

# CHAPTER 16: SPANISH-VERSION TAAS

In 1994 the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted a plan to develop Spanish TAAS tests at Grades 3 through 6 in order to evaluate the academic skills of LEP students who receive their academic instruction in Spanish while they learn English. The Spanish- and English-version TAAS tests measure skills delineated in the state curriculum and are designed to be as comparable in content as possible.

## TEST IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The SBOE approved a schedule for phasing in Spanish-version tests over a period of years. The first assessments phased in were the Spanish-version tests in reading and mathematics at Grades 3 and 4. These tests were field-tested in the spring of 1995, benchmarked in the spring of 1996, and administered with a passing standard in the spring of 1997. Spanish-version tests in writing at Grade 4 and in reading and mathematics at Grades 5 and 6 were phased in one year later, with the passing standard becoming effective in the spring of 1998.

The results from the Spanish TAAS tests for Grades 3 and 4 reading and mathematics were included in the accountability rating system beginning with the spring 1999 administration. The results of the remaining Spanish TAAS tests were included in the rating system as of the spring 2001 administration.

## TEST DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Development of the Spanish tests began with the convening of committees of Texas bilingual educators. After English TAAS objectives for reading, mathematics, and writing were compared to the state curriculum for bilingual education, the objectives were translated into Spanish with any necessary adaptations and presented to the committees for review and recommendations. The committees reviewed the English and Spanish objectives and judged the proposed Spanish objectives to be appropriate for measurement on the Spanish TAAS tests. Next the test contractor drafted measurement specifications and sample items for each objective. Committees of Texas bilingual educators reviewed these documents, and the documents were also distributed statewide for field input. Final versions of the measurement specifications incorporating this input were later sent to education service centers and schools.

Field-testing began in the spring of 1995. For the areas of reading and mathematics, items from English-language assessments were translated into Spanish and adapted as necessary to account for differences in cultural content and readability levels. For the writing assessment, a translation approach was not used, because of the wide variance in rules governing grammar and usage in Spanish and English. Instead, items for the writing test were developed independently from the English-language items. Individuals with expertise in developing Spanish-language tests, persons fluent in Spanish as spoken in various parts of Texas and other areas, and bilingual educators assisted with the preparation of these items. Afterward, committees of Texas bilingual teachers were again convened to review each item for appropriateness of language, content, difficulty, and absence of cultural or other bias.

Following the benchmark administrations in 1996 and 1997, the SBOE adopted passing standards for the tests. To inform their decision, they evaluated the student performance data from the tests as well as the results of the “adequacy-of-preparation” surveys asking bilingual educators to judge, for each item on the benchmark test, whether their students had received sufficient instruction by the time the test was administered to enable them to answer the items correctly. In the fall of 1996, the SBOE established a passing standard of 70% of the items correct on the Grades 3 and 4 reading and mathematics assessments in Spanish. Then, in the fall of 1997, they set a passing standard of 70% for the Grades 5 and 6 Spanish reading

and mathematics tests and for the Grade 4 writing test. The 70% standard on the writing test included a rating on the written composition of at least a 2. The 70% standard is comparable to the passing standard that has been established for the TAAS tests in English.

The last administration of the Spanish TAAS was in spring 2002. Spanish-version TAKS tests will be available for grades 3–6 reading, grades 3–6 mathematics, grade 4 writing, and grade 5 science beginning in the 2002–2003 academic year.