

Science of Teaching Reading (STR) Exam Requirement.....

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Questions and Answers

HOUSE BILL 3 STR EXAM MANDATE

What is the Science of Teaching Reading?

In 2018, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) adopted the [Science of Teaching Reading Standards](#). The STR Standards address the discipline and practice of teaching early reading.

What is the House Bill 3 STR exam requirement? Who is required to take the Science of Teaching Reading exam?

House Bill (HB) 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, requires that all educators that teach any grade level from prekindergarten through grade six demonstrate proficiency in the science of teaching reading on a certification examination beginning January 1, 2021. The following certificate fields will require the STR exam for issuance of an intern, probationary, or standard certificate beginning January 1, 2021:

- Core Subjects with Science of Teaching Reading: Early Childhood – Grade 6
- Core Subjects with Science of Teaching Reading: Grades 4 – 8
- English Language Arts and Reading with Science of Teaching Reading: Grades 4 – 8
- English Language Arts and Reading/Social Studies with Science of Teaching Reading: Grades 4 – 8
- Early Childhood: Prekindergarten-Grade 3

Does the STR exam requirement impact the teacher assignment chart or teachers who already have their standard teaching certificate?

No. The STR exam requirement and associated HB 3 impacted certificates do not impact Teacher Assignment Charts or teachers who already have their standard teaching certificate. The SBEC adopted rules to replace the current certificate names for the HB 3 impacted certification fields, adding the phrase “with the Science of Teaching Reading” to indicate the certified teacher’s knowledge and skill related to the science of teaching reading.

How does the STR examination affect teachers currently, or soon to be, employed by Texas LEAs?

1. Teacher candidates will need to complete the STR exam to receive their intern or standard certificate in one of the 5 impacted certification fields to start as a teacher of record beginning 1/1/21.
2. Current teachers of record with a probationary or intern certificate would need to take the STR examination to be issued a standard certificate in one of the 5 impacted certification fields to continue as a teacher of record beginning 1/1/21.
3. Teachers with standard certification in one of the impacted certificate fields do not need to take the STR examination for renewal of their standard certificate.
4. Standard certified teachers seeking to add one of the impacted certificate fields through certification by examination will need to take the STR examination, along with the appropriate content pedagogy exam, in order to add the certification field to their standard certificate.

STR EXAM INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

What is the STR exam introductory period?

During the STR Exam introductory period, an initial cut score has been established to support the transition into the new exam. During the 8-month introductory period, candidates must meet a minimum threshold of items correct in order to pass the exam. That threshold is established in [19 TAC §151.1001\(b\)\(1\)](#) under Commissioner’s rulemaking authority. A standard setting committee composed of Texas educators will make recommendations this spring on the passing standard to be implemented under Commissioner’s rulemaking authority in September 2021 for all teacher candidates who take the exam on or after September 6, 2021.

Will candidates receive a full score report during the introductory period?

For selected-response items, the score report will include the number of correct answers out of the number of total scorable questions for each competency. For the constructed-response item, the score report will indicate whether the candidate submitted

a scorable response. If the response was not scorable, the candidate will receive information about why the response could not be scored.

Will the introductory period data (Jan.-Sept. scores) be reported to educator preparation programs?

Yes, candidate performance data will be reported to educator preparation programs (EPPs). Candidate results are automatically reported to the candidate's EPP on the published score report date for the exam administration. Candidates may verify their EPP through their Educator Certification Online System (ECOS) account at <https://tealprod.tea.state.tx.us>.

SCORING, REPORTING, AND RETAKES

How will the passing standard be determined for the exam?

During the STR Exam introductory period, an initial cut score has been established to support the transition into the new exam. During the 8-month introductory period, candidates must meet a minimum threshold of items correct in order to pass the exam. That threshold is established in [19 TAC §151.1001\(b\)\(1\)](#), under Commissioner's rulemaking authority. A standard setting committee composed of Texas educators will make recommendations this spring on the passing standard to be implemented under Commissioner's rulemaking authority in September 2021 for all teacher candidates who take the exam on or after September 6, 2021.

Will candidates have to pass each domain in order to pass the assessment? Can the test-taker retake a section they failed?

No, candidates will not have to pass each domain in order to pass the assessment. The Science of Teaching Reading (293) exam is not an assessment composed of subtests, as are the Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 assessments. A candidate will be scored on the exam as a whole. The scaled score for the selected-response sections will be combined with the scaled score for the constructed-response section to produce a total test scaled score. Candidates who do not pass the examination will be required to retake the full examination.

How long will it be before test-takers know if they passed?

Scores are reported within 28 days for exams that include constructed-response assignments. The score report schedule specifically for Science of Teaching Reading (293) can be found here:

http://www.tx.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/TX293_TestPage.html

During the introductory period, if candidates fail, do they retake the test? What is the length of time before they are eligible to take the test again?

The TExES program retake policy will apply to Science of Teaching Reading (293) both during and after the introductory period. For all TExES exams, candidates are prevented from registering until the results from the last attempt have been posted to ECOS. Once the results have posted, a candidate can then register, at which point the first available date for an exam appointment will be 30 days from the prior attempt's exam date. The full retake policy is available at

http://www.tx.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_RetakePolicy.html.

PREPARING FOR THE STR EXAM

How do I prepare for the STR exam?

A candidate's EPP is best positioned to support them in preparing for the STR exam and completing the requirements necessary for issuance of their certificate. Since July 2019, TEA staff has provided EPPs training and resources on the content of the STR exam with the intent to support programs in their preparation of candidates for the STR exam. All Texas EPPs approved to offer the certification fields now requiring the STR exam have attested that they have updated their curriculum to prepare their candidates for the STR exam.

In addition, the 293 Science of Teaching Reading TExES Preparation Manual is a useful tool to support candidates in their preparation for the STR exam. The preparation manual includes the STR exam framework along with sample assessment questions. The preparation manual can be accessed at the following link: http://www.tx.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/TX293_PrepMaterials.html.

PREPARATION MATERIALS

Where can I access the STR preparation manual?

The preparation manual for the 293 Science of Teaching Reading (STR) TExES is available on the [Texas Educator Certification Exam website](#). The preparation manual is web-based and responsively designed for viewing on multiple devices. A PDF version that includes the exam framework and sample exam questions will also be available for download.

What is the difference between the STR practice exam and representative exam?

Information about representative exams, which EPPs purchase and administer directly to candidates, is available here:

http://www.tx.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_AssessingCandidatesReadiness.html .

Information about interactive practice exams, which anyone can purchase at www.tx.nesinc.com, is available here:

http://www.tx.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_TXPractice.html .

When will the STR Representative Exam be available?

The STR Representative Exam is planned for release in early 2021. Information about ordering Representative Exams is available at http://www.tx.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_AssessingCandidatesReadiness.html .

When will the STR Practice Exam be available?

The STR Interactive Practice Exam is planned for release in early 2021. The price is \$10.

CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE QUESTIONS ON THE STR EXAM

How many scorers will read each test?

Each response is read independently and scored by two qualified scorers. If the two scores are not identical or adjacent, additional scoring is conducted to resolve the discrepancy.

Can test-takers request a rescore?

Yes, exam takers who do not pass may request a score review for the written-response section. Score review is not available for the selected-response section because of the quality-control measures in place to ensure accurate scoring of selected-response items .

Is there a word limit on the open response item, and will there be a word count included in the response box?

Yes, there is a word counter. The assignment indicates a suggested range of 400-600 words, however there is no limit to the candidate's written response.

Does holistic scoring of the constructed response penalize for errors in spelling and grammar?

Spelling and grammar are not considered in the score unless errors are so significant that they interfere with a scorer's ability to understand the response.

Can the response include bullets/lists/etc.?

Yes, the response can include bullets, lists, etc.

Will candidates be able to watch the video more than once?

Yes, candidates can pause, scroll, and replay the video.

Will candidates have the text from the passage read by the student in the video? Will candidates have access to a print version?

Yes, candidates will have access to the reading passage text on screen. The exam is computer-administered, and a print version is not provided.

Will this constructed response section of the test be timed?

Candidates have five hours for the full exam session. Like other TExES exams (e.g., English Language Arts and Reading 7-12), the five hours will consist of 15 minutes for a computer-administered testing tutorial and a non-compliance agreement and 4 hours and 45 minutes of testing time. There is no specific time restriction for individual sections of the exam. Candidates can navigate freely through the exam and may choose to respond, for example, to the constructed-response item first and then move on to the selected-response items.

How can EPPs support candidates in understanding the rubric associated with the constructed response question?

To assist candidates in understanding the scoring criteria for the constructed response, the scoring rubric and sample strong and weak responses with rationales are provided in the preparation manual. Information is also provided that explains how the strong and weak responses characterize the score point descriptions and how the candidate should use the materials to prepare for the exam. The preparation manual for the Science of Teaching Reading (293) is not yet posted but will be included here when it is available: http://www.tx.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/TX293_PrepMaterials.html

What resources will candidates have available to them during the constructed response? Are the test takers allowed to bring in any supports; e.g., previously studied examples, to help construct the CRI?

Candidates are not permitted to bring any material into the test center. Candidates will refer to the information presented in the constructed-response prompt and the exhibits. For example, if referring to a specific TEKS statement is necessary to respond to the prompt, that TEKS statement will be included in one or more exhibits.

IMPACT ON THE CORE SUBJECTS: EC-6 CERTIFICATION EXAM

Why was the 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES exam developed?

The 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES exam was developed to remove duplicative content now assessed on the 293 STR TExES exam.

The 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES exam includes a subtest titled 801 ELAR & STR. If a candidate passes that subtest, are they still required to take the STR exam for issuance of the Core Subjects with the Science of Teaching Reading: EC-6 certificate?

Yes. House Bill 3, 86th Legislature, requires new teachers seeking a certificate to teach Pre-K to grade 6 to demonstrate proficiency in the science of teaching reading on a new, standalone certification examination, starting January 1, 2021. The intent of developing a new, standalone STR certification exam was to ensure teacher candidates demonstrate the depth and breadth of STR-aligned educator competencies.

Due to this requirement, the 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 exam was used as a basis for an additional Core Subjects: EC-6 exam that does not include duplicative content from the 801 ELAR & STR subtest. The new 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 launched on January 1, 2021 and does not include STR content now assessed in the 293 STR exam. Both 291 and 391 are offered concurrently through 12/31/21.

- 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 (**includes** STR content) – last administration 12/31/21
- 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 (**excludes** STR content) – first administration 1/1/21

How long can the 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 be used for certification?

The last administration date for Core Subjects EC-6 (291) will be December 31, 2021. A passing score on the 291 can be used for issuance of the Core Subjects with the Science of Teaching Reading: EC-6 no later than December 30, 2022.

If a candidate needs to take the Core Subjects: EC-6 exam during the 2021 calendar year when the 291 and 391 are concurrently available, which should they take?

The 291 Core Subjects EC-6 exam is being made available through 2021 to provide additional opportunities to test for candidates whose first attempt was prior to 1/1/21 but who did not pass all subtests. The 291 exam framework does include some content that is also assessed in the Science of Teaching Reading (293) exam framework.

First-time test-takers should take the 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 exam. The 391 Core Subjects EC-6 exam framework does not include content that is assessed in the Science of Teaching Reading (293) exam framework. In addition, feedback from the field and analysis of the 291 exam has resulted in a reduction and redistribution of items across all 5 subtests of the 391 exam, while the total test session time remains 5 hours.

Can a candidate combine passing scores on subtests from the 291 and 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES exams to achieve an overall passing score on the Core Subjects: EC-6 exam?

No. The 291 and 391 are separate exams and passing scores on subject exams of one exam cannot be combined with passing scores on subject exams of the other exam.

If a candidate took the 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES but needs to transition to the 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 TExES, how many test attempts are they allowed with the 391 exam?

The candidate will be allowed five attempts since the 391 exam is a new exam, with a new exam number. Candidates are allowed five attempts per exam. Please note, though, that as the 291 and 391 are separate exams, passing scores on subject exams of one exam cannot be combined with passing scores on subject exams of the other exam. In addition,

Can candidates still apply for a Test Limit Waiver for the 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 exam?

Yes. Candidates can continue to submit Test Limit Waivers for the 291 Core Subjects: EC-6 exam through 12/1/2021.

Will candidates be able to take the STR exam before their other content pedagogy exam? (For example, prior to taking EC-6 Core Subjects.)

Yes. Candidates can take the Science of Teaching Reading (293) exam before taking their other content-pedagogy certification exam, if approved to do so by the candidate's educator preparation program.

Where can I access the preparation manual for the 391 Core Subjects: EC-6 exam?

The preparation manual for the 391 Core Subjects EC-6 TExES is now available on the [Texas Educator Certification Exam website](#). The preparation manual is web-based and responsively designed for viewing on multiple devices. A PDF version that includes the exam framework and sample exam questions will also be available for download.

TESTING CENTERS:

Is the STR exam offered at all Texas testing centers?

The Science of Teaching Reading exam includes video items which require special handling for delivery at test sites. The STR joins the current group of exams with specific requirements, such as world languages, Superintendent, Music and Principal as Instructional Leader. To provide the best candidate experience, test centers offering these exams may also provide special headsets or 24-inch monitors, in addition to supporting video item presentation.

In addition to the 28 Pearson Professional Centers in Texas, there are 12 test centers located across the regions that currently administering the Science of Teaching Reading exam. An additional 3 sites are expected to be available soon. Pearson is tracking appointment availability by region across the state daily. Any candidate encountering difficulty locating a testing appointment is encouraged to contact Pearson for assistance.

With the impacts of COVID-19, is testing capacity currently limited in Texas?

There are currently over 140 test centers open and testing candidates across the state. In response to COVID-19 impacts, 20+ test centers have been added to the test center network. Overall, more exams were administered in January 2021 than January 2020.

Appointment availability takes into account social distancing precautions and some test centers have extended their hours to be open nearly 24 hours a day. We encourage you to check for test center availability prior to registration by using the [seat availability tool](#). Test centers that are open will appear in the seat availability tool and during the scheduling process. TEA staff are closely monitoring test center capacity and availability weekly with Pearson. Candidates having difficulty scheduling a testing appointment should contact Pearson for assistance. Some appointment availability may change due to COVID-19, and TEA and Pearson staff are reviewing all cancellations and test center closures to ensure it was unavoidable and required to ensure candidate health and safety during the pandemic.

HB 3 STR EXAM AND READING ACADEMY REQUIREMENTS

Does taking the STR exam waive the HB 3 Reading Academies training requirement for incoming or current teachers?

Although the STR examination and the Reading Academies are both requirements of HB 3, they are different mandates. The STR examination is a mandated requirement for the [issuance of a teaching certification](#). The STR examination is required for teacher candidates seeking certification in one of the five HB 3 impacted certificate fields.

Completion of the Reading Academies is a mandated requirement for all in-service teachers and administrators who teach students in grades Kindergarten to 3rd.

This means that even if a teacher has passed the STR exam and is issued one of the 5 HB3 impacted certificates, they will still need to complete Reading Academies training once hired by a Texas LEA. All teacher candidates seeking certification in an HB 3 impacted field are required to take and pass the STR exam for issuance of an intern, probationary, or standard certificate as of January 1, 2021.

Can the STR exam be taken as a separate exam to add “with science of teaching reading” to a teacher’s certificate?

No, the STR exam cannot be added to an existing certificate as an endorsement. As a reminder, the STR exam requirement and associated HB 3 impacted certificates do not impact Teacher Assignment Charts or teachers who already have their standard teaching certificate.