

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

House Bill 1164 Writing Pilot Program

Report to the Governor and The Texas Legislature

9/17/2016

As required by House Bill (HB) 1164, 2015 Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is committed to developing an effective writing pilot program to examine alternative methods of assessment. This report contains program updates on the pilot design and the implementation plan.

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WRITING PILOT BACKGROUND

As required by HB 1164, for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years TEA and Educational Testing Service (ETS) will conduct a pilot program study to examine alternative methods of assessing writing. TEA is conducting the writing pilot study to determine methods of local assessment of writing for use in state accountability. Currently, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program assesses student writing skills in grades 4 and 7, and on the English I and II end-of-course (EOC) tests.

The pilot study will include the collection and scoring of a range of student writing samples throughout the school year. Students will compose the following writing samples:

- An initial timed writing sample based on a specific writing prompt chosen by the student from a selection of writing prompts generated through a collaborative design process, inclusive of teachers, Education Service Centers (ESCs), and institutes of higher education. This initial sample will be collected at the beginning of the school year;
- A portfolio of three compositions to demonstrate each student's skill in writing to three additional genres (e.g., personal narrative, persuasive, and expository); and
- A final timed writing product, written near the end of the school year, designed to produce a growth measure. Students will produce all writing samples in English.

Scoring of the student writing samples will be coordinated at the local level by the regional education service center (ESC), the ESC's participating school district and partnering institution of higher education (IHE).

WRITING PILOT APPLICATION PROCESS

On June 10, 2016, the TEA sent a request for applications (RFA) for the writing pilot program to all Texas Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs). The RFA outlined the purpose of the pilot study and required an applicant to provide detailed evidence of its ability to meet all program requirements (see Appendix). TEA received and reviewed 10 ESC applications. TEA then selected its top candidates to determine whether the student demographics of the ESC's partnering district/s are reflective of the state's diversity. Based on the overall quality of the applications and the diversity of the participating districts, TEA selected three ESCs to participate in the 2016-2017/2017-2018 writing pilot.

Region 6: Huntsville

- Calvert ISD: Calvert School
- Huntsville ISD: Huntsville High School
- IHE Partner: Sam Houston State University

Region 10: Richardson

- Athens ISD: Central Athens Elementary School

- Garland ISD: Bradfield Elementary School, Club Hill Elementary School, Seller Middle School, Shorehaven Elementary School, Williams Elementary School
- Sunnyvale ISD: Sunnyvale Middle School, Sunnyvale Elementary School
- IHE Partner: University of North Texas

Region 16: Amarillo

- Amarillo ISD: Humphrey’s Highland Elementary School, Mesa Verde Elementary School, Tascosa High School
- Dumas ISD: Dumas High School
- IHE Partners: West Texas A&M, Texas Tech University, and Panhandle 16 Collaborative

OVERVIEW OF 2016-2017 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Best practices in the assessment of writing include multiple measures related to student performance. Besides performance on a final essay product, it’s also important to consider a student’s ability to generate ideas, draft and revise, incorporate feedback and new learning, organize thoughts, demonstrate an understanding of writing conventions, and ultimately show growth in writing ability over time. To this end, the writing pilot program will collect and score a variety of English writing products from participating students throughout the school year. The writing products to be collected, submitted, and scored are:

- Two timed writing samples collected at the beginning and end of the school year.
- Three process writing samples in different genres that illustrate the writing process from start to finish.
- An instructional portfolio containing at minimum the five writing samples listed above, to demonstrate growth and engagement in the writing process.

Participating staff the local education agencies and IHEs will score all writing products at the end of the school year. TEA and ETS will provide training to school district and IHE personnel to assist with local scoring.

WRITING SAMPLES AND SCORING

TIMED WRITING SAMPLES

Students will provide two timed writing samples to determine the student’s growth over the course of a school year. To establish a baseline measure, a district will administer and collect the first writing sample within the first six weeks of school. A district will administer and collect the second sample by the end of April 2017. This timeframe gives maximum instructional time between the timed assessments while allowing for the scoring and reporting of results within the school year.

For each timed writing sample, students will have a choice of 3-4 prompts to which they can respond. Providing students a choice of prompts allows for ownership and relevancy in the writing. Trained scorers will score each sample using a common rubric (more details in the scoring section below).

Schools will administer and collect the timed writing assessments within one class period. The time limits for each of the submissions are as follows:

Grade level	Time Limit
Kindergarten 1st grade	25 minutes
2nd grade 4th grade	35 minutes
5th grade 8th grade	45 minutes
9th grade 12th grade	60 minutes

PROCESS SAMPLES

In the months between the two timed writing assessments, students will develop portfolios that will contain evidence of the student's writing process (e.g. planning, drafts, revision, editing, reflections, feedback, final product, etc.). To provide students with the opportunity to develop and deepen their own process through multiple writing styles, a student's portfolio will include, at minimum, three process samples indicative of the following writing styles:

- Personal Narrative
- Expository
- Persuasive
- Analytic

These writing styles are representative of what is in Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in English language arts content standards. The styles are also indicative of the kinds of writing tasks necessary in content areas, career and technical education classes, and higher education. The overall portfolio may contain more than the required number of writing samples.

There are designated timeframes and submission windows for assigning and collecting each process sample. Participating teachers will choose the writing style to collect during each submission window. Submission windows and choice of style allows teachers the flexibility to fully align an assessment with the scope and sequence of the local curriculum and instruction.

INSTRUCTIONAL PORTFOLIO

Student instructional portfolios will be comprised of timed writing samples and process samples. The instructional portfolio scores will be reflective of student growth, mastery, and the type of writing instruction occurring on each campus/district.

SCORING

Timed Writing Samples

The timed writing sample scores will be based on:

- A writing continuum/rubric designed to reflect developmental stages of writing (e.g., emergent, early, developing, competent, sophisticated) generated through a collaborative design process, inclusive of teachers, ESCs, IHEs, and TEA; and
- A rubric that outlines writing traits (i.e. ideas, organization, word choice, conventions, etc.) necessary for effective written communication in any mode, generated through a collaborative design process, inclusive of teachers, ESCs IHEs, and TEA.

All timed writing assessments will receive two locally produced scores that represent the teacher of record, another trained writing teacher, or an automated scoring engine. A student will take the timed writing assessments at the beginning and end of the school year in order to measure growth and mastery of writing during the school year.

The purpose of this scoring design is to compare the reliability and validity of different scoring methods involving teacher of record scores, non-teacher of record scores, or automated scores for future decisions regarding the pilot. TEA will evaluate a sample of timed writings for validity purposes.

Process Samples

In collaboration, teachers, ESCs, IHEs, and TEA designed two rubrics for the scoring of the process samples:

- A writing rubric that reflects developmental stages of writing (e.g., emergent, early, developing, competent, and sophisticated); and
- A rubric that outlines writing traits (i.e. ideas, organization, word choice, conventions, etc.) necessary for effective written communication in any mode.

The participating students' teachers will score all process samples. Other trained and independent certified Texas educators with a background in writing instruction will give a second rating to 50% of the process samples. Scorers will assess the process samples to determine a student's ability to follow the writing process from rough draft to final product, and to produce more than one type of writing.

TEA will rate process samples for validity purposes. Additionally, in order to guide future program decisions, TEA will also compare student samples scored in isolation and holistically as part of a student's instructional portfolio.

Student Portfolios

Student instructional portfolios will be comprised of timed writing samples and process samples. The instructional portfolio scores will be reflective of student growth, mastery, and the quality of writing instruction at each campus/district.

Local scoring of the instructional portfolios will be completed through use of a holistic rubric that takes into account the following:

- TEKS mastery;
- Student growth in writing;
- Student ability to engage in a writing process;
- Effective use of teacher/peer feedback;
- The revision process;
- A student's reflection on his/her own writing process; and
- The ability to produce multiple styles of writing.

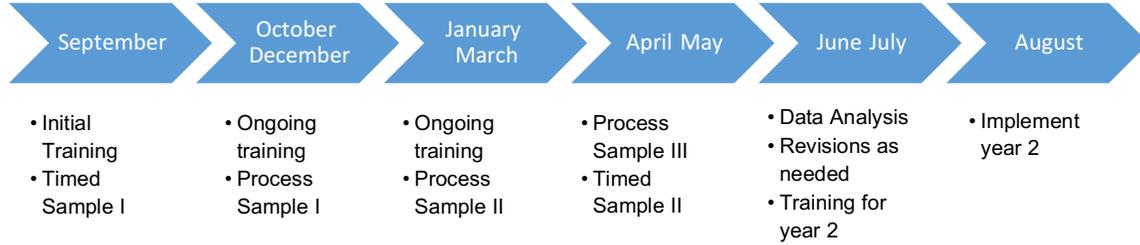
By evaluating a student's responses as a whole, teachers will gain a better understanding of a student's ability to master the TEKS. Comparisons between responses will show student growth throughout the year and their ability to engage in the writing process. Portfolio evaluation will also encompass a student's ability to respond to feedback from teachers and/or peers and use that feedback to revise responses.

A participating classroom teacher will evaluate his/her students' portfolios. In addition, local, non-teacher/s of record will evaluate 50% of the student instructional portfolios. TEA will randomly sample instructional portfolios for validity purposes. In order to determine the relationship between responses scored in isolation and responses scored holistically as a portfolio, TEA will also compare student holistic scores from instructional portfolios with scores on the process sample and timed responses.

FALL 2016 KICK-OFF EVENTS

On September 7, 2016, TEA hosted an In-person training in Austin for representatives from the three selected ESCs to inaugurate the pilot program. During the collaborative training, participants chose writing prompts, scoring rubrics, and other program elements. Additional events in September will include ESC region visits by TEA, dissemination of pilot materials for timed sample I, process sample I, and the portfolio medium. Finally, by the end of September, participating teachers will assign and score timed sample I and the pilot will be officially underway.

YEAR ONE TIMELINE



SUMMARY

A quality writing assessment is inclusive of multiple factors of development that evidence growth in writing. Through a portfolio approach, teachers are able to assess a writer's initiative, fluency, capacity to critique writing, habits and skills with revision, and the ability to learn from constructive feedback. Comparison of beginning and end of year timed writing samples will allow quantitative measurement of student growth, and the development and evaluation of student portfolios over the course of the school years will ensure that there is a meaningful relationship between instruction and assessment.

APPENDIX – JUNE 10, 2016 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Pursuant to House Bill (HB) 1164¹, 2015 Texas Legislature, this is to notify education service centers (ESCs) and Texas school districts that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is now accepting applications by ESCs for the writing pilot study program described below. For consideration, an application must be received no later than July 11, 2016.

Applications can be sent to the following address:

Texas Education Agency
Student Assessment Division, 3-122
ATTN: Brad Vasil, Director of Reading, Writing, and Social Studies Assessments
1701 N. Congress
Austin, TX 78701

The 2016-2018 Writing Pilot Program

During the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, TEA and Educational Testing Service (ETS) will conduct a writing pilot program to determine whether and how Texas students' writing skills can be assessed using a locally supervised approach that yields reliable and valid scores for use in accountability. Currently, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program assesses student writing skills in grades 4 and 7, and on the English I and II end-of-course (EOC) tests.

The pilot study will include the collection and scoring of a range of student writing samples throughout the school year. Students will compose the following writing samples:

- An initial timed writing sample based on a specific writing prompt chosen by the student from a selection of writing prompts generated through a collaborative design process, inclusive of teachers, Education Service Centers (ESCs), and institutes of higher education. This initial sample will be collected at the beginning of the school year;
- A portfolio of three compositions to demonstrate each student's skill in writing to three additional genres (e.g., personal narrative, persuasive, and expository); and
- A final timed writing product, written near the end of the school year, designed to produce a growth measure. All writing samples will be written in English.

The writing program's design and methodology can be found at www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/writing_pilot_study.pdf. It is expected that up to 12 school districts will be selected, and approximately **500** students per grade or subject will participate in the pilot study.

¹ Enrolled HB 1164 may be viewed at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/html/HB01164F.htm>

In addition to classroom teacher scoring and trained rater scoring, some participating districts will be using a cloud-based digital platform with the capability of scoring student timed writing samples.

To confirm the reliability of local and machine scoring, a percentage of writing samples will also be scored by TEA and ETS. Throughout the pilot study, TEA and ETS will provide procedures for the collection and submission of these student writing samples.

At the high school level, participating students will still be required to take the STAAR English I and English II assessments for graduation purposes. Participating students in grades 4 and 7 will not be administered the STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing assessments.

Requirements for Application

Each ESC is expected to coordinate its own application process.

To apply for participation in the 2016-2018 writing pilot program study, an ESC must propose one to three partnering local school districts it serves and at least one local university partner. ESC, district, and institution of higher education (IHE) participation in the pilot study will extend over the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years.

Between June and July 2016, TEA anticipates selecting one or more ESCs for the writing pilot program. TEA and ETS will evaluate applications, ensuring that key Texas demographic and geographic characteristics are represented by the selected ESCs and the partner school districts.

ESC Required Evidence for Application

An applying ESC must include the following in its application: identification of up to three partnering school districts for the pilot study and evidence that these school districts agree to participate in the writing pilot program for the duration of the study; identification and proof of cooperation of an IHE partner to provide assistance in training for local scoring of writing samples; and evidence that the ESC can host TEA-sponsored training for the writing pilot program.

Partnering School Districts

An ESC's application must identify up to three partnering districts in its service region, and the number of students by district for each grade or subject that will participate in the pilot study. A district can propose to participate in the pilot study for one or more grades or courses. Selected districts will be expected to:

- a. participate in the pilot study for both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years in the grades and courses specified in the application;
- b. select appropriate reading/writing teachers and students to participate in the pilot;
- c. maintain student writing samples and any other necessary material; and
- d. participate in all required ESC-sponsored training for scoring essays using materials provided by TEA.

An ESC must include evidence in its application that the partnering districts understand and can meet the above requirements. Additionally, since the writing pilot program must reflect the state's diverse demographics and geography, the application must illustrate the demographic composition of the proposed participating schools and whether each school is rural, medium-sized suburban, or large urban.

The ESC application should identify the teachers who will be involved in either the implementation or scoring of the writing pilot program by grade and course. The application must also include a letter of commitment from the superintendent of each participating school district.

Partnering IHE

In its application, an ESC is expected to provide evidence that it has obtained a commitment from a Texas institution of higher education to provide writing instructional/assessment expertise for the writing pilot program. Participating institutions of higher education will be responsible for providing assistance in scoring and evaluating student writing samples. An ESC's application will demonstrate that:

- a. the institution of higher education (IHE) will participate for both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years;
- b. the IHE understands its role will include, in consultation with the ESC's participating districts and TEA, assistance in scoring and evaluating student writing samples; and
- c. IHE staff involved in the writing pilot program will attend all required TEA-sponsored training related to the pilot study.

An application must provide the name and a description of the IHE(s). TEA will accept a letter of commitment from an executive or administrative officer employed by the IHE as evidence of an IHE's willingness to participate. Such a letter should include the contact information of the executive/administrative officer, the title of the officer, and a list of resources, including staff, that the IHE can provide to the ESC and participating districts in the execution of the writing pilot program.

ESC Hosting TEA-Sponsored Training

A selected ESC is expected to work in close collaboration with TEA and ETS in all aspects of the pilot study. During the course of the pilot study, selected ESCs may need to provide lodging and travel for at least four local educators at each participating grade or course level for all TEA-sponsored training. ESCs will also provide training for the collection and scoring of student writing samples and essays to participating educators and IHE staff. Specific activities will include:

- summer 2016 – a participating ESC will work with TEA and that region's designated IHE to develop rubrics for the evaluation of student writing samples;
- summer 2016 and 2017 – a participating ESC will host a one day workshop for participating district educators and higher education faculty on the use of materials provided by TEA to collect and evaluate student writing samples;

- September/October 2016 and 2017 – a participating ESC will work with TEA, the designated IHE, and the participating writing teachers to review/score the initial writing samples collected from students;
- May/June 2017 and 2018 -- in the final month of each school year, a participating ESC will work with TEA, the designated IHE, and the participating writing teachers to score the final student writing products. The ESCs will also collect and organize student portfolios of writing samples for local evaluation by participating teachers and IHE staff, as well as for score verification by TEA.

An application should describe the districts an ESC serves (rural, medium-sized suburban, and/or large urban school; and demographic composition of those districts) and the ways in which the ESC currently collaborates with elementary and secondary teachers in the applicable subject areas. Additionally, an ESC's application should illustrate any other current collaboration with local IHEs or other organizations.

Program Funding

The writing pilot program is funded through the state assessment program contract. Participating ESCs, districts, and IHEs will be compensated for program activities by ETS as the state assessment contractor for the writing pilot program.

Evaluation

TEA and ETS will evaluate each application. To ensure consideration, an application must show evidence to support all requirements described under ESC Required Evidence for Application to Participate.

Upon review and evaluation, TEA will contact each applying ESC with its determination.

