

DATE:	August 22, 2019
SUBJECT:	Enhancements and Updates to the Texas Assessment Program for 2019-20
CATEGORY:	Information for School Year 2019-2020
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is dedicated to continuous improvement and has implemented a number of enhancements to the Texas Assessment Program in recent years. These improvements continue with the 2019-2020 school year and are made possible through valuable feedback provided by educators across the state.

The following changes have been introduced to improve test development and administrative processes (the use of the term “district” in the figure below includes charter schools):

Topic	Action	Rationale
Educator participation	An online universal application was released for educators to volunteer to participate in a variety of state-level assessment processes.	In order to encourage more educators to participate in test development steps, including external item review, early passage review, the Teacher Institute, range finding, and other advisory committees, the participant application process was streamlined, making it easier for educators to volunteer.
Test item development	To support a robust review, enhancements were made to the passage selection process, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number of times Texas teachers see the passages • Adding specificity to review and selection criteria • Implementing firmer Lexile readability targets 	Questions were raised regarding the readability of passages, and these enhancements increase the amount and types of additional teacher input. The transition to firmer Lexile targets and the use of additional readability measures for reading and writing passages began in 2016 and continue in the 2019-2020 school year.
Test item development	More robust item specifications and image review criteria have been created to guide development of high-quality STAAR assessments for all subject areas.	More robust specifications allow for improved quality and variety of items closely aligned to the standards. A more detailed image review process will ensure that all image details are appropriate.
Online systems	New and significant infrastructure and live	The 2018-2019 school year saw no system-wide interruptions to the student platform for

	monitoring upgrades, including addition of on-demand server capacity are now in place.	online testers. These changes add additional process improvements to ensure the system performs as it should for all users and administrators.
Resources and training	Additional functionality, such as easier navigation, expanded print-on-demand capabilities, and an improved test security oath submission process for the District and Campus Coordinator Resources (<i>DCCR</i>) will become available in early fall.	Feedback from district testing personnel helped identify design improvements for our guidance documents. These enhancements will also be applied to all other online resources (e.g., Interim Assessments User's Manual), as applicable.
Resources and training	Video recordings of the annual, TEA-provided assessment training will be made available to all districts through YouTube video links. Additional training webinars and guidance materials will be offered during the year.	Improving the availability of administration training and guidance materials allows for better access by users in ways most convenient for them.
Resources and training	Districts now have the option to designate expert Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) Writing sample collection raters at the campus level.	Assigning designated TELPAS raters reduces the burden of training for districts and provides additional flexibility.
Test registration	Calendars were updated to allow districts additional time to identify students before registration for STAAR Alternate 2 and to allow earlier availability of testing materials lists.	The past STAAR Alternate 2 registration process did not always allow enough time to identify and register students, making materials orders too difficult.
Customer service	A new online Help Desk ticketing system for external users along with searchable FAQ pages will be launched in September.	Users in the field requested additional ways to make queries and improve response times for assessment-related questions, especially during test administration windows. The new Help Desk system and searchable FAQ pages provide alternative response methods beyond our TEA staff support and vendor call centers.
Assessment calendar	Updates have been made to the 2019-2020 calendar to avoid testing on the first instructional day of the week.	New legislation no longer allows assessments to be administered on the first instructional day of the week.

Reminder on Substitute Assessments and Accountability

As a reminder, beginning with the December 2019 and spring 2020 STAAR End of Course (EOC) administrations, substitute assessments will no longer be included in accountability calculations. During the upcoming year, the agency will amend Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, §101.4002, as appropriate, and remove references to the inclusion of substitute assessments in accountability during the adoption of the *2020 Accountability Manual*. Substitute assessments may continue to be used to meet individual student graduation requirements, as adopted under 19 TAC §101.4002.

Testing Requirements for Accelerated Students

There will be no policy changes to the testing requirements for accelerated students for the 2019–2020 school year, as the agency works to implement new funding established under House Bill (HB) 3. Districts should continue to follow existing policies and guidance concerning testing of accelerated students for the 2019–2020 school year. HB 3 will provide funding for districts to administer the SAT or ACT; this funding will facilitate the implementation of federal testing requirements for accelerated students who have taken the Algebra I end-of-course STAAR prior to high school. During the upcoming school year, the agency will complete the required process to include these outcomes in August 2021 accountability.

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