

September 18, 2009

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Student Assessment Program Updates for 2009–2010

This letter provides important updates about the Texas assessment program and calendar of events for the 2009–2010 school year, including program changes resulting from the passage of House Bill (HB) 3 during the 81st Legislative Session.

2009–2010 Student Assessment Testing Calendar Changes

Below are highlights of some of the major changes to the Student Assessment Testing Calendar. Districts should also refer to the revised calendar at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3635&menu_id3=793 and to the previous Student Assessment broadcast e-mail regarding calendar changes dated July 8, 2009.

- HB 3 eliminated the Spanish versions of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) grade 6 mathematics and reading tests. These tests have been removed from the 2009–2010 calendar.
- Grade 3 TAKS reading is no longer a Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade advancement requirement.
- Grades 5 and 8 TAKS reading will be administered on the same schedule as the April and May SSI mathematics tests.
- Linguistically accommodated testing (LAT) for grades 5 and 8 mathematics and reading will be administered on the same schedule as the May SSI TAKS mathematics tests.
- In January 2010 stand-alone TAKS field tests will be administered for grades 10 and exit level English language arts (ELA) only. Grade 4 writing (English and Spanish), grade 7 writing, and grade 9 reading will not be field-tested.

For additional details about test administration dates, please refer to the revised 2009–2010 Student Assessment Testing Calendar.

Implementation of the TAKS Vertical Scale

Under Section 39.036 of Senate Bill 1031, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was required to develop a vertical scale for assessing student performance on TAKS in reading and mathematics at grades 3–8. This scale will become the primary reporting scale for both English and Spanish versions of the assessment beginning in the 2009–

2010 school year. A standards review was conducted to determine if the existing academic achievement standards across grade levels would need adjustment to conform to a vertical scale. The approved changes to the academic achievement standards to create a vertical scale will go into effect beginning in the 2009–2010 school year. Additional information about the TAKS vertical scales and the changes to the academic achievement standards can be found at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3818&menu_id3=793.

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)

HB 3 eliminated the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Beginning in October 2009, examinees for whom TAAS was the previous graduation requirement—and who have yet to pass all three subject areas of the exit level assessment—are required under HB 3 to pass the corresponding subject(s) of the TAKS exit level retest. Passing standards will be adjusted for students whose graduation requirement was TAAS or TEAMS. Districts received information on registration and test administration for the October TAKS exit level retest.

Changes to Test Participation Provisions for English Language Learners (ELLs)

HB 3 made changes to provisions for ELL exemptions, exit level test postponements, and linguistically accommodated testing. Included are test participation provisions for ELLs who are unschooled asylees/refugees. Commissioner of Education rule revisions affecting the spring 2010 assessments will be made in the coming months based on the new legislation.

Graduation Brochures

With the transition to EOC assessments, the current graduation brochures are no longer applicable to students who are seventh graders in the 2009–2010 school year. New graduation brochures will be provided in spring 2010.

TAKS Study Guides

No funding was appropriated by the 81st Texas Legislature to support the study guides program. Therefore, all print versions of the TAKS general summer remediation study guides, as well as the TAKS personalized study guides, will no longer be available beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

EOC Assessments

EOC assessments will become the graduation requirement for students entering grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year. HB 3 authorizes TEA to collect data through the administrations of the EOC assessments to a sufficiently large sample in order to establish performance standards prior to the first high-stakes administrations in spring 2012. To achieve this, mandatory EOC testing will be required for selected campuses in geometry, biology, chemistry, and world geography in spring 2010. Campuses selected to administer the 2010 operational assessments will test either online or on paper for specific assessments, and participation is mandatory.

Also in spring 2010, EOC field tests will be administered in English I and Algebra II. Campuses selected to participate in the 2010 field tests will test either online or on paper in English I or in Algebra II or in both; participation of the selected campuses is mandatory. Additional information about mandatory participation in EOC assessments has been provided in a separate communication to districts.

Changes to Calculator Policy for the Chemistry and Physics EOC Assessments

The calculator policy for the chemistry and physics EOC assessments is changing. Currently, one scientific or graphing calculator is required for every five students. The new policy will require one scientific or graphing calculator for *each* student. TEA recommends that school districts begin implementing the one-calculator-per-student policy for the spring 2010 administrations; however, this policy is not required until spring 2011. Districts can use American Recovery Reinvestment Act State Fiscal Stabilization funds to purchase additional calculators.

TELPAS Reading Interface Study

A transition will be made in spring 2010 to the use of an enhanced online interface for the TELPAS reading assessments for grades 2–12. For the spring administration, some districts will use the original interface (Interface A) and some will use the enhanced interface (Interface B). Using performance data from both interfaces, a comparability study will be conducted to maintain the original performance standards. All districts will be notified in late September of whether they will be using Interface A or Interface B for the assessment.

TELPAS Supplemental Training Requirements for Level 2 Refresher Course

A letter from TEA was sent to districts on April 23, 2009, regarding TELPAS holistic rating training for the 2009-2010 school year. The letter and associated attachments can be found at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3280&menu_id3=793. As mentioned in this letter, individuals who do not meet performance expectations on the rating activities in the level 2 online refresher course will be required to receive supplemental training beginning this spring. This requirement applies to both the K–1 and 2–12 refreshers. Details concerning the supplemental training requirements will be provided in TETN videoconferences and the test administration materials.

Materials Distribution

Beginning this year, the Student Assessment accommodations manual will be available exclusively online. Districts will also no longer receive printed copies of the enrollment letter or its attachment. The enrollment attachment will be posted on SchoolHouse, while the enrollment letter and precode option letters will now be sent via e-mail.

Locally Required Assessments

A school district may not administer locally required assessments designed to prepare students for state-required assessments on more than 10 percent of instructional days in any school year. A provision in HB 3 establishes that a campus-level planning and decision-making committee may limit the administration of locally required assessments to less than 10% of instructional days per year.

New Assessments at Grades 3–8

Please keep in mind that there will be additional changes to the Texas assessment program in the coming years, such as the development of new assessments to replace TAKS at grades 3–8. The new assessments will be implemented in 2011–2012. We will be communicating with districts about those changes and associated assessment activities as plans are finalized.

Use of Assessments in State and Federal Accountability

The attachment provides an overview of the state assessments that will be used in the state and federal accountability systems in the 2009–2010 school year. Questions about the state or federal accountability systems can be directed to the Division of Performance Reporting at 512-463-9704.

If you have questions about any of the activities outlined above or need additional information about the 2009–2010 assessment activities, please call the Student Assessment Division. We appreciate your support of these important activities.

Assessment Contact Information

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Attachment

cc: ESC Testing Coordinator