciting pilot.

More Information

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Resources

TEA Student Assessment Website

TexasAssessment.com

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ETS Texas Assessment Support Center: (855) 333-7770

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From Deb's Desk

In January, a few team members, vendor staff, and I took to the roadways and airways for an assessment road show. We visited 10 regions from Beaumont to El Paso and Edinburg to Amarillo to conduct training and answer questions about the 2018 assessment administrations. Superintendents, chief academic officers, district testing coordinators, technology coordinators, and campus staff attended the trainings. These training opportunities were supplemental to our annual Education Service Center training-of-trainers held in Austin. I met incredible educators, saw some of the beauty of this state, and had some amazing food! It was a valuable learning experience, and I want to thank everyone for their warmth and support!

I also want to thank the many students, campuses, and districts who participated in the 2018 pilot administration of the STAAR Interim Assessments. When the testing window closed on March 23, there were 378 districts, 1,081 campuses, and 423,455 students who had used this new tool with remarkable success! Districts participating in the pilot will be asked to provide feedback through a post-administration survey. Results of the survey, as well as on-site visits, will inform improvements to the interim assessment tool before the full launch in the 2018–2019 school year.

Finally, please help me congratulate José Ríos who has been promoted to Director of Test Administration for Student Assessment. José has worked in the Student Assessment Division for 12 years on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Spanish, TELPAS, and accommodations.

Hurricane Harvey Update

Given the impact of Hurricane Harvey, Commissioner Mike Morath removed some Student Success Initiative (SSI) requirements for districts in the 47 county Presidential Disaster Declaration. The district testing coordinator must provide written notification to ETS by May 4, 2018 indicating that his or her district does not wish to participate in the June 2018 STAAR grades 5 and 8 retest administration.

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Changes in Rule and Legislation

SSI Requirements for Students Receiving Special Education Services

The 85th Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 657, making changes to the SSI requirements for students receiving special education services. If a student receiving special education services fails STAAR the first time he or she takes it, an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee meeting* must be held before the student is administered STAAR for the second time.

IDEA allows that "When conducting [ARD committee] meetings...the parent of a child with a disability and a public agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls." (34 CFR §300.328). NOTE: the meeting required after the first time a student takes and fails STAAR, may not consist of an agreement to amend the IEP.

More Information

New Webpage for TEC and TAC References for the Texas Assessment Program

To provide better access to statutory and regulatory information, the Student Assessment Division has created a new webpage. The webpage contains links to the specific sections of the Texas Education Code (TEC) and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) that support and guide the Texas assessment program.

View the Webpage

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Test Administration Updates

New Medical Exemptions for STAAR

With the implementation of the new accountability system in 2018, TEA will more closely monitor participation rates for schools and districts. To ensure that students who have experienced a significant medical event do not impact participation rates, a new process has been developed for a medical exemption from STAAR.

More Information

Transcribing Student Responses

Student responses recorded in the test booklet may be transcribed onto a blank answer document. Please note that this change is a departure from previous years, as well as information in current test administration materials.

More Information

Updated STAAR Tutorials for Online Testing

It is expected that all students participating in an online test administration complete the tutorials prior to taking the assessment. Updated STAAR tutorials and help videos are available in the STAAR Online Testing Platform (SOTP). This includes a practice option that allows students to interact with the new features for 2018. One of the new features is a sticky notes tool. This accessibility feature is available to all students taking STAAR online and allows students to make annotations in selections and items throughout the test.

New Spelling Assistance Tool

Students who meet eligibility for the designated support of spelling assistance will be able to use this new personal needs and preferences (PNP) option for the writing prompt during online administrations of STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing, English I, and English II. The spelling assistance tool will alert students when a typed word is not found in the Merriam-Webster dictionary source list. It will then offer up to five suggestions for replacement words from which students may choose. The tool evaluates words independent of the context. It's important to have eligible students practice using this new tool to determine if it meets their needs. This is a new option available for students who meet eligibility requirements; however, students may use any allowable types of spelling assistance listed in the designated support policy document in lieu of, or in addition to, this new support.

More Information

Technology Use Guidelines Presentation

A new resource for districts, Technology Use Guidelines Presentation, has been posted to the TEA Accommodation Resources webpage. This presentation is intended to expand on the Technology Guidelines document posted in fall 2017 and includes clarifications and examples about the use of technology-based accessibility features and designated supports for state assessments.

[More Information](#)

Technology Enhanced Item Pilot

TEA is working to improve the STAAR testing experience for students. One way of doing this is by introducing technology-enhanced items (TEI) that create more engaging content and allow for demonstration of higher order thinking skills. TEA is piloting a few TEI items during the spring 2018 STAAR online administrations for grades 3–8 mathematics and reading. The TEI pilot is only available for students testing online and is optional for the students. The TEI pilot, which will include up to five TEI sample questions, will be displayed after the student completes and submits the STAAR online assessment and will not affect the student's score on STAAR.

[More Information](#)

Enhancements to STAAR Alternate 2

There are several enhancements to STAAR Alternate 2 materials for the 2018 administration.

- Test materials will be shipped in kits. Each kit includes a student booklet, a set of image cards, and a test administrator manual.

- New image cards contain the same images that appear in the student test booklet and may be used in conjunction with the student booklet if the student needs this type of assistance. The image cards must be returned with nonscorable materials.

- Color images have been added to some questions in the student test booklets.

- Large-print student test booklets are now available. The large-print booklets are shipped separately from the kits; however, districts will need to use the test administrator manual and image cards within the kit.

TEA is conducting a post-administration survey to request feedback regarding the effectiveness of these enhancements.

[**View the Webpage**](#)

STAAR Report Card Reminder

Districts will not receive printed copies of STAAR Report Cards for the April 2018 administrations. Electronic versions of STAAR Report Cards will be posted in the STAAR Assessment Management System in accordance with the dates listed in the 2018 Calendar of Events. Printed copies of the STAAR Report Cards for spring 2018 administrations will be sent in June as listed in the 2018 Calendar of Events.

Technology Updates

From ETS:

- Districts can access the 2018 Student Data File Format for Student Registration and Precoding, to be used for the spring 2018 administrations, at https://texasassessment.com/administrators/technology/.

- Prior to testing, districts should launch the SOTP on all testing devices and verify the updated SOTP is installed and functional on ALL testing devices. A Quick Guide to Online Testing has been posted to identify preparation activities for administering STAAR online.

- Districts may enable access for campus-level staff to view their campus standard reports. By default, access to campus staff (campus testing coordinators and principals) will be closed.

From Pearson:

- An interactive calendar with important TELPAS, STAAR Alternate 2, and TELPAS Alternate dates is available under Calendar on Avocet at http://avocet.pearson.com/TX/Home. This calendar can be imported into users' calendars.

- An Infrastructure Trial is now available in the PearsonAccess Next Training Site. The form should be used to test system configurations and practice test setup. Infrastructure Trial Instructions are available on Avocet at http://avocet.pearson.com/TX/Home.

- The Customer Service Center now offers a chat feature and an online support form. Both features can be accessed at https://tx.pearsonaccessnext.com.

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Posted Information

Below is a list of information that has been posted to the Student Assessment website: http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/.

- [Texas Assessment Program Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [District and Campus Coordinator Manual (DCCM)](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [2018 ESC Training](#) Presentation
- [STAAR Test Administration Manuals](#)
- [Oaths of Test Security and Confidentiality](#)
- [Student Success Initiative Manual](#)
- [Medical Exemptions for STAAR](#)
- [Transcribing Student Responses for STAAR](#)
- [2018 Supplement for the Technology-Enhanced Pilot](#)
- [Educator Guide to Accessibility within the STAAR Program](#)
- [Technology Use Guidelines Presentation](#)
- [Accommodation Request Process](#)
- [2018 Online Accommodation Request Submission Deadlines](#)
- [Online Accommodation Request Form](#)
- [Request for Special Administration of an Online Assessment](#)
- [STAAR Alternate 2 Test Administrator Manual](#)
- [2018 LPAC STAAR Decision-Making Guide](#)

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The Crunch—Upcoming Events

Below is a list of events coming up in the next few months.

Assessments:

- STAAR Alternate 2, April 2–20
- TELPAS Alternate Pilot, April 23–May 4
- STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing, grades 5 and 8 mathematics and reading, English I, and English II, April 10–13
- STAAR Algebra I, biology, and U.S. history, May 7–11
- STAAR grades 3, 4, 6 and 7 mathematics and reading, grades 5 and 8 science, grade 8 social studies, Algebra II, and English III, May 14–18
- STAAR grades 5 and 8 mathematics and reading retests, May 14–18

Training—Save the Date:

- ESC Training for the 2018–2019 school year, October 3

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Communication from Contractors

To reduce the number of email communications sent to districts by assessment contractors while continuing to provide necessary, helpful information, TEA has established a bi-weekly email system that alternates between ETS and Pearson. Districts now receive a STAAR update email from ETS and a STAAR Alternate 2 and TELPAS update email from Pearson every two weeks, as needed. Other emails may also be sent for specific topics. In addition, ETS has begun posting reminders of deadlines for STAAR as announcements in the Assessment Management System.

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The Texas Education Agency will improve outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems.