

September 3, 2021

Subject: Update on Released Tests, Practice Tests, and Optional Assessments

To the Education Service Center and District Testing Coordinator Addressed:

The purpose of this communication is to provide updated information to Texas public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools regarding released tests, practice tests, and optional assessments provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Released Tests and Practice Tests

PDF versions of the 2021 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) released tests for all grades/subjects and courses are now available on the [STAAR Released Test Questions](#) webpage. In addition, answer keys, item rationales, and scoring rubrics are also available. The 2021 STAAR released tests will be available as online practice tests in the Cambium system in October 2021.

Educators and students can now access numerous [online practice tests](#) and practice sets in the Cambium system. The online practice tests are designed to familiarize students with the online testing environment, the available tools, and the various types of test questions. These tests provide students with an opportunity to interact with the test interface, respond to questions, and locate and use available tools. Currently, all 2018 and 2019 STAAR and STAAR Spanish released tests are available as online practice tests. Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) released tests from 2017 and 2020 are also available as online practice tests.

Beginning-of-Year (BOY) Assessments

TEA is providing optional online BOY assessments for the 2021–2022 school year. BOY assessments can help schools gauge students’ understanding of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), as they begin the school year. BOY assessments have been built using released STAAR test questions that measure the TEKS. While the optional BOY assessments will be administered in early fall 2021, they are designed to diagnose students’ understanding of the TEKS from the previous school year. Therefore, the grade level of each student’s BOY assessment should be aligned to a student’s grade level from the previous school year. TEA will not use data from the BOY assessments for any accountability purposes.

BOY Assessments Key Dates

| Key Dates | Resources |
|--------------------|---|
| July 22, 2021 | Frequently Asked Questions posted on BOY Assessments webpage |
| July 30, 2021 | BOY Assessment Overview training posted on Learning Management System (LMS) |
| August 16, 2021 | BOY assessment window opens |
| September 10, 2021 | Centralized Reporting System webinar recording posted on LMS |
| October 15, 2021 | BOY assessment window closes |

STAAR Interim Assessments

TEA continues to offer optional online interim assessments that align with the TEKS. Test questions for the STAAR Interim Assessments have undergone field-testing and are developed with Texas teachers. The interim assessments are a tool that provides actionable data to help educators monitor progress and predict student performance on the STAAR summative assessments. The interim assessments are free, untimed, not part of the accountability system, and available to Texas public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools.

Interim Key Dates

| Key Dates | Resources |
|--------------------|--|
| August 18, 2021 | STAAR Interim Assessments Educator Guide posted on STAAR Interim Assessments webpage |
| August 20, 2021 | STAAR Interim Assessments Overview training posted on LMS |
| September 7, 2021 | Window 1 opens—mathematics and reading/language arts titles |
| September 10, 2021 | Centralized Reporting System webinar recording posted on LMS |
| September 17, 2021 | Educator Training Module posted on LMS |
| November 8, 2021 | Window 2 opens—science and social studies titles |
| December 17, 2021 | Window 1 closes |
| January 10, 2022 | Window 3 opens—mathematics and reading/language arts titles |
| April 15, 2022 | Windows 2 and 3 close |

Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR)

TFAR is a free platform that allows teachers to create, administer, analyze, and share formative assessments. It is a resource educators can use to supplement existing classroom formative practices to inform teaching decisions and improve instructional supports. TFAR is not tied to accountability and is available at no cost to Texas public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. TFAR consists of a TEKS-aligned item bank, item-creator, test-builder, and data reports. Items created by TFAR users during the 2020–2021 school year will be integrated into the new system, and additional items will be added to TFAR’s item bank over time. TFAR should be used within a coherent instructional framework to support formative assessment practices.

TFAR Key Dates

| Key Dates | Resources |
|--------------------|--|
| September 3, 2021 | TFAR Authoring Modules posted on LMS |
| September 15, 2021 | TFAR goes live |
| Mid-September 2021 | TFAR Educator Guide posted on TFAR webpage |
| October 1, 2021 | Educator Training Module posted on LMS |

Registering for Optional Assessments

All assessments included in the Texas Assessment Program are now hosted on Cambium's assessment system, including optional assessments. On July 31, 2021, registration opened for Cambium's assessment system, and testing coordinators may register students using Cambium's Test Information Distribution Engine ([TIDE](#)). Once registered, districts and their campuses will have access to all assessment programs, including optional assessments. Access may be granted to teachers by assigning users a *Teacher Role*.

If you have questions about the information in this communication, submit your inquiries to TEA using the [Student Assessment Help Desk](#). If you have questions about accessing Cambium's systems or need technical assistance, call Texas Testing Support at 833-601-8821.

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