

CHAPTER 3: THE STATE-DEVELOPED ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT (SDAA)

OVERVIEW

In 1997 the 75th Texas Legislature amended TEC §39.023 to address the assessment of students who receive special education services. These amendments were enacted to allow for greater inclusion of students with disabilities in the statewide assessment program. The State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was developed and implemented to meet the requirements of the law.

The following testing eligibility guidelines apply to students who are receiving special education services.

- Students take the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) if they are receiving instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) on grade level with no accommodations that would invalidate TAKS.
- Students take SDAA if they are enrolled in grades 3–8, receive instruction in the TEKS on grade level in mathematics, reading, and/or writing, and need a testing accommodation that would invalidate TAKS, or are enrolled in grades 3–8, receive instruction in the TEKS below grade level in mathematics, reading, and/or writing, and need no testing accommodation that would invalidate SDAA.
- Students take a locally developed alternate assessment (LDAA) if they are not being instructed in the TEKS in mathematics, reading, and/or writing, on at least the Kindergarten level, or require a testing accommodation and/or modification that would invalidate SDAA, or are enrolled in a grade level that has a TAKS in a subject for which there is no SDAA and are exempt from that subject-area TAKS.

Beginning in the 2004–2005 school year, SDAA will be more fully aligned with the TAKS testing program and testing requirements will be in place for students in grades 9 and 10.

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SDAA

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.

Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM) subcontractors Harcourt Educational Measurement (HEM) and Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc. (BETA) assumed the primary role for the initial development of test items. Agency personnel were also involved in the process.

After the initial item development process was complete, items were field-tested with representative samples of Texas students. Districts throughout the state were asked to participate in the first SDAA field test during a testing window in spring 1999. Each district was allowed to develop a local testing schedule within this window in which to administer the field test.

During subsequent years, SDAA field testing for each subject area required the involvement of all eligible students receiving special education services. Initially, separate test booklets were designed for tests that could be taken by students in two age groups: ages 8–11 and 12–16. After two years of field testing, the development of two separate test forms for each instructional level proved to be unnecessary and was discontinued, although there has been a continuous effort to ensure that test items are appropriate for students of all ages.

The steering committee reconvened after the first year of SDAA field testing (1999–2000) to discuss the development of training materials to assist ARD committees in making assessment decisions. Phase One materials for the *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program*, including a training manual and video, were distributed to districts and regional Education Service Centers in spring 2000. For all subsequent testing years, ARD training materials have been updated, distributed to districts and regional Education Service Centers, and posted on the Student Assessment Division Web site.

The ongoing test development process for SDAA consists of the same procedures followed for all statewide assessments, coupled with additional requirements specific to SDAA. Educational diagnosticians and other special education administrators, parents of students with disabilities, and advocates are included as members of SDAA test development committees, in addition to the classroom teachers and school administrators who are required participants in the test development process. For additional information on the test development process, see Chapter 6, Annual Test Development Activities.

HOW SDAA DIFFERS FROM TAKS

From the inception of the alternative assessment program, advocates for students with disabilities stressed the need for a test that was an accurate measure of a student's growth within the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum. SDAA was developed prior to TAKS and is modeled on the TAAS testing program. In 2002–2003, educator committees met to discuss the alignment of the SDAA program with the TAKS program. The realigned SDAA program, referred to as SDAA II, will be field-tested in spring 2004 and fully implemented in the 2004–2005 school year. Although SDAA II will be closer to TAKS in terms of the objectives tested, item types, and item rigor, most if not all of the current differences between TAKS and SDAA that are noted below will remain in place.

SDAA differs from TAKS in that it allows ARD committees to select an appropriate instructional level for each assessment, so SDAA matches the instruction the student receives in the classroom, regardless of the student's enrolled grade. In addition, some testing accommodations that are not allowed on TAKS are allowed on SDAA (see Chapter 7, Test Administration).

Additional differences between SDAA and TAKS can be found in the format and length of the tests. Differences in formatting on SDAA include shorter passages, more illustrations to help provide context, more white space on the page, and increased font size. Field-test items on SDAA are not embedded as they are on TAKS, and the operational SDAA tests are slightly shorter than the comparable grade level TAKS. These differences in test format and length are based on educator committee members' identification of accommodations frequently made for students receiving special education services in the classroom.

THE ROLE OF THE ARD COMMITTEE IN MAKING ASSESSMENT DECISIONS

The requirement that admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees make assessment decisions for students receiving special education services is a critical component of state and federal law. The TEA-published manual, *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program (Grades 3–8)—Reference Manual for 2002–2003 Testing Year*, provides guidance for ARD committees in making assessment decisions. Each student's ARD committee has the responsibility to promote student achievement based on goals and objectives documented in the student's individual educational plan (IEP). When making assessment decisions, the ARD committee should first consider whether TAKS could be an appropriate assessment.

If the ARD committee determines that SDAA in reading, writing, and/or mathematics is the most appropriate assessment for a student, the ARD committee must determine the most appropriate instructional level for each subject area SDAA test the student is assigned. This instructional level should match the instruction received in the classroom and may be different from the student's enrolled grade. The ARD committee may select any instructional level K–8 for SDAA reading and mathematics tests. The ARD committee may select an SDAA writing test from four instructional level clusters: K/1/2, 3/4, 5/6, and 7.

SDAA is administered on the same schedule as TAKS. Rather than indicating whether a student has met passing standards set by the State Board of Education, performance results on SDAA indicate whether a student has met achievement expectations set by the ARD committee. SDAA is designed to measure a student's academic growth. When setting achievement expectations for a student, the ARD committee must determine whether the student is expected to perform with minimum skills, moderate skills, or sufficient skills on a subject-area SDAA test. Student performance results are reported as "Met ARD Expectations" or "Did not Meet ARD Expectations." For more information on setting ARD expectations, refer to SDAA Achievement Levels on page 19.

SDAA became a part of the school accountability system in 2002–2003 when performance results were reported. A determination of how student results on SDAA will be included in the accountability system in the future will be made as part of the development of the new accountability system.

A student's ARD committee may decide that the most appropriate assessment for a subject-area test is a locally determined alternate assessment (LDAA). This decision may be made for one of three reasons: 1) the student may not be receiving instruction in the TEKS on at least the Kindergarten level in one or more of the areas assessed by SDAA; or 2) the student may be receiving TEKS instruction on at least the Kindergarten level but may require a testing accommodation that would invalidate SDAA; or 3) the student may be exempt from a subject-area TAKS test for which there is no SDAA. The grades and subjects listed below do not have a corresponding SDAA test and, therefore, require the ARD committee to select an appropriate LDAA if TAKS is not appropriate.

- Grade 5—science
- Grade 8—social studies
- Grade 9—reading and mathematics
- Grade 10—English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies
- Grade 11 (exit level)—English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies

Students must take an LDAA for each content-area assessment in which they are exempt from TAKS or SDAA. For additional information about the LDAA, please refer to the Division of Special Education Web site at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/ldaa>.

The ARD committee is also responsible for determining the appropriate participation in state assessments for limited English proficient (LEP) students who receive special education services. TAKS, SDAA, and LDAA are all assessment options that may be considered for a LEP student who is receiving special education services. LEP students may also be required to take the RPTE, or Reading Proficiency Tests in English (see Chapter 4—RPTE).

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 test exemptions.

TEST ADMINISTRATION

During the 2002–2003 school year, the statewide SDAA field test was administered from January 21 to February 4, 2003. Each district was allowed to develop a local testing schedule within this testing window. Students receiving special education services whose ARD committees had determined SDAA to be the most appropriate assessment for reading, writing, or mathematics were required to participate in the same subject-area field test based on procedures outlined in the *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program (Grades 3–8)—Reference Manual for 2002–2003 Testing Year*.

The operational SDAA test is designed to measure a student's academic growth over time. Performance results from a student's first administration of SDAA in reading or mathematics are referred to as the student's baseline. Baseline results (or baseline scores) provide a starting point from which future performance can be measured and expectations for growth in the future can be made.

Each subject area tested by SDAA is considered separately when measuring growth. During a particular school year, a student may take SDAA for one subject area test and TAKS for another subject area test. Because the SDAA writing test is administered only to students enrolled in grades 4 and 7, writing assessment decisions need to be discussed separately from assessment decisions for reading and mathematics, which are administered each year to students enrolled in grades 3–8. ARD committees need to set expected achievement levels for the SDAA writing test prior to each administration. The concept of a baseline score does not apply to SDAA writing.

In the spring of 2003, districts were required to administer the SDAA reading, writing, and mathematics tests on the same testing schedule as TAKS. SDAA test-booklet configurations for the 2003 operational test administration are described in the following chart.

SDAA 2003 SPRING ADMINISTRATION																								
Instructional Levels	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Reading Scorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">K — Form 01</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">1 — Form 11</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">2 — Form 21</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">3 — Form 31</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">*Reading Nonscorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">4 — Form 41</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">5 — Form 51</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">6 — Form 61</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">7 — Form 71</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">8 — Form 81</td></tr> </table>	Reading Scorable Booklets	K — Form 01	1 — Form 11	2 — Form 21	3 — Form 31	*Reading Nonscorable Booklets	4 — Form 41	5 — Form 51	6 — Form 61	7 — Form 71	8 — Form 81	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Mathematics Scorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">K — Form 01</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">1 — Form 11</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">2 — Form 21</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">3 — Form 31</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">*Mathematics Nonscorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">4 — Form 41</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">5 — Form 51</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">6 — Form 61</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">7 — Form 71</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">8 — Form 81</td></tr> </table>	Mathematics Scorable Booklets	K — Form 01	1 — Form 11	2 — Form 21	3 — Form 31	*Mathematics Nonscorable Booklets	4 — Form 41	5 — Form 51	6 — Form 61	7 — Form 71	8 — Form 81
Reading Scorable Booklets																								
K — Form 01																								
1 — Form 11																								
2 — Form 21																								
3 — Form 31																								
*Reading Nonscorable Booklets																								
4 — Form 41																								
5 — Form 51																								
6 — Form 61																								
7 — Form 71																								
8 — Form 81																								
Mathematics Scorable Booklets																								
K — Form 01																								
1 — Form 11																								
2 — Form 21																								
3 — Form 31																								
*Mathematics Nonscorable Booklets																								
4 — Form 41																								
5 — Form 51																								
6 — Form 61																								
7 — Form 71																								
8 — Form 81																								
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Writing Scorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">K/1/2 — Form 01</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">3/4 — Form 31</td></tr> </table>	Writing Scorable Booklets	K/1/2 — Form 01	3/4 — Form 31	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">*Writing Nonscorable Booklets</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">5/6 — Form 51</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">7 — Form 71</td></tr> </table>	*Writing Nonscorable Booklets	5/6 — Form 51	7 — Form 71																
Writing Scorable Booklets																								
K/1/2 — Form 01																								
3/4 — Form 31																								
*Writing Nonscorable Booklets																								
5/6 — Form 51																								
7 — Form 71																								

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

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

Braille test forms were available by instructional level for

<i>Writing</i>	<i>3/4, 5/6, 7</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>K–8</i>
<i>Reading</i>	<i>2–8</i>

SDAA ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Student performance results on the SDAA reading and mathematics tests are reported as one of three achievement levels. These achievement levels are derived by converting a student's raw score (the number of items answered correctly) into a scale score. Raw-score-to-scale-score conversion tables for the spring 2003 SDAA reading and mathematics tests can be found in Appendix 11.

Ranges of scale scores corresponding to the achievement levels for the SDAA reading and mathematics tests are provided on the following page. For example, a student who earns a scale score of 561 in reading at Instructional Level 3 demonstrates skills at Achievement Level II for that test. One can further note that this score is the lowest possible score within the range of scores for Achievement Level II in the SDAA Instructional Level 3 reading test. Minimum and maximum scale scores for each test level are not shown, since these may vary as a function of test difficulty. Additional information regarding SDAA scale scores is available in Chapter 12, Scaling.

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	436–499	≥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	506–557	≥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 3/4, 5/6, and 7 were assigned based on a combination of scores from the multiple-choice portion and scores from the written composition portion of the writing test.

Instructional Level 3/4	Multiple-Choice Raw Score	Essay Score				
		0 & 1	2	3	4	
		0–11	I	I	I	II
		12–16	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	Multiple-Choice Raw Score	Essay Score				
		0 & 1	2	3	4	
		0–18	I	I	I	II
		19–27	I	II	II	III
	28–33	I	II	III	III	

For SDAA writing at Instructional Level K/1/2 (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

For more information on the SDAA writing test, see Chapter 8, Performance Assessment.

FUTURE SDAA TEST DEVELOPMENT

Starting in the 2004–2005 school year, the SDAA program will be more closely aligned to the TAKS program at grades 3–8. The newly aligned SDAA program, which will be referred to as SDAA II, will also be expanded to include students enrolled in grades 9 and 10 who are receiving instruction in the TEKS, but for whom TAKS is determined to be an inappropriate measure of their academic achievement. The SDAA II program will include the following additional instructional level tests: mathematics tests for Instructional Levels 9 and 10, a reading test for Instructional Level 9, a writing test for Instructional Level 8/9, and an English language arts (ELA) test for Instructional Level 10. ARD committees for students enrolled in grades 9 and 10 will determine the most appropriate assessment (TAKS or SDAA), and if SDAA is selected, indicate the instructional level and test for each SDAA content area at or below the student’s enrolled grade level.

A total of nine SDAA II development meetings were held in January and February 2003 to determine which TEKS objectives and student expectations will be eligible for inclusion on SDAA II for Instructional Levels K–10 and to elicit feedback on the appropriateness of prototype test items. During these meetings, committee members suggested ways to improve the alignment between SDAA II and instruction.

Item guidelines were then provided to the testing contractors who are responsible for developing SDAA assessments that are based on curricula for the specified instructional level tested (for example, the ELA test for Instructional Level 10 must be based on the grade 10 ELA curriculum). SDAA II test items for students enrolled in grades 3–10 will be field-tested in spring 2004.

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