

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>August 17, 2023</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Texas Assessment Program Updates for the 2023–2024 School Year</b>
<b>CATEGORY:</b>	<b>Student Assessment</b>
<b>NEXT STEPS:</b>	<b>Share with appropriate staff</b>

The purpose of this communication is to inform local educational agencies (LEAs) about updates to the Texas Assessment Program for the 2023–24 school year. These updates are a result of legislation passed during the 88th Texas Legislature, U.S. Department of Education (USDE) requirements, and feedback received from stakeholders.

### **STAAR Paper by Request Administrations**

[House Bill \(HB\) 1225](#), 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, adds Section 39.02342 to the Texas Education Code. The law provides a new optional process for LEAs to provide a paper administration of a State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) assessment to **ANY** student whose parent, guardian, or teacher in the applicable subject area requests a paper version. LEAs have the flexibility to implement this new optional process and gather paper administration requests as appropriate for their school. The parent, guardian, or teacher must submit the request for a paper administration of STAAR to the LEA no later than September 15 for December administrations and no later than December 1 for spring administrations each year. District testing coordinators must mark students as eligible for a STAAR paper administration in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) by October 5, 2023, for the December 2023 STAAR administration and December 14, 2023, for the Spring 2024 STAAR administration. The only criterion that is required to be met is submitting the request to the LEA by the deadline.

The number of students who are provided a paper by request administration of STAAR may not exceed three percent of the number of eligible students enrolled in the district who are administered each assessment. For example, if an LEA has 500 students who are eligible for the STAAR grade 3 math and reading language arts (RLA) assessments, the LEA may indicate up to 15 students as eligible for a paper by request administration of the STAAR grade 3 math and RLA assessments. Similarly, if an LEA has 300 students who are eligible for the STAAR Algebra I assessment, the LEA may indicate up to 9 students as eligible for a paper by request administration of that assessment.

It is important to note that the number of students who receive a paper by request administration is separate and distinct from the students who are eligible for a special paper administration of STAAR. LEAs will continue the same process as last year for any student who is eligible for a special paper administration of STAAR because the student needs a testing accommodation that is not possible to provide in an online setting. These students are not counted in the maximum three percent of students who are administered a paper by request administration of STAAR.

### **Holy Days and Religious Observance**

[HB 1883](#), 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, adds Section 39.0238 to the Texas Education Code. The law allows LEAs to consider the dates of religious holy days or periods of observance likely to be observed by students in the LEA when establishing the LEA's school calendar and days on which students are administered state assessments. Religious holy days and periods of observance are defined as days observed by a religion whose places of worship would be exempt from property taxation under Texas Tax Code, Section [11.20](#). The law requires

LEAs to provide an alternate test date within the testing window to administer an assessment to a student who is absent from school to observe a religious holy day or period of observance on the day a STAAR or STAAR Alternate 2 assessment is administered. When providing the required make-up testing day, LEAs must maintain the security of the assessment to ensure that the assessment content remains valid throughout the testing window.

### **Updated STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements**

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, limits the number of students in a state who may participate in alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards to no more than one percent. It also requires states who anticipate exceeding one percent to submit a waiver request to USDE requesting permission to exceed the one percent state limit.

Texas has successfully submitted a waiver to exceed the one percent statewide limit for the past five years, except for spring 2020 when tests were cancelled due to COVID. However, there has not been a significant change in the number of students statewide who are assessed with STAAR Alternate 2, ranging from 1.2–1.6 percent.

In December 2022, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) submitted a waiver request to USDE for the number of students statewide who can be assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 for the 2022–23 school year. In March 2023, the USDE denied Texas' waiver request. Since then, the Student Assessment and Special Education Divisions of TEA have been working together on a new plan to update STAAR Alternate 2 documents and trainings to ensure all students are appropriately assessed. As a result, TEA has updated the STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements for the 2023–24 school year, and they are available on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage.

### **Testing Time**

Based on feedback from educators, parents, and students, as well as other changes to the Texas Assessment Program, TEA is implementing a maximum allowable testing time of seven hours for STAAR and Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) assessments. Students are expected to complete each STAAR and TELPAS assessment in about three hours. Students who are still testing after four hours should be consolidated into a general testing area to continue testing. Students must complete the assessment within the same school day, and no test session may exceed seven hours. Exceptions exist for students who have an approved accommodation for an extra day. TEA recommends that districts begin testing within one hour of the start of the school day. Districts should exercise judgment about starting a test session after lunch for students who are late, as they may not have sufficient time to complete the test before the end of the school day. In addition, just like the administration of STAAR assessments, the TELPAS listening and speaking assessment should be administered on a different day than the TELPAS reading and writing assessment to reduce student fatigue and allow students sufficient time and opportunity to do their best work.

### **Testing System Updates**

Based on input from educators, TIDE and the Test Delivery System (TDS) have been updated to include several enhancements.

- The secure inbox in TIDE has been renamed as the Secure File Center. The Secure File Center serves as a password-protected repository listing files containing data that have been exported from TIDE and other Cambium Assessment, Inc. (CAI) systems. In addition, district testing personnel may access the Secure File Center through TIDE or through the new Secure File Center card on the [Testing Personnel](#) page of the Texas Assessment website.

- The new *View Student History* feature in TIDE allows district testing personnel to see what and when changes were made to a student's registration in the system during the current school year.
- The student registration file has been revised to only update the fields included that are intended to be corrected.
- Several accommodations in TDS have been updated and enhanced. There is now an embedded Word Prediction (Co:Writer) feature. The speech-to-text functionality will be added to the Notepad and Sticky Notes tools. Additionally, students are now able to modify font and background colors within the test.

More information about the updates for this school year will be available in the [District and Campus Coordinator Resources](#). If you have questions about the updates or about the Texas Assessment Program, contact TEA using the Student Assessment [Help Desk](#).

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