Vertical Scale

In order to understand vertical scales, we need to first understand raw scores and scale scores. The basic score on any test is the raw score, which is simply the number of questions a student answers correctly. A scale score is a conversion of the raw score onto a scale that is common to all test forms for that assessment. A raw score can be interpreted only in terms of a particular set of test questions, whereas scale scores allow direct comparisons of student performance across different test administrations. The scale score quantifies a student's performance relative to the passing standards or proficiency levels for tests. Until 2009, the Texas assessment program used a type of scale known as a horizontal scale, which allows direct comparisons of performance across different test administrations but not across grades.

Vertical scales were developed in 2009 for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) English reading and mathematics tests in grades 3–8 to meet new state legislated requirements. Vertical scales for Spanish TAKS reading and mathematics in grades 3–6 were also developed; however, grade 6 Spanish TAKS is no longer administered, meaning the current vertical scale for Spanish TAKS grades 3–5. With a vertical scale, a student's scale score in one grade can be compared to the student's scale score in another grade as long as the scores are in the same language and subject (for example, Spanish grade 3 reading to Spanish grade 4 reading; English grade 6 mathematics to English grade 7 mathematics). An advantage to the vertical scale is that it enables the progress of students who have different initial proficiency levels to be compared. For TAKS assessments that are reported on a vertical scale, each grade and subject have its own score that indicates Met Standard and Commended Performance. The vertical scale cut scores for Met Standard and Commended performance on the English and Spanish TAKS reading and mathematics tests are listed in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. Vertical scale scores are reported exclusively where applicable since 2010.

Table 1. TAKS Reading Vertical Scale Scores

Performance Standard	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
English Met Standard	483	554	620	644	670	700
English Commended	659	725	763	797	829	850
Spanish Met Standard	503	555	623	N/A	N/A	N/A
Spanish Commended	657	694	744	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2. TAKS Mathematics Vertical Scale Scores

Performance Standard	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
English Met Standard	500	554	603	637	670	700
English Commended	640	698	738	783	823	850
Spanish Met Standard	503	555	627	N/A	N/A	N/A
Spanish Commended	649	692	755	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note that a vertical scale is not reported for TAKS writing (grades 4 and 7), science (grades 5, 8, 10, and exit level), social studies (grades 8, 10, and exit level), reading and mathematics at grade 9, and English language arts and mathematics at grade 10 and exit level. Student performance results on these assessments continue to have a scale score of 2100 for Met Standard and 2400 for Commended Performance.