

SUBJECT: Important Changes to the Texas Assessment Program for the 2017–2018 School Year

September 11, 2017

To the Administrator Addressed:

The purpose of this communication is to provide information about important changes to the Texas assessment program for the 2017–2018 school year.

STAAR WITH ONLINE EMBEDDED SUPPORTS

Beginning with the April 2018 administration of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®), content supports and language and vocabulary supports will be combined into one embedded support called content and language supports. Students receiving content and language supports will see all pop-ups, rollovers, and pre-read text available on each test. They will also have access to the Punnett Squares tool in the biology test and the Writing Checklist tool in the grade 4 writing, grade 7 writing, English I, and English II tests.

For the grades 4 and 7 writing, English I, English II, and English III tests, the written response box within the STAAR Online Testing Platform will include a spelling assistance feature. This embedded support will indicate a misspelled word and will offer suggestions for replacement words that students can choose from. Only students who are eligible for the designated support of spelling assistance may have this embedded support activated. It is important to note that students eligible for the designated support of spelling assistance may use this embedded support in the STAAR online test in addition to any other type of spelling assistance in the "Example/Type" section of the designated support policy located on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Districts will indicate in the student data file upload or manually in the STAAR Assessment Management System which students will have Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) accommodation codes, including content and language supports or spelling assistance, for a STAAR online test. Districts will be notified by email when the “2018 Student Data File Format for Student Registration and Precoding” document is available.

CODING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

Beginning with the April 2018 administration of STAAR, coding the ACCOMM. field on all answer documents and within the Assessment Management System for online tests will change. District or campus personnel will no longer indicate GA, for general accommodations, as it will be replaced with DS, for designated supports. For students taking online tests, districts will be able to indicate which students will be receiving designated supports in the student data file upload or manually in the Assessment Management System.

DICTIONARY AND CALCULATOR POLICIES

Beginning with the April 2018 administration of STAAR, the dictionary policy will be extended to include grades 3–5. Districts must ensure that dictionaries are available to all students taking STAAR grades 3–8 reading, grades 4 and 7 writing, English I, English II, and English III. The updated dictionary policy is posted on TEA’s Student Assessment Division website at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/>.

Beginning with the May 2018 administration of STAAR, calculators will be required for STAAR grade 8 science. Districts must ensure that students have access to a calculator with four-function, scientific, or graphing capability when taking the STAAR grade 8 science assessment. The updated calculator policy is posted on TEA’s Student Assessment Division website at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/>.

BRAILLE

Based on the implementation date established by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA), Braille versions of the STAAR assessments will be offered in Unified English Braille (UEB) as well as English Braille American Edition (EBAE) beginning with the April 2018 administration. Contracted and uncontracted Braille test materials in both UEB and EBAE will be available, and districts will indicate the correct Braille format in the Assessment Management System for each student taking a Braille version of an assessment.

STAAR REPORT CARD

To improve communication and transparency with educators and families, TEA conducted an overhaul of the STAAR report card. The redesigned report card was rolled out in June 2017. The goal of the redesign was to create a family-friendly report on student progress, specifically highlighting growth and improvement as much as proficiency, while giving parents concrete tools to help with student learning. Content and videos are available on the Texas Assessment website at <https://www.texasassessment.com/>. In the Student Portal, parents can also see actual test questions their child answered, how their child answered the questions, and the grade-level specific knowledge or skill that each question is designed to address.

STAAR ALTERNATE 2

Beginning with the 2018 administration of STAAR Alternate 2, student test booklets will include color images, and districts will have the option of ordering large print booklets if needed.

The process for entering student responses has been streamlined. Previously, coordinators, administrators, or other staff designated as Transcribe Assistants entered student responses into an online testing system, TestNav 8. The responses were then scored and reported in the Assessment Management System. Starting with the 2018 administration, transcription into TestNav 8 will no longer be required. Instead, designated staff will enter student responses directly into the Assessment Management System.

TELPAS

Beginning with the 2018 administration, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) listening and speaking assessments for grades 2–12 will be online tests instead of holistically-rated assessments. Due to the new online format, headsets will be required

for the listening and speaking test. Uni-directional headsets with noise-canceling microphones are recommended. Refer to the "Unified Minimum System Requirements for the Administration of Online Assessments" (available soon) for more information. Grades K–1 will continue to be holistically-rated assessments for all four domains and grades 2–12 writing will continue to be holistically-rated as well.

Blueprints have been developed for the new grades 2–12 listening and speaking tests. The length of each TELPAS reading test has been reduced and the blueprints for the reading tests have been revised. Both sets of blueprints will be released prior to the 2018 TELPAS administration.

The 2018 TELPAS testing window will begin one week earlier than it did for the 2017 administration. Due to this change, TELPAS data verification must be conducted within the assessment window. There will no longer be a separate verification window.

Student tutorials to prepare students for the 2018 TELPAS Reading test and Listening and Speaking test will be available by January 2018.

TAKS

Based on recent legislative actions, the Texas Assessments of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests are no longer being administered. Proposed amendments to Texas Administrative Code will provide paths toward meeting graduation requirements and earning a high school diploma for former students whose assessment graduation requirement is TAKS. The proposed rule was posted for public comment with the Texas Register on August 18, 2017.

TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is gathering information to better understand district needs and challenges regarding administering tests online. The information is being collected in a survey focused on online testing experiences, computer hardware and software, and information technology infrastructure. The input collected in this survey will provide valuable information to help TEA better understand district readiness for online testing. Your responses are critical to the decision-making process as TEA determines how to enhance online testing. Districts were sent an email containing a link to the survey and are encouraged to submit responses by the deadline provided in the email.

RELEASED TESTS

In August 2018, TEA will release the primary form of all 2018 STAAR assessments. All released tests will be posted on TEA's Student Assessment Division website.

INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

Beginning in spring 2018, TEA will provide districts with interim assessments for grades 3–8 math and reading. These interim assessments are an additional tool schools can use to gauge student progress toward meeting STAAR achievement standards. The assessments will be online adaptive tests used by teachers at various times throughout the school year. The interim

assessments will be available to all Texas public and charter schools to use at their discretion. Additional information may be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/IFA/>.