Chapter 5: The State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA)

Section 39.023 of the Texas Education Code was amended by the 75th Texas Legislature to address the assessment of students receiving special education services. The following information applies to students who tested during the 2001–2002 academic year.

- All students receiving special education services for whom TAAS is an appropriate measure of their academic achievement take TAAS.
- Students enrolled in Grades 3–8 who are being instructed in the state-mandated curriculum (TEKS) in mathematics, reading, and/or writing but for whom TAAS is not an appropriate measure, even with allowable accommodations and/or modifications, take SDAA.
- Students who are not being instructed in the state-mandated curriculum (TEKS) in mathematics, reading, and/or writing, at least at the kindergarten level, in an area tested by TAAS are exempted from TAAS and SDAA. In addition, any student whose admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee determines the need for an accommodation and/or modification that would invalidate SDAA is exempted from SDAA.

Note: Students who do not take TAAS or SDAA are still required to take one or more locally determined alternate assessments (LDAA) selected by their ARD committee.

SDAA assesses students enrolled in Grades 3–8 who are receiving special education services and who are receiving instruction in the TEKS but whose ARD committee determines TAAS to be an inappropriate measure of their academic progress. This test assesses the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Students are assessed at their appropriate instructional level, as determined by their ARD committee, which may be different from their enrolled grade level.

SDAA is administered on the same schedule as TAAS and is designed to measure annual growth based on appropriate expectations for each student, as determined by the student's ARD committee. SDAA will become a part of the school accountability system in 2003.

For additional information about the SDAA, please refer to the Student Assessment Division website at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/sdaa/index.html.

SDAA Development

The development process for SDAA includes the same basic procedures followed in developing any new assessment, coupled with the specific requirements needed for this particular test. Test-development committees include teachers, diagnosticians, special education directors, administrators (such as principals and superintendents), parents, and advocates.

During the 1998–1999 school year, a steering committee of representatives from across the state guided TEA staff in the development of an appropriate assessment for students receiving special education services. Item research had been conducted throughout the year, and objectives and proposed TEKS to be assessed were identified. In January 1999 committees of Texas educators reviewed and revised the item guidelines and prototype items. While HEM and BETA, Inc., assume the major role for item development, many subcontractors and agency personnel are involved in the item development process. The item development process for SDAA is similar to that for TAAS. See page 10 for a description of TAAS item development.

The next step was to field-test items with large samples of Texas students. Districts throughout the state were asked to participate in a statewide field test during the week of April 12–16, 1999. Each district was allowed to develop a local testing schedule to administer the field test during that week.

The second statewide field test was administered from April 24 to May 5, 2000. Each district was allowed to develop a local testing schedule during that period. All students receiving special education services who were exempt from TAAS but receiving instruction in the TEKS in an assessed subject area were required to take the SDAA field test in that subject area. Each test booklet was appropriate for one of two age groups, ages 8–11 or 12–16.

The steering committee reconvened during the 1999–2000 school year to discuss appropriate ARD committee training for the decision-making process regarding the Texas assessment program. Phase One materials for the ARD training, including a manual and a video, were distributed to districts and regional service centers in May 2000. Phase One of the ARD training should have been implemented by October 31, 2000. Phase Two materials, including an updated manual and video, were distributed to districts and regional service centers in August 2001.

ARD Committee Decisions

The requirement that ARD committees, which consist of educators, administrators, parents, educational diagnosticians, and others, make decisions about what type of assessment is most appropriate for students receiving special education services is a critical aspect of state and federal law. It is the responsibility of each student's ARD committee to promote high expectations based on the goals and objectives documented in the student's individual educational plan (IEP). The ARD committee must weigh the benefits of rigorous and challenging expectations with the possibilities of success given the individual strengths, needs, instruction, and accommodations of each student. Instructional decisions made by the ARD committee must always guide assessment decisions.

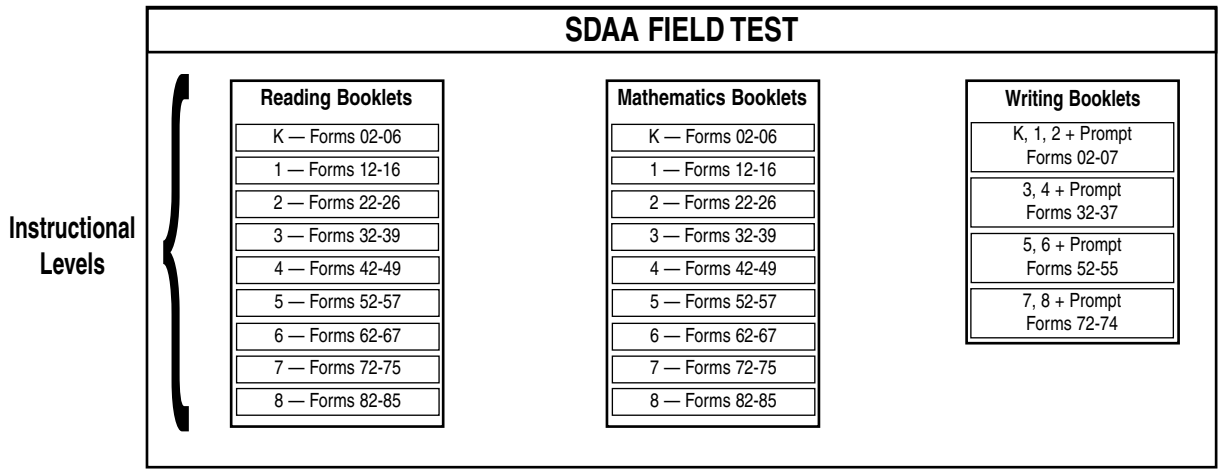
The ARD committee is also responsible for determining the appropriate participation in state assessments for LEP students who receive special education services. The ARD committee for a LEP student must include a school representative who is also a member of the student's language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) to ensure that issues related to the student's language proficiency are carefully considered. Certain LEP students may qualify for a test exemption.

Spring 2002 Administrations

2002 FIELD TEST

During the 2001–2002 school year, the statewide SDAA field test was administered from January 28 to February 8, 2002. Each district was allowed to develop a local testing schedule within that testing window. Students receiving special education services whose ARD committees had determined SDAA to be the most appropriate assessment for either writing, mathematics, or reading—based on procedures outlined in the Phase Two ARD training materials—were required to participate in the same subject-area field test. Every field-test booklet was designed for and administered to students of all age groups and instructional levels.

The field-test data were presented to educator committees during the summer of 2002. See the chart below for SDAA field-test booklet configuration.



2002 LIVE TEST

In the spring of 2002, each district was required to administer the SDAA writing, mathematics, and reading tests on the same testing schedule as TAAS. Unlike the spring 2001 live administration for which there were age-differentiated test forms for every instructional level (ages 8–11 and 12–16), in the spring 2002 administration every instructional level test booklet was designed to be appropriate for students of all ages.

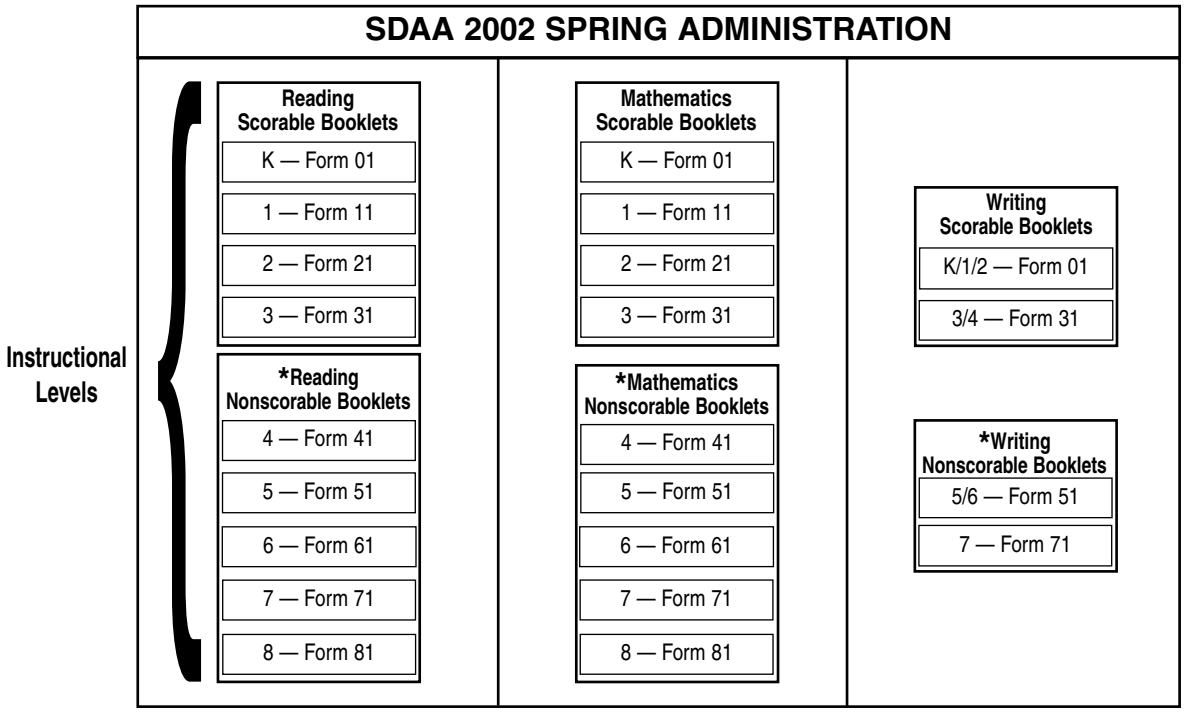
The first year a student takes SDAA in reading and/or mathematics is called the baseline year. The baseline test provides data about a student in order to set expectations for growth in the future. SDAA is designed to be an assessment that measures growth over time. The baseline year is important because it is the starting point from which growth can be measured by comparing test results from one year to the next.

Students in a special education program may have baseline years in assessed subject areas at different times. Each subject area tested by SDAA is considered separately when measuring growth. During a particular school year, a student might take the SDAA reading test and the TAAS mathematics test. The SDAA administration would be considered the baseline year for that student in reading only. Because the student did not take SDAA math, no baseline would be set for that subject area. If the student takes SDAA math during a subsequent school year, that administration would be considered the baseline year for mathematics.

Writing assessment decisions need to be discussed separately from reading and mathematics assessment decisions because writing is administered to students enrolled in Grades 4 and 8 only, whereas SDAA reading and mathematics are administered each year to students enrolled in Grades 3–8. Because of this, ARD committees need to set expected achievement levels prior to each writing administration.

Detailed descriptions of SDAA, including objectives and related TEKS, are provided in the SDAA Information Booklets, which were distributed in spring 2001. SDAA test-booklet configurations for the spring 2002 live test administration are described in the chart below.

The charts on pages 25–26 provide information on the participation of special education students in the statewide testing program in spring 2002, including the number and percent of students taking TAAS, the number and percent of students taking SDAA, and the number and percent of students taking either TAAS or SDAA (note that the number of students receiving special education services taking TAAS includes both English and Spanish versions of TAAS for Grades 3–6).



**** Separate answer documents are provided for use with nonscorable test booklets.***

Large-print test booklets were available for all forms of this test.

Braille test forms were available by instructional level:

Writing	***3/4, 5/6, 7/8***
Mathematics	***K–8***
Reading	***2–8***

Spring 2002 Texas Assessment Program—Number and Percent of Special-Education Students Enrolled and Tested

Enrolled Grade Level	Total Enrolled in SE	Number SE Students Taking TAAS*	Percent SE Students Taking TAAS	Average TLI	Percent Meeting Min Expectations	Number SE Students Taking SDAA	Percent SE Students Taking SDAA	Number SE Students Taking TAAS or SDAA	Percent SE Students Taking TAAS or SDAA
Reading									
3	41,198	13,256	32.18%	80.2	82.0%	24,174	58.68%	37,430	90.85%
4	46,400	12,539	27.02%	84.5	88.0%	28,582	61.60%	41,121	88.62%
5	45,781	12,904	28.19%	84.2	86.0%	29,368	64.15%	42,272	92.34%
6	44,703	12,674	28.35%	79.5	74.0%	28,594	63.96%	41,268	92.32%
7	44,208	13,099	29.63%	79.6	79.0%	27,405	61.99%	40,504	91.62%
8	45,124	11,845	26.25%	82.5	84.0%	25,925	57.45%	37,770	83.70%
Total	267,414	76,317	28.54%			164,048	61.35%	240,365	89.88%
Mathematics									
3	41,198	15,472	37.56%	78.8	81.0%	21,386	51.91%	36,858	89.47%
4	46,400	14,714	31.71%	81.1	90.0%	25,777	55.55%	40,491	87.27%
5	45,781	15,283	33.38%	82.6	92.0%	26,676	58.27%	41,959	91.65%
6	44,703	14,873	33.27%	79.5	84.0%	26,194	58.60%	41,067	91.87%
7	44,208	14,545	32.90%	77.8	79.0%	25,874	58.53%	40,419	91.43%
8	45,124	11,493	25.47%	78.0	81.0%	25,184	55.81%	36,677	81.28%
Total	267,414	86,380	32.30%			151,091	56.50%	237,471	88.80%
Writing									
4	46,400	10,520	22.67%	1615	82.0%	28,983	62.46%	39,503	85.14%
8	45,124	11,194	24.81%	1530	61.0%	26,934	59.69%	38,128	84.50%
Total	91,524	21,714	23.72%			55,917	61.10%	77,631	84.82%

* ***TAAS totals include only English Forms.***
TAAS totals are based on Spring 2002 TAAS Statewide Summary Reports.
SDAA totals are based on Spring 2002 SDAA Statewide Summary Reports.

Spring 2002 Texas Assessment Program—Number and Percent of Special-Education Students Enrolled and Tested

Enrolled Grade Level	Number SE Students ARD Exempt	Percent SE Students ARD Exempt	Number SE Students LEP Exempt	Number SE Students Absent	Number SE Students Other NT	Number SE Students Not Tested	Total SE Students Accounted For	Percent SE Students Accounted For	Total SE Students Unaccounted For
Reading									
3	1,381	3.4%	58	840	869	3,148	40,578	98.5%	620
4	1,272	2.7%	51	887	2,263	4,473	45,594	98.3%	806
5	1,430	3.1%	33	918	783	3,164	45,436	99.2%	345
6	1,182	2.6%	28	1,217	916	3,343	44,611	99.8%	92
7	1,114	2.5%	31	1,452	974	3,571	44,075	99.7%	133
8	1,316	2.9%	25	1,419	2,636	5,396	43,166	95.7%	1,958
Total	7,695	2.9%	226	6,733	8,441	23,095	263,460	98.5%	3,954
Mathematics									
3	1,332	3.2%	59	863	919	3,173	40,031	97.2%	1,167
4	1,247	2.7%	47	960	2,401	4,655	45,146	97.3%	1,254
5	1,421	3.1%	32	1,004	891	3,348	45,307	99.0%	474
6	1,166	2.6%	30	1,264	1,005	3,465	44,532	99.6%	171
7	1,104	2.5%	29	1,527	1,050	3,710	44,129	99.8%	79
8	1,298	2.9%	27	1,520	2,689	5,534	42,211	93.5%	2,913
Total	7,568	2.8%	224	7,138	8,955	23,885	261,356	97.7%	6,058
Writing									
4	1,392	3.0%	79	1,373	2,710	5,554	45,057	97.1%	1,343
8	1,429	3.2%	32	2,179	3,062	6,702	44,830	99.3%	294
Total	2,821	3.1%	111	3,552	5,772	12,256	89,887	98.2%	1,637

SDAA Achievement Levels

Within each SDAA reading and mathematics test, the raw score (the number of items answered correctly) is converted to a scale score and categorized into one of three achievement levels (raw-score-to-scale-score conversion tables for the spring 2002 SDAA reading and mathematics tests can be found in Appendix 11). Within a content area the scale scores span across age-group test forms (that is, there is only one scale score system regardless of age level). Ranges of scale scores corresponding to the achievement levels for the SDAA reading and mathematics tests are provided below. For example, a student who earns a scale score of 565 in reading at Instructional Level 3 demonstrates skills consistent with Achievement Level II for that test. One can further note that this score is in the lower end of the range of scores for Achievement Level II at this grade and subject area. Minimum and maximum scale scores for each test level are not shown, since these may vary as a function of test difficulty.

	READING			**MATHEMATICS**		
	Level I SS Range	Level II SS Range	Level III SS Range	Level I SS Range	Level II SS Range	Level III SS Range
K	≤ 503	504–562	≥563	≤ 435	435–499	≥500
1	≤ 520	521–564	≥565	≤ 460	461–534	≥535
2	≤ 550	551–598	≥599	≤ 500	501–549	≥550
3	≤ 560	561–609	≥610	≤ 505	504–557	≥558
4	≤ 564	565–614	≥615	≤ 550	551–609	≥610
5	≤ 600	601–659	≥660	≤ 600	601–674	≥675
6	≤ 625	626–699	≥700	≤ 610	611–679	≥680
7	≤ 638	639–704	≥705	≤ 620	621–684	≥685
8	≤ 645	646–709	≥710	≤ 635	636–699	≥700

Achievement levels for the SDAA writing tests for Instructional Levels 3–8 were assigned based on a combination of scores from the multiple-choice portion and scores from the essay portion of the writing test, as follows:

Instructional Level 3/4

Multiple-Choice Raw Score	Essay Score: 0 & 1	2	3	4
0–10	I	I	I	II
11–16	I	II	II	III
17–21	I	II	III	III

Instructional Level 5/6

Multiple-Choice Raw Score	Essay Score: 0 & 1	2	3	4
0–13	I	I	I	II
14–22	I	II	II	III
23–28	I	II	III	III

Instructional Level 7/8

Multiple-Choice Raw Score	Essay Score: 0 & 1	2	3	4
0–16	I	I	I	II
17–26	I	II	II	III
27–33	I	II	III	III

For SDAA writing at Instructional Levels K–2 (a completely performance-based test), the achievement levels are based on a total score. This score is the sum of analytic scores earned on the four writing tasks of numbers, names, letters, and labeling, plus the weighted score on the response to the prompt, as follows:

Tasks 1–4	=	4 each = 16 points possible
Prompt (6 pts × 4)	=	24 points possible
K–2 total score	=	40 points possible

K–2 Total Score Range	Achievement Level
0–20	I
21–33	II
34–40	III