

## Item 15:

# Discussion of Certification Test Updates

### DISCUSSION

**SUMMARY:** This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an update on the recently launched Science of Teaching Reading (STR) certification exam and on upcoming educator certification test development.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** The statutory authority for the classroom teacher class certificate structure is Texas Education Code (TEC), §§21.003(a), 21.031, and 21.041(b)(1), (2), and (4), 21.041(c), 21.044(a), 21.0441, 21.048(a).

**FUTURE ACTION EXPECTED:** Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff anticipates presenting an update on educator certification test development to the Board at each SBEC meeting.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION:** This item provides an update on the January 1, 2021 implementation of the House Bill (HB) 3, 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, 2019 requirement that all educators who teach any grade level from prekindergarten through grade six demonstrate proficiency in the science of teaching reading on a certification examination. This item also provides an update regarding upcoming test development dates. The updated assessments are a part of the teacher certification redesign plan that has been discussed with the SBEC since 2018 to improve the quality and consistency of newly certified teachers.

#### STR Exam Launch

The 293 Science of Teaching Reading (STR) TExES exam launched on January 1, 2021. In preparation for the launch of the STR exam requirement and the 293 STR TExES exam, TEA staff facilitated a coordinated effort across the following workstreams: Division of Educator Certification, Division of Educator Investigations, Division of Educator Data and Preparation Program Management, and Division of Educator Standards and Testing, to ensure that educators, candidates, educator preparation programs, and districts had guidance and support and that communication and technical considerations regarding the requirement were executed effectively.

An overview of the STR Exam requirement and updated timeline of TEA staff communication related to the STR transition can be found in Attachment I.

An updated STR communication plan related to the STR transition can be found in Attachment II.

#### STR Exam Next Steps

The launch of the STR exam requirement and 293 STR TExES exam represents the first phase in the multi-phase implementation of the SBEC's vision for strong early literacy educator preparation across Texas. TEA staff will continue to support effective implementation of STR-

aligned preparation with the STR exam requirement in effect. An overview of additional phases of support are summarized below.

Phase	Aligned Actions and Supports
<p><b>Phase 1: Getting Ready to Launch</b></p> <p>(June 2019–December 2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build awareness of the STR standards</li> <li>• Build awareness of the STR exam requirement</li> <li>• Train and support programs in the development of STR-aligned curriculum</li> <li>• Support candidates in the issuance of certificates prior to the STR requirement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 2: Introductory Period</b></p> <p>(January 2021–August 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First administration period begins January 1, 2021</li> <li>• First score reports issued February 5, 2021</li> <li>• Eight-month introductory period</li> <li>• Monitor exam performance trends</li> <li>• Train and support programs in the continued refinement of STR-aligned curriculum</li> <li>• Conduct 2020–2021 EPP five-year continuing approval reviews, including a review of the STR curriculum</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 3: Ongoing Administration and Continuous Improvement</b></p> <p>(September 2021–onward)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an official cut score for the 293 STR TExES exam</li> <li>• Monitor exam performance trends</li> <li>• Train and support programs in the continued refinement of STR-aligned curriculum</li> <li>• Continue to conduct 2020–2021 EPP five-year continuing approval reviews, including a review of the STR curriculum</li> </ul>

### Test Development Update

Staff are actively working to update the current content pedagogy tests to increase their rigor and relevance and to ensure alignment with the current Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). A summary of the recent and anticipated first operational dates of the new assessments are in the table below.

January 1, 2021	September 1, 2021	January 1, 2022	September 1, 2023	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC–3 Content (292)</li> <li>• Science of Teaching Reading (293)</li> <li>• Educational Diagnostician (253)</li> <li>• Early Childhood–Grade 6 Core Subjects (391)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Counselor (252)</li> <li>• Trade and Industrial Education PPR (370)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Arts and Reading 4–8 (217)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Arts and Reading 7–12 (331)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESL Supplemental</li> <li>• Bilingual Spanish</li> <li>• Special Education and related assessments</li> <li>• Health (258)</li> <li>• Physical Education (257)</li> </ul>

January 1, 2021 Exam Launches

In addition to the 293 STR TExES exam launch, the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) subtest of the Core Subjects: EC–6 exam was updated to remove duplicative content now assessed on the STR exam. The updates also allowed for more time per item across all subtests. These updates are now represented in the 391 Core Subjects: EC–6 TExES exam. The 291 Core Subjects: EC–6 TExES exam will remain operational throughout 2021 to support teacher candidates who are still seeking to pass specific 291 Core Subjects: EC–6 subtests.

On January 25, 2021, the new 292 Early Childhood: PK–6 TExES exam and the updated 253 Educational Diagnostician TExES exams were launched. These certification exams were developed to assess educator knowledge and skills related to the Early Childhood and Educational Diagnostician educator standards, respectively.

English Language Arts and Reading 7–12 Exam Launch

The English Language Arts and Reading: 7–12 Test Framework is currently under review through a content validation survey. Once finalized, the test framework will be posted to the TEA website and shared with all educator preparation programs currently approved to certify educators in this field. The anticipated operational launch date of the exam is September 1, 2023. At a subsequent SBEC meeting, TEA staff will bring forward proposed rule text for the Board’s consideration to establish this operational launch date in rule.

Future Exam Launches

TEA staff paused initial development work related to the update of the Health and Physical Education certification exams to ensure alignment with relevant updates to the TEKS. With the

State Board of Education's recent adoption of updated TEKS in Health and Physical Education, development work for these certification exams has started back up. TEA staff anticipates bringing an update on exam development processes and timelines at the April 2021 SBEC meeting.

**PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT:** The public and student benefit anticipated as a result of the recommendations and assessments would be more rigorous, relevant, and reliable requirements for the preparation, certification, and testing of classroom teachers upon entry into the profession, and retention of these qualified professionals for years to come.

**Staff Member Responsible:**

Jessica McLoughlin, Director, Educator Standards and Testing

**Attachments:**

- I. Science of Teaching Reading Transition Communication Timeline
- II. Science of Teaching Reading Transition Updated Communication Plan

## ATTACHMENT I

### STR Transition Communication Timeline: Implementation of the STR Exam as a Requirement of HB 3

#### STR Exam Requirement Overview

The Science of Teaching Reading (STR) standards were adopted by the SBEC in March 2018. In 2019, House Bill (HB) 3, 86th Texas Legislature, required that all educators who become certified to 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. Since the July 2019 SBEC work session, TEA staff have provided the Board with regular updates regarding the STR examination as a part of the comprehensive test development timeline.

Since the STR legislative requirement was enacted, TEA staff have actively communicated with the field regarding the associated timelines and requirements for educator preparation programs and teacher candidates. In addition, TEA staff have provided resources to support educator preparation programs in aligning their curriculum for impacted certification fields to the Science of Teaching Reading standards. The certification fields impacted are:

- 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, and
- English Language Arts and Reading/Social Studies with Science of Teaching Reading: Grades 4–8

Included in those efforts is the requirement that all EPPs indicate their ability and readiness to successfully prepare candidates for certification in those impacted certification fields through the submission of the STR Letter of Attestation. All EPPs indicated their ability and readiness to do so by the December 1, 2020 deadline.

#### STR Exam Transition Overview

By statutory mandate, as of January 1, 2021 all teacher candidates are required to take the STR exam for issuance of an intern, probationary, and standard certificate if seeking certification in an HB 3 impacted certificate field. This includes:

- Teacher candidates currently enrolled in an EPP who were not issued their standard certificate by December 31, 2020.
- Teacher candidates who may have previously completed a preparation program who were not issued a standard certificate by December 31, 2020.
- Teacher candidates issued the Waiver Probationary Certificate who were not issued a standard certificate by December 31, 2020.
- All future teacher candidates pursuing certification in an HB 3 impacted certification field.
- Certified teachers seeking to add an HB 3 impacted certificate through certification by exam.
- Teachers seeking Texas teacher certification in an HB 3 impacted field through out-of-state and out-of-country routes.

TEA staff actively communicated with key stakeholders regarding the timelines and requirements associated with the implementation of the HB 3 STR requirement. TEA staff encouraged EPPs to communicate early and consistently with teacher candidates regarding the transitions to ensure that teacher candidates impacted by the HB 3 STR requirement were well aware and took the necessary actions to achieve their certification. The full communication timeline is included below.

Date	Action
June 11, 2019	TEA staff provides legislative update to educator preparation program professional organizations, including Texas Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs (TACCTEP), Texas Association of Certification Officers (TACO), Texas Coordinators for Teacher Certification Testing (TCTCT), Texas Directors of Field Experiences (TDFE), and Texas Association of Teacher Educators (TxATE) Summer Meeting.
July 12, 2019	TEA discusses the science of teaching reading requirements and implications with SBEC's Educator Preparation Advisory Committee (EPAC), including a deep dive on reading with Dr. Jennifer Schnakenberg from the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk .
July 25, 2019	TEA staff provides legislative update to SBEC, including the requirements around the science of teaching reading.
September 20, 2019	TEA staff updates EPAC about early literacy training for educator preparation programs and implementation timelines for new science of teaching reading assessments.
October 4, 2019	TEA staff updates SBEC regarding the science of teaching reading rule changes and test development timeline.
October 24, 2019	TEA staff updates Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA) about updates to science of teaching reading rule changes.
October 27, 2019	TEA staff provides a STR Application Deep Dive for preparation programs.
October 29, 2019	TEA staff provides updates to Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) regarding the science of teaching reading and associated timelines.
October 30, 2019	TEA provides initial application and associated guidance for preparation programs to offer the science of teaching reading assessment.
November 12, 2019	TEA staff provides a STR Application Scope and Sequence Deep Dive for preparation programs.

Date	Action
November 18, 2019	TEA staff provides deep dive into substance and implications for different pathways regarding the science of teaching reading assessment for the EPAC.
November 21–22, 2019	Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Training: Group 1, Session 1.
December 6, 2019	TEA staff updates SBEC regarding the science of teaching reading rule changes and test development timeline.
December 12, 2019	TEA provides a STR Application Performance Task Deep Dive for preparation programs.
December 16–17, 2019	LETRS Training: Group 1, Session 2.
December 18, 2019	TEA provides updated guidance via email around the science of teaching reading application and allowing programs to offer the science of teaching reading assessment without an application but with an attestation and updated curriculum.
January 20–21, 2020	LETRS Training: Group 2, Session 1.
January 22–23, 2020	LETRS Training for Administrators.
January 31, 2020	TEA staff presented to TACTE regarding the upcoming requirements for certification related to STR and the necessary timing for EPP recommendation of certificates.
February 7, 2020	TEA staff provides deep dive into substance and implications for different pathways regarding the science of teaching reading assessment for the EPAC.
February 11–12, 2020	LETRS Training: Group 2, Session 2.
February 20, 2020	TEA staff discusses with SBEC the replacement of the certification names for the HB 3 impacted certification fields to more clearly indicate the science of teaching reading requirement.
March 5, 2020	TEA staff provides update to Data Working Group. The update includes requirements for certification related to STR and the necessary timing for EPP recommendation of certificates.
March 13, 2020	Governor Abbott declares a state of disaster due to COVID-19.

Date	Action
April 20, 2020	TEA staff provides an overview of proposed replacement certificate names for HB3 impacted certificate fields, an overview of the timelines and requirements for the STR exam implementation, and a summary of STR related communication methods for the EPAC.
May 1, 2020	TEA staff proposed with SBEC the replacement of the certification names for the HB 3 impacted certification fields to more clearly indicate the science of teaching reading requirement and discussed communication regarding the STR exam requirement to date and plans for ongoing communication methods to ensure all relevant stakeholders are aware of and take necessary action to support the implementation of the STR exam requirement.
May 29, 2020	TEA staff presented an update on STR exam requirement, timelines, and curriculum alignment resources at the TACTE Retreat.
June 15, 2020	TEA staff presented an update on STR exam requirements, timelines, and curriculum alignment resources at the TxATE Summer Convening.
July 16, 2020	Pearson staff facilitates the first “STR in Focus” webinar for EPPs, providing information regarding the STR exam structure and an overview of STR exam assessment item types, including constructed response questions.
July 20, 2020	The STR exam page goes live on the TEA website, which includes a webinar detailing the timelines and requirements associated with the STR exam.
July 24, 2020	TEA staff proposes for the SBEC’s adoption the replacement of the certification names for the HB 3 impacted certification fields to more clearly indicate the science of teaching reading requirement and discusses updates regarding the STR exam transition, including the communication regarding the STR exam requirement to date and plans for ongoing communication methods.
July 28, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on the STR exam requirements and timelines with the Texas Consortium of Educator Preparation Programs for ESCs.
August 14, 2020	TEA staff facilitate a webinar to introduce the opportunity for EPP faculty to participate in Reading Academy training.



Date	Action
September 2020	The Educator Preparation Program Newsletter launches, distributed to EPP points of contact at all EPPs, which includes reminders about the STR Letter of Attestation requirement and the launch of the STR exam webpage.
September 2, 2020	The STR Exam Preparation Manual is live on the Texas Examination Program website and notification is distributed to all EPPs.
September 18, 2020	TEA staff facilitate a webinar to provide additional guidance regarding the opportunity for EPP faculty to participate in Reading Academy training.
September 25, 2020	The STR Exam Frequently Asked Questions document posts to the TEA STR Exam webpage.
September 25, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on STR exam requirement communication and supports provided to date to the EPAC and solicits feedback on further communication necessary.
September 30, 2020	TEA staff facilitates EPP Form and Function Webinar, which includes an overview of the STR exam related rules and the associated implementation dates and requirements.
October 6, 2020	Targeted email communications are sent to candidates with a history within the past calendar year of registration in the impacted fields notifying them of the STR exam requirement beginning January 1, 2021.
October 6, 2020	Pearson adds field-specific messaging to the Exam Selection page in the Texas registration system, notifying candidates that certification requirements have changed for their certification field beginning January 1, 2021.
October 19–20, 2020	TEA staff provides updates to Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) regarding the science of teaching reading and associated timelines.
October 29, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on the STR exam requirements and timelines with Region 4 ESC's Human Resources Consortium.
November 2, 2020	TEA Reading Academies staff facilitates the Reading Academy Deep Dive training for EPP faculty and staff.
November 13, 2020	TEA staff facilitates the Reading Pedagogy and Constructed Response Deep Dive for EPP faculty and staff as a component of the STR in Focus Webinar Series.

Date	Action
November 2020– December 2020	TEA staff sends direct email communication to educators impacted by the STR exam requirement and shares candidate information with EPPs to support their direct communication with candidates.
December 3, 2020	TEA staff distributes a To the Administrator Addressed notice to all Texas LEAs notifying LEAs of upcoming deadlines for current elementary and middle school teacher certification requirements.
December 4, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on STR exam requirement communication and supports provided to date to the EPAC and solicits feedback on final communication opportunities.
December 10, 2020	TEA staff provides an overview of the STR exam requirement, timelines, and potential impacts on Texas LEA hiring timelines at the Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA) Winter Conference.
December 11, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on STR exam requirement communication and supports to date and an update on EPP submission of the STR Letter of Attestation to the SBEC.
December 15, 2020	TEA staff provides an update on STR exam requirement communication and next steps to the Texas Consortium of Educator Preparation Programs for ESCs..
January 1, 2021	Launch of the 293 Science of Teaching Reading TExES exam.
January 22, 2021	TEA staff facilitates the STR Exam Oral and Written Communication Deep Dive training session to EPP faculty and staff.
February 5, 2021	First score reports issue for the 293 STR TExES exam.

## ATTACHMENT II

### STR Transition Updated Communication Plan: Implementation of the STR Exam as a Requirement of HB 3

**Topic:** STR Implementation Requirements and Associated Timelines

**Audience:** Educator preparation programs, candidates currently being prepared to educate students in EC–Grade 6, and Texas local education agencies (LEAs)

**Communication Methods:**

Method	Description	Specific Actions
Direct email communication	Direct email communication regarding STR timelines and requirements distributed through applicable teacher candidate listservs and monthly email communication updates to educator preparation programs through TEA Email Blast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop STR exam requirement documents that can be shared with teacher candidates via their EPP</li> <li>• Direct email communication with teacher candidates who have completed all testing requirements but have not yet applied for certification in advance of the January 1, 2021 STR mandate.</li> </ul>
Informational webinar series	Webinar series addressing STR transition requirements and timelines, guidance for programs and/or candidates, and frequently asked questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop additional informational webinars based on EPP, candidate, and LEA needs.</li> </ul>
Timely updates to the TEA Standards and Testing website	Dedicated website page including all communication updates, access to recorded webinars, and timely Frequently Asked Questions documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistently update STR exam webpage on the TEA website</li> <li>• Develop and post to the webpage informational handouts for EPPs, LEAs, and candidates.</li> </ul>

Method	Description	Specific Actions
Professional Organization updates	Timely updates related to the STR timelines and requirements through professional organization communication channels and convenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide timely updates at professional organization convenings</li> </ul>
LEA updates	Timely updates related to the STR timelines, requirements, and staffing implications through LEA communication channels and convenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide informational handouts to LEA stakeholders related to the STR exam requirements.</li> </ul>
SBEC updates	Regular updates related to the STR timeline and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide standing updates to the Board on STR communication.</li> </ul>
EPAC updates and discussion	Regular updates related to the STR timeline and requirements and opportunities for feedback and questions related to preparation program implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide relevant updates to the EPAC on STR timelines and requirements.</li> </ul>

**Topic:** STR Exam Specifications and Curriculum Alignment

**Audience:** Educator preparation programs

**Communication Methods:**

Method	Description	Specific Actions
LETRS Training and Reading Academies Access	Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training series offered to all educator preparation programs to provide foundational context regarding the science of teaching reading to inform curriculum development. In addition, access to the Reading Academies training content at an audit level to inform curriculum development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to LETRS training online modules available through Fall 2021.</li> <li>Provide access to Reading Academies blended model training and Reading Academies Overview webinar.</li> </ul>

Method	Description	Specific Actions
Webinar series	Training series focused on alignment of curriculum with Science of Teaching Reading standards and associated examination requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “STR in Focus” webinar series</li> </ul>
Timely updates to the TEA Standards and Testing website	Dedicated website page including posting of the standards, test framework, and additional relevant examination resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STR exam webpage live on the TEA website with consistent updates.</li> </ul>
Professional Organization updates	Resources and guidance related to the STR transition through professional organization communication channels and convenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide timely updates at professional organization convenings</li> </ul>
SBEC updates	Regular updates related to the STR communication timeline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide standing updates to the Board on STR communication.</li> </ul>
EPAC updates and discussion	Regular updates regarding resources and supports related to STR curriculum alignment and opportunities for feedback and questions related to preparation program implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide relevant updates to the EPAC on STR content and curriculum alignment.</li> </ul>