



EYES ON STAAR

Transitioning Questions

The Eyes on STAAR will be a recurring publication throughout the 2011 – 2012 school year to provide information related to the transition to the new state assessment and accountability standards. The following list of transitioning questions provides information related to STAAR, *The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness*. STAAR resulted from House Bill 3 passed by the 81st Texas Legislature and incorporated into the Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 39. Much of the information are highlights taken from a document, the *House Bill 3 Transition Plan*, found on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website, <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar>.

HISTORICAL TESTING INFORMATION



How long has Texas been administering state-wide tests?

Since 1980

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) – First state-mandated test, in use from 1980-1985, administered to students in grades 3, 5 and 9 in reading, mathematics and writing.

Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) – In use from 1986-1990, tested reading, mathematics and writing in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11; first state test students were required to pass to earn a diploma.

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) – In use from 1990-2002, tested reading, mathematics and writing, ultimately given to students in grades 3-8 and 10, additionally science and social studies tested at eighth grade, Spanish-language tests available for students in grades 3-6, four end-of-course exams provided optional method for meeting graduation requirements.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) – In use from 2003 to 2011, assessed mathematics, reading, writing, English language arts, science and social studies, students tested in grades 3-11; promotion tied to test results for students in grades 3, 5 and 8; graduation requirements expanded to include English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) will be implemented in the 2011-2012 school year and replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). STAAR™ includes the 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments mandated by SB 1031 in 2007 and the new grade 3-8 assessments mandated by HB 3 in 2009.

THE MEANING OF STAAR

What is STAAR? What are Readiness, Supporting, and Process standards?

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) are the new state assessments for students in grades 3-12. STAAR is replacing the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills* (TAKS). The STAAR questions will align to the content AND cognitive rigor of TEKS.

The TEKS define content, cognitive rigor and processes needed for applying the learning. The STAAR identify the Readiness Standards, Supporting Standards, and the Process Standards.

- **Readiness Standards** – essential for success in the current grade or course; are important for preparedness for the next grade; support college and career readiness; require in-depth instruction; address broad and deep concepts and skills. On any given test the majority of the test items (approx 60-70%) will assess readiness standards.
- **Supporting standards** – These TEKS play a role in preparing students for the next grade or course, but not a central role. The remainder of the test items will assess these supporting standards.
- **Process Standards** – those skills needed for applying the Readiness and Supporting Standards. For example, are defined in *The Commissioner’s Draft on the Texas Mathematics Standards* (p.8): “**The process skills weave the other knowledge and skills together so that students may be successful problem solvers and use mathematics efficiently and effectively in daily life**”.

Like TAKS, the STAAR assessment is based on state curriculum standards, the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills* (TEKS). However, which specific TEKS are emphasized has changed. See “Tested Subjects” section for listing of subjects being tested.

TESTED SUBJECTS

On what subjects will students be tested in grades 3-8?

Under STAAR, students in grades 3-8 take tests in subjects exactly as they did under TAKS:

- Math and Reading (grades 3-8)
- Writing (grades 4 and 7)
- Science (grades 5 and 8)
- Social Studies (grade 8)

What are the tests for grades 9-12?

Under STAAR, students in grades 9 – 12 take the STAAR End-of-Course (STAAR EOC)

English Language Arts (ELA)	Math	Science	Social Studies
English I	Algebra I	Biology	World Geography
English II	Geometry	Chemistry	World History
English III	Algebra II	Physics	U.S. History



What is STAAR EOC? How does it impact high school graduation?

In grades 9-12, students will take 12 STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) tests throughout their years in high school. STAAR EOC tests occur at the completion of the core courses that are required to earn high school graduation credits. In order to receive a diploma, students will be required to have satisfactory performance on all 12 STAAR EOC tests and have a minimum cumulative total in the four core areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Social Studies, Math, and Science.

In addition to meeting a cumulative score requirement in each of the four core content areas, students on the **recommended high school program** need to perform satisfactorily on English III and Algebra II assessments, and students on the **distinguished achievement program (DAP)** need to perform satisfactorily on the college-readiness component of both the English III assessment and Algebra II assessment. The STAAR EOC tests will focus solely on the curriculum covered in that course. In contrast, the TAKS measured overall knowledge of the general subject, along with some specific questions from course curriculum.



How is the STAAR different from TAKS?

STAAR will be more rigorous for all tested grades. For grades, 3-8 tests are designed to measure not only a student's academic achievement but also a student's academic growth with particular emphasis on assessing a student's progress with respect to College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). The tests in reading and mathematics are linked from grade to grade to performance expectations that a student must demonstrate on the English III and Algebra II EOC test in high school. The tests in science focus more on content that better prepares students for high school biology, chemistry, and physics courses. The tests in writing require students to write both a first-person essay and an expository piece.

The majority of the new STAAR- EOC assessments will test content that students studied that same year of the test as opposed to testing content studied over multiple years. This change will strengthen the alignment between what is taught and what is tested for a given course of study.



What is a TEA Blueprint and what information does it provide about readiness and supporting standards?

The TEA Blueprint can be found at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar. Once at the site, information about how the readiness and supporting standards are assessed at each grade level can be found by clicking on the blueprint of the various subject areas for a specific grade level. For example, you can find how many reporting and supporting standards will be tested at each grade level for the subject area being tested.



How does the STAAR increase the level of difficulty?

It measures readiness for college and career success:

- More questions per test
- Measures a higher level of thinking in relationship to content skills
- Contains more items where students have to write in responses rather than choose from multiple-choice answers
- Focuses more deeply on content taught during the current year rather than testing

- Assesses knowledge and skills learned over multiple years



What does Rigor mean related to the STAAR?

The rigor of items will be increased by

- assessing content and skills at a greater depth and higher level of cognitive complexity
- assessing more than one student standard in an item

The rigor of the tests will be increased by

- assessing more focused student expectations, but doing so multiple times and in more complex ways
- including a greater number of rigorous items on the test, thereby increasing the overall test difficulty

Performance standards will be increased by

- using empirical data to link performance in specific courses to college and career readiness
- using empirical studies to compare student performance on the new assessments with other national assessments
- reviewing performance standards at least once every three years and, if necessary, adjusting them to maintain a high level of rigor
- expectations for student performance on STAAR will be raised to achieve the goal of graduating students who are college and career ready



How will the change to STAAR impact KISD accountability ratings?

The last TAKS-based school accountability ratings were issued in July, 2011 and remain in place for 2011- 2012. The Texas Education Agency will suspend campus and district ratings in 2012 while a new accountability system is developed. The new state rating system will debut in 2013.

STAAR VOCABULARY AND TERMINOLOGY



Are there any differences in terminology between TAKS and STAAR?

Yes, there are some new terms.

STAAR	TAKS
Reporting Categories	Objectives
Readiness, Supporting, Process Standards	Student Expectations



What other terms have changed related to the STAAR accountability?

- Two rating levels: Acceptable and Unacceptable
- Several Academic Excellence Distinction Designations:
 - Recognized and Exemplary
 - Percent of students who meet the college-ready standard or annual improvement standard
 - Separate ratings or “add-ons” to Acceptable/Unacceptable
- Two Campus Distinction Designations
 - Top 25% in Percent in Annual Improvement
 - Top 25% in Closing Performance Gaps
- Five Additional Campus Distinction Designations
 - Academic achievement in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies
 - Fine arts
 - Physical Education
 - 21st Century workforce development program
 - Second language acquisition program



How will student performance be labeled for the STAAR?

There will be 3: Level III: Advanced Academic Performance

Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance

Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

- Level III: Advanced Academic Performance*

Performance in this category indicates that students are well prepared for the next grade or course. They demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in varied contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar. Students in this category have a high likelihood of success in the next grade or course with little or no academic intervention.

*For Algebra II and English III, this level of performance also indicates students' postsecondary readiness.

- Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance

Performance in this category indicates that students are sufficiently prepared for the next grade or course. They generally demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in familiar contexts. Students in this category have a reasonable likelihood of success in the next grade or course but may need short-term, targeted academic intervention.

- Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

Performance in this category indicates that students are inadequately prepared for the next grade or course. They do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the assessed knowledge and skills. Students in this category are unlikely to succeed in the next grade or course without significant, ongoing academic intervention.



When the state refers to college and career readiness, what does that mean?

From the Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.024: "...the level of preparation a student must attain in English language arts and mathematics courses to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in an entry-level general education course for credit in that same content area."

- at four-year colleges and universities
- at institutions that offer associate degrees and certificates



What is dual coding?

Many tests in Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies will be dual coded to show the connection between the content TEKS and process TEKS.

Process TEKS (Underlying Processes)	Assessed in context with content standards and reported along with content skills under other reporting objectives (dual coding). Content Area % of items dual coded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying Processes and Mathematical Tools (Math) $\geq 75\%$ • Scientific Investigation and Reasoning Skills (Science) $\geq 40\%$ • Social Studies Skills (Social Studies) $\geq 30\%$
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TAKS divided student population data into several ethnicities for making comparisons and reporting. Is that the same for STAAR?

STAAR will continue to support Federal race/ethnicity categories that were phased-in with TAKS and are reflected in the following chart.

Old Definitions (Prior to and including 2009-10 school year)	New Definitions (beginning with 2009-10 school year)
Native American	American Indian or Alaska Native
Asian or Pacific Islander	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
	Asian
Black or African American	Black or African American
Hispanic	Hispanic/Latino
White	White
(not available)	Two or more races

SOURCE: 2011 Accountability Manual, Appendix J

TEST ADMINISTRATION



When will students start taking the STAAR?

The new tests will be introduced in the 2011-12 school year for students graduating in 2015 and beyond. *Those students in high school in 2010-2011 who took TAKS tests will continue to take TAKS tests until their graduation.*

Students in grades 3-8 will take the STAAR version of tests in subjects in which they are tested.



Will students in grade 8 taking high school courses take both STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC?

No. Students in grade 8 taking high school courses will not be required to take both the STAAR assessment for grade 8 and the STAAR EOC. These students will take the STAAR EOC if tested in the high school course they are taking.



Like the TAKS test, will students have all the time they need to complete the STAAR assessments?

No. Students taking STAAR exams will have a 4-hour time limit to complete both the STAAR EOC assessments and the STAAR grades 3-8 assessments for the 2012 spring test administration. Per TEA, a 4-hour time limit should provide sufficient time for most students to complete the test. This policy will align Texas testing practices with other timed state and national assessments. For example, SAT, ACT, and AP examinations are all administered in timed settings. This change should support high school students in being adequately prepared for future testing expectations. Extended time accommodations for students with unique learning needs or circumstances will continue to be offered. TEA will review the 4-hour time limit for STAAR after the first administration in spring 2012 to determine if the policy needs to be reconsidered or adjusted for specific grades or subjects.



What is the change in how grade 3 students complete the STAAR test?

Students taking STAAR grade 3 reading and mathematics assessments will now record their responses on a separate answer document, as is done for other assessments. For TAKS, grade 3 students answered in their test booklets.



What is the number of testing days required by the STAAR EOC assessments?

STAAR significantly increases the number of testing days at the high school level. Currently, there are 25 TAKS testing days, including exit-level re-testing. STAAR EOC will require up to 45 testing days when it is fully implemented in 2015. (**Note:** Districts will administer 45 days of testing but that does *not* mean individual students will be testing on 45 days.)



How will the state modify STAAR for English Language Learners (ELL)?

ELL students will continue to take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). There are plans to adjust items on TELPAS to align more closely with the rigor of the STAAR assessments. Plans are also being made for the development of linguistically accommodated versions of STAAR.



How will the state modify STAAR for students with special needs?

Testing accommodations will be made as needed according to each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). As with current modified assessments, the STAAR Modified assessment will cover the same content area for grades 3-8 and for nine of the twelve STAAR EOC assessments, but will be modified in format and test design. *Modified assessments are not being developed for Algebra II, Chemistry or Physics, as those courses are not required on the Minimum High School Program (MHSP), and all students taking STAAR Modified assessments are on the MHSP.*

The STAAR Alternate assessments will be very similar to the current TAKS-Alt assessments. Students will continue to perform tasks linked to the appropriate grade-level TEKS. At the high school level, assessments will move from grade-level assessments to course-based assessments.



How many times will the STAAR test be administered?

As of this publication, TEA is planning EOC administrations in spring, summer, and fall. All STAAR test administrations follow the state testing calendar, which can be found on the District's Testing & Evaluation website at www.katyisd.org.



Does the STAAR assessment utilize dictionaries and calculators?

Yes. The STAAR program has new policies for dictionary and calculator use on the state assessments based on the new curriculum requirements. One dictionary should be available for every five students and must be available to **all** students taking

- STAAR reading assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR Linguistic Modifications) at grades 6-8
- STAAR writing assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR Linguistic Modifications) at grade 7
- STAAR English I, II, and III assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR Linguistic Modifications)

Calculators must be available to **all** students taking STAAR Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Chemistry, Physics, and Biology assessments (including STAAR Modified and STAAR Linguistic Modifications). One graphing calculator is required for each student taking

STAAR Algebra I
STAAR Geometry
STAAR Algebra II

One scientific or graphing calculator required for each student taking
STAAR Chemistry
STAAR Physics

One 4-function, scientific, or graphing calculator for every 5 students taking STAAR Biology

SCORING, PASSING, GRADUATING

When will STAAR cut scores be determined?

It is anticipated that STAAR EOC performance levels will be set by February 2012, and reports will be available in June 2012, after the first May 2012 administration. Performance levels for grades 3-8 will be set in fall 2012 after the first spring administration of STAAR.

What are the passing scores on the new tests? When do school districts become accountable to these new passing standards/scores?

The state has not announced what a passing score will be on the tests. This explains why the state will not implement test standards or use the new tests in school accountability ratings until 2012-2013. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has published the following timeline:

For 2011-2012: Performance ratings suspended

August 8, 2013: District and campus ratings issued for first time under new system

--Ratings based on percent proficient indicators

--Percent college-ready indicators "report" only

August 8, 2014: District and campus ratings issued for second time under new system

--Ratings based on percent proficient and percent college-ready indicators

What are the labels for the performance categories on STAAR?

The state has established three performance labels for the general STAAR assessments, STAAR Modified, and linguistically accommodated forms of STAAR. The labels for the performance categories are: a) Level III: advanced academic performance, b) Level II: satisfactory academic performance, c) Level I: unsatisfactory academic performance.

The state has not yet determined the cut scores that correspond to these three performance levels. Further information on STAAR performance labels and policy definitions, as well as the process used to develop them, can be found on TEA's website at the following link: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147496801>.

What is required in grades 3-8 in order to advance to the next grade level?

Since the state has not established passing standards, promotion requirements will not include the use of STAAR results for the 2011-12 school year. Other academic information (student grades and teacher recommendations) will be used for promotion decisions. After 2011-12, performance on the STAAR will be used for promotion decisions; and, as was true with TAKS, students in grades 5 and 8 must perform satisfactorily on reading and math in order to be promoted. TEA anticipates defining performance levels for STAAR grades 3-8 in October, 2012.



How will the STAAR EOC testing score impact a student's grade?

The state requires that the STAAR EOC score is to account for 15 percent of a student's final grade in the course. Katy ISD is developing local policies to align with state requirements found in the district's legal policies relating to the new assessment and accountability standards.



What is required for graduation?

To receive a diploma, the student must complete the Katy ISD graduation program requirements **and** meet passing requirements on the State of Texas Assessments (see table below):

Graduating Class	State Testing Requirements			
2011-14	Pass all sections of exit-level TAKS			
2015 and beyond	Meet minimum requirements on all twelve STAAR EOC exams and meet a satisfactory cumulative EOC passing score requirement in each of the four content areas (ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies). The cumulative score must be at least equal to the product of the number of EOC assessments taken in that content area and a scale score that indicates satisfactory performance. That is, for each of the four core content areas, the cumulative score $\geq n \times$ (times) passing scale score, where n = number of assessments taken.			
	English Language Arts (ELA)	Math	Science	Social Studies
	English I	Algebra I	Biology	World Geography
	English II	Geometry	Chemistry	World History
	English III	Algebra II	Physics	U.S. History



Do high school students have the opportunity to retake STAAR EOC exams?

Yes. Students at the high school level will be able to retake any of the STAAR EOC assessments. KISD local policy will address this opportunity. (Students in grades 5 and 8 will be able to re-test in reading and math in order to meet Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion criteria beginning in 2013 as the state is not offering re-test opportunities in 2012. See the above question: *What is required in grades 3-8 in order to advance to the next grade level?*)



How do the requirements differ according to graduation plans?

Different levels of performance on English III and Algebra II EOC tests will be required for each of the three graduation plans (minimum, recommended and distinguished). The state is developing specific guidelines.



When do the state's requirements regarding graduation become effective?

The class of 2015 will be the first class to undergo four years of EOC testing. Therefore, they will be the first class required to fulfill the state's new graduation requirements. Students graduating before 2015 will continue to take TAKS.



Can you provide an example of how to determine a cumulative score for STAAR EOC?

Just as the STAAR test has increased in complexity, explaining some scoring components is also more complex.

- **If** the passing scale score is 1000 on each science test, for example, **then** 3000 cumulative points are required to graduate.
- **If** the minimum scale score on each of the 3 science EOC assessments happens to be 900, **then** students must score at least 900 on each of the 3 science EOC assessments – **BUT** scoring 900 on each of the 3 science EOC assessments will NOT meet the cumulative score requirement of 3000.

SAMPLE STUDENT:

§ 1200 on Biology § 800 on Chemistry** § 1100 on Physics

**800 does not meet the minimum score requirement of 900. It CANNOT be used toward the cumulative score.

- **Then**, this student's cumulative score is 2300, which does not meet the cumulative score requirement of 3000; the student must RETEST IN CHEMISTRY.



Can SAT, PSAT, the preliminary ACT, and Dual Credit scores be substituted for the STAAR EOC?

No. At the time of this publication, HB3 specifically calls for research studies to be conducted to evaluate the relationship between student performance on the STAAR EOC assessments and student performance on tests at least as rigorous as the STAAR EOC assessments. Once all data are collected (beginning in the spring of 2012) and the analyses are complete, substitute assessment policies may be considered and possibly become effective for some assessments in the 2013-14 school year.



Will STAAR EOC assessments replace Advanced Placement (AP) exams?

No. Students taking AP courses will be required to take both STAAR EOC and AP exams. AP exams are national exams tied to Advanced Placement courses. STAAR is tied to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and under new state law, passage of STAAR is required for graduation.

ODDS AND ENDS



Will the state continue to field test?

Per TEA, there has been a concerted effort over the past several years to minimize the amount of instructional time used for testing purposes, particularly stand-alone field testing. However, there may be a need for some mandatory sampling for several STAAR EOC assessments in 2012 in order to provide adequate data required for legislative studies and to build a sufficient number of test forms to allow for multiple administrations. Field-test data from a sample of students representative of the state are critical to the state's ability to build high-quality assessments.



Has TEA finalized the details regarding STAAR?

No. As of the date of this publication, the TEA is still developing policies and regulations with respect to STAAR. For example, final decisions have not been made regarding:

- Scores needed to pass STAAR
- Retesting schedules and guidelines
- Further clarification regarding which policy decisions will be left to individual districts
- Specifics regarding special education modifications
- Costs to districts to implement/administer this mandate