



## State Summative Assessment Redesign Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) November 2, 2021

The state summative assessment is one of many tools that provide educators and families helpful information to support strong teaching and guide students to their full potential.

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guidance is to provide Texas local education agencies (LEAs) with information related to the redesign that will be implemented in the 2022–23 school year.

This document includes FAQs on the following topics:

- [State Summative Assessment Redesign Overview](#)
- [Transition to Online Assessment](#)
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- [Reading Language Arts Redesign](#)

### State Summative Assessment Redesign Overview

#### 1. What is the state summative assessment redesign?

The state summative assessment redesign is a result of House Bill (HB) 3906 passed by the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature in 2019. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), working with a wide range of education stakeholders, including the Assessment Education Advisory Committee, has been exploring the most instructionally supportive approach to implementing these changes. The redesign will be implemented in the state summative assessments administered in the 2022–23 school year. This redesign includes several components:

- **New types of test questions:** New, non-multiple-choice question types are more like the kind of questions teachers ask in class and give students more ways to show understanding.
- **Tests administered online:** An online format allows students to receive accommodations like they get in the classroom and provides faster test results to support accelerated learning.
- **More cross-curricular reading passages:** Reading comprehension test questions reference topics students have learned about in other classes.
- **Writing incorporated into reading language arts tests:** Combined reading and writing tests better support the interconnected way these subjects are taught and eliminate stand-alone writing tests for grades 4 and 7.

#### 2. When is the state summative assessment redesign happening?

As specified in HB 3906 requirements, the redesign will be fully implemented in the 2022–23 school year.

## Transition to Online Assessments

### 3. When will students be required to take the test online?

Beginning with the December 2022 test administration, Texas students will be required to take the summative assessments online. However, students with extenuating circumstances that prevent them from testing online may qualify for a special administration on paper. More information about special administrations on paper will be made available soon.

Given the unique needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Alternate 2 program is excluded from the electronic testing requirement and will continue to be administered in the format that is most appropriate for each student.

### 4. What supports exist to ensure that LEAs have the internet connectivity and devices needed to test online?

TEA recognizes that internet infrastructure is critical to successful online administrations of state summative tests. COVID-19 brought an unprecedented increase in technology funding in the form of Governor Abbott's Operation Connectivity to provide technology devices and infrastructure to help ensure all students could access online content and stay connected. LEAs are encouraged to continue to improve their online capabilities through resources available from state and federal funding mechanisms such as the state Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA) and the federal E-Rate fund to support internet connectivity and fiber projects.

Additionally, TEA is standing up a \$4 million grant intended to help rural and small LEAs upgrade their network infrastructure to meet the recommended testing speeds. More information will be provided by early 2022.

### 5. What are the minimum bandwidth requirements for testing?

LEAs should aim for the recommended minimum download speeds of 500 kilobits per second (Kbps) per concurrent student tester for all online assessment programs. While the required bandwidth for each test will vary, having bandwidth of at least 500 Kbps will ensure that all tests can be successfully administered online. Although this is the recommended minimum bandwidth for online testing, 1 megabit per second (Mbps) per student is the recommended digital learning standard for schools, as determined by technology leaders across the nation (e.g., Consortium for School Networking [CoSN], State Education Technology Directors Association [SETDA]).

### 6. What are the minimum device numbers needed for testing?

TEA recommends a student-to-device ratio of 3:1, but each LEA's device needs will vary depending on their local test schedule plan. Although this is the recommended minimum for online testing, a 1:1 student-to-device ratio is the recommended digital learning standard outlined in the state's [Long Range Plan for Technology 2018–2023](#).

### 7. What are the minimum device specifications for testing?

A secure browser that meets [minimum system requirements](#) must be installed on each device used for testing. Refer to the [Quick Guide for Setting Up Your Online Testing Technology](#) for more information on

setting up the test administrator and student workstations, configuring the network for online testing, and configuring assistive technologies.

**8. What calculators will students be able to use when taking the grade 8 math and Algebra I tests online?**

There are two calculators embedded in the online testing system; students may choose to use one or both options during the test:

- Texas Instruments (TI) 84 Plus CE
- Desmos

Students can also choose to use a handheld calculator or calculator application that aligns with the [Calculator Policy \(updated October 2021\)](#). In the transition to online testing, the calculator policy will not change from this current calculator policy.

**9. What calculators will students be able to use when taking the grade 8 science and Biology tests online?**

Students have access to a four-function and a scientific calculator embedded in the online testing system. Students may choose to use one or both options during the test.

Students can also choose to use a handheld calculator that aligns with the [Calculator Policy \(updated October 2021\)](#).

**10. Will students taking the grades 3–7 tests be able to use a calculator?**

Calculators are not permitted for students taking the grades 3–7 mathematics assessments or the grade 5 science assessment unless the student meets certain eligibility criteria. Information regarding calculators as a designated support for students with disabilities can be found on the [Accommodation Resources](#) webpage.

## New Item Types

**11. What are new item types, and why are they part of the state summative assessment redesign?**

HB 3906 established a “multiple-choice cap,” meaning that no more than 75% of the total points on a test can be based on multiple-choice questions. These new item types are designed with Texas educators to be more similar to the types of questions teachers ask in class and give students different ways to show understanding. More information about new item types will be available this winter.

**12. When will full implementation of the new item types occur?**

Students will see new item types on state summative tests beginning in spring 2023.

**13. How will each test be organized with the addition of new item types?**

Preliminary blueprints for spring 2023, which give basic information about how each test is designed, can be found on the [STAAR redesign webpage](#) on the TEA website.

**14. Will the new item types take students longer to complete and, if so, will students have extended time to take the test?**

TEA will evaluate the amount of time it takes students to complete the new item types while field-testing items in February 2022. TEA will use this information when building tests to ensure the overall length of each test does not exceed statutory time limits.

**15. What are the different ways students will be able to practice interacting with the new item types?**

There are several ways students will be able to practice interacting with the new item types, including:

- New item type samplers will be available this winter.
- TEA is planning to release full-length practice tests in fall 2022.
- State developed interim assessments will include new item types starting in the 2022–23 school year. Interims are a free, benchmarking tool aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that LEAs can use to monitor student progress and to predict summative assessment performance. Interims are administered on the same online testing platform used to administer the state summative assessments.
- Additionally, teachers can create their own assessment questions using most new item types in the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR). TFAR is an online platform that allows teachers to create tests using items from existing item banks or items authored by the teacher. The platform used to administer tests created in TFAR is the same online testing platform used to administer the state interim and summative assessments.

## Reading Language Arts Redesign

**16. What changes will be made to reading language arts (RLA) tests in 2022–23 as part of the state summative assessment redesign?**

The main changes to RLA tests in the 2022–23 school year include:

- All RLA tests will assess both reading and writing (grades 3–8 English, grades 3–5 Spanish, English I, and English II). Students will be scored on both reading and writing questions.
- The tests will include new item types (reference above section on new item types).
- The extended constructed response item, or essay question, will ask students to respond to a reading selection. (In the past, the essay question was not connected to a reading selection.)
- The extended constructed response item, or essay question, will ask students to write in one of three possible modes: informational, argumentative, or correspondence. (In the past, the only possible mode was informational.)
- Extended constructed response items will be scored using a 5-point rubric (see the following question for more detail.)
- There will be an increase in the number of cross-curricular informational passages that reference content aligned to the TEKS for other subject areas (e.g., social studies, science, mathematics, fine arts, etc.). While the cross-curricular passages will include topics from other subject areas, the questions will only assess RLA TEKS; students will not be scored on their understanding of TEKS for other subject areas.

**17. What will the RLA tests look like in 2021–22 as a transition to the 2022–23 redesigned tests?**

As a transition to the redesigned RLA tests in 2023, a one-year modification will be implemented in 2022. STAAR RLA tests administered in April through December 2022 will include only items that assess the current 2017 TEKS for reading grades 3–8 English, reading grades 3–5 Spanish, and reading and writing in English I and English II.

- *Note: The stand-alone writing tests for grades 4 and 7 have been eliminated. The December 2021 STAAR EOC tests for English I and English II will continue to assess the standards in common between the 2009 and the 2017 TEKS.*

**18. How will extended constructed response items be scored in 2023?**

The extended constructed response item, or essay, will be scored using a 5-point rubric. The rubric will include two main components—idea development and language conventions.

The idea development component will score responses on aspects such as:

- quality and development of the controlling idea
- organization
- use of supporting evidence

The language conventions component will score responses on aspects such as:

- grammar
- mechanics
- word usage

**19. Where can I find information on which TEKS will be assessed on the RLA assessments?**

The TEKS eligible for assessment on each STAAR test for 2021–22 can be found within the [assessed curriculum](#) documents for each grade/subject and course.

The assessed curriculum for 2022–23 as well as preliminary blueprints, which given basic information about how each test is designed, can be found on the [STAAR redesign webpage](#) on the TEA website.