

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guidance is to provide Texas school districts and open-enrollment charter schools with information related to new, state provided, optional beginning-of-year (BOY) assessments for the 2020–2021 school year. Just like the end-of-year (EOY) assessments, BOY assessments are an optional tool schools can use to gauge where students are in their understanding of the statewide curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), as they begin the next school year. Similarly, like the EOY assessments, the 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 2020, they are designed to diagnose understanding of the TEKS from the previous school year. Therefore, the BOY assessments should be administered to students based on their prior year enrolled grade level. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) will not use data from the BOY assessments for any accountability purposes. Data may only be used to research the educational impact of the current crisis and to spread best practices. This FAQ will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

### **1. Are the BOY assessments a new testing requirement for fall 2020?**

No. The BOY assessments are being provided as an optional resource for teachers and parents to measure their students' understanding of the TEKS as they begin the next 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 and the optional EOY assessments. 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, and BOY assessments for Algebra II and English III will not be offered.

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

The BOY assessments are meant to serve as a diagnostic starting point for the 2020–2021 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 2019–2020 enrolled grade level (e.g., a student entering 4th grade in fall 2020 should 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 2019–2020 school year. For example, many districts offer Geometry after Algebra I. Students enrolled in Geometry for the 2020–2021 school year may be administered the Algebra I BOY assessment in early fall 2020. Alternatively, districts may want to administer BOY assessments to students who did not successfully complete a course in the 2019–2020 school year and are repeating the course in fall 2020.

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

In response to district requests, the registration and testing windows have been extended. The registration window opened to districts on Monday, July 20, 2020, and will remain open until Friday, October 9, 2020 (previously Friday, September 18). The BOY assessments will be available to administer from Monday, July 27, 2020, to Friday, October 16, 2020 (previously Friday, September 25). Specific instructions on district and parent registration can be found in the Student Assessment webpage.

#### **5. Do I need to have participated in the EOY assessments to register for the BOY assessments?**

No. The optional BOY assessments are independent from the optional EOY assessments.

#### **6. In what format will the BOY assessments be available?**

The optional BOY assessments will be available online and in paper (through a printable PDF). Just as with the EOY assessments, students may also access the online tests at home using Pearson’s Schoolnet platform. By clicking on a link to Schoolnet, students can access a browser-based version of Pearson’s online testing system known as TestNav. This is not a secure application and no installation or plug-ins are required. Districts may also provide print PDF versions of the tests to their students.

#### **7. Are the BOY assessments the actual spring 2020 STAAR tests that were not administered?**

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 unique 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. The BOY assessments contain different questions than the EOY assessments.

#### **8. 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 2019–2020 school year since they are designed to diagnose learning acquired during that year.

#### **9. 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 and proportion of test questions as its related STAAR test. The BOY assessments for Reading Language Arts (RLA) will not include writing prompts.

**10. 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. If a student participated in the EOY assessments (either through parent or district registration), he or she can expect a similar testing experience.

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

Just like the previous EOY 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 an online testing environment will be available in TestNav.

**12. 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) that students are used to seeing in an online testing environment will be available in TestNav; however, the accommodations may look or behave slightly differently. Braille and online American sign language (ASL) versions will not be available.

**13. 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 providing a data file for registration. Registration is required for both online and paper testing.

**14. How quickly can a parent or student see the student's test results for the BOY assessments?**

Students who take the BOY assessments online will be able to see their test results immediately after submitting the test. Results 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. Parents and students can log back into the web browser at any time to review the student's test results. 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 scored.

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

Just like for the EOY assessments, raw scores (the number of questions the student answered correctly) and performance levels similar to those used for STAAR will be available. For each BOY assessment, a raw score to scale score conversion table will be created so that scale scores and STAAR performance levels may be determined.

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

Districts will have access to reporting data files similar to those used for STAAR. A district may download the data files into its data processing systems.

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

The BOY assessments are optional for district use but 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 school closures. 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 2020–2021 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.