

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

Overview

In 1997 the 75th Texas Legislature, and again in 1999, the 76th 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 are assessment eligibility guidelines for students receiving special education services during the 2004–2005 school year.

- 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 II if they are enrolled in Grades 3–10, receive instruction in the TEKS on grade level in mathematics, reading, writing, and/or English language arts, but need a testing accommodation that would invalidate TAKS.
- Students take SDAA II if they are enrolled in Grades 3–10, receive instruction in the TEKS below grade level in mathematics, reading, and/or writing, and need no testing accommodation that would invalidate SDAA II.
- Students take a locally developed alternate assessment (LDAA) if they are not being instructed on at least the kindergarten level in the TEKS in mathematics, reading, and/or writing; require a testing accommodation and/or modification that would invalidate SDAA II; or are enrolled in a grade level that has a TAKS test in a subject area for which there is no SDAA II test and that subject-area TAKS test is determined to be inappropriate.

Changes have been made to the SDAA testing program to align it to the TAKS testing program. The SDAA tests were administered for the last time in spring 2004. The new SDAA II tests were implemented in the 2004–2005 school year, including testing requirements for enrolled Grades 9 and 10 students receiving special education services.

Development of SDAA

During the 1998–1999 school year, a steering committee made up of special education directors, principals, special education teachers, regional education service center representatives, parents of students receiving special education services, advocacy group representatives from across the state, and national special education experts, guided TEA staff in the development of an appropriate assessment for students receiving special education

services. Research was conducted with regard to format and item design, and TAAS objectives and TEKS student expectations for each subject area and instructional level were identified. In January 1999, committees of Texas educators reviewed and revised the item guidelines and prototype items.

Pearson Educational Measurement and subcontractors Harcourt Educational Measurement and Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc., with TEA staff, assumed the primary role for the initial development of test items.

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 spring study in 1999.

During subsequent years, SDAA field testing for each subject area required the participation 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 continued effort to ensure that test items are appropriate for students of all ages.

The test development process for SDAA II follows the same procedures as for all statewide assessments, coupled with additional requirements specific to SDAA II. In addition to the classroom teachers and school administrators required to participate in the test development process, educational diagnosticians and other special education administrators are included as members of SDAA II test development committees.

The ARD Committee

The requirement that admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees make assessment decisions for students receiving special education services is a critical component of state law. The TEA-published manual *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* provides guidance for ARD committees in making assessment decisions. Each student's ARD committee has the responsibility of weighing the benefits of rigorous and challenging expectations with the possibilities of success given each student's individual strengths, needs, instruction, and accommodations as documented in the IEP.

For the 2004–2005 school year, if the ARD committee determined that SDAA II mathematics, English language arts, reading, and/or writing was the most appropriate assessment for a student, the committee had to determine the most appropriate instructional level for each subject-area SDAA II test, based on the match between the instruction received in the classroom, which may be different from the student's enrolled grade level, and the assessment. The ARD committee could have selected any Instructional Level K–9 SDAA II reading test, K–10 SDAA II mathematics test, the SDAA II English language arts test at Instructional Level 10, and/or an SDAA II writing test from six instructional level clusters: K/1, 2, 3/4, 5, 6/7, or 8/9.

Rather than indicating whether a student has met a passing standard set by the State Board of Education, SDAA II performance results indicate whether a student has met the achievement expectations set by the ARD committee. When setting achievement expectations for a student, the ARD committee must determine whether the student is expected to perform with beginning skills, developing skills, or proficient skills on a subject-area SDAA II test. Student performance results are reported as “Met ARD Expectations” or “Did Not Meet ARD Expectations.”

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 II; (2) the student may be receiving TEKS instruction on at least the kindergarten level but may require a testing accommodation that would invalidate SDAA II; or (3) the student cannot take a subject-area TAKS test for which there is no SDAA II test. The grades and subjects listed below do not have a corresponding SDAA II test and therefore the ARD committee must select an appropriate LDAA if TAKS is inappropriate.

- Grade 5—science
- Grade 8—science and social studies
- Grade 10—science and social studies
- Exit Level—English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies

Students must take an LDAA for each subject-area assessment in which they do not take TAKS or SDAA II. For additional information about the LDAA, please refer to the Division of Special Education website at 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. 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. TAKS, SDAA II, and LDAA are all assessment options that may be considered for a LEP student who is receiving special education services. LEP students are required to take the Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE).

How SDAA II Differs from TAKS

From the inception of the alternative assessment program, advocates for students with disabilities emphasized the need for a test that was an appropriate measure of a student’s growth within the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum. SDAA was developed prior to TAKS and was 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 TAKS-aligned SDAA program, referred to as SDAA II, was field-tested in spring 2004 and was implemented in the 2004–2005 school year.

SDAA II differs from TAKS in that it allows admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees to select an appropriate instructional level for each assessment. This allows the assessment to reflect the instruction the student receives in the classroom, regardless of the student's enrolled grade level. In addition, some expanded testing accommodations that are not allowed on TAKS are allowed on SDAA II.

Additional differences between SDAA II and TAKS can be found in the format and length of the tests. Differences in formatting on SDAA II include slightly shorter passages, more white space on the page, increased font size, and increased leading. SDAA II field-test items are not embedded as they are on TAKS, and the SDAA II tests are slightly shorter than the comparable grade-level TAKS tests. 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.

Test Administration

During the 2004–2005 school year, SDAA II field tests for enrolled Grades 3–10 students for mathematics, English language arts, reading, and writing were administered statewide between January 18 and February 1, 2005. Students receiving special education services whose ARD committees determined SDAA II to be the most appropriate assessment for mathematics, English language arts, reading, and writing were required to participate in the same SDAA II subject-area field test(s).

In spring 2005, districts were required to administer SDAA II reading, writing, English language arts, and mathematics tests on the same testing schedule as TAKS. SDAA II test booklet configurations for the 2005 test administration are described in the table below.

Table 1. SDAA II 2005 Spring Administration

Instructional Levels	Reading Scorable Booklets K — Form 01 1 — Form 11 2 — Form 21 3 — Form 31	Mathematics Scorable Booklets K — Form 01 1 — Form 11 2 — Form 21 3 — Form 31	Writing Scorable Booklets K/1 — Form 01 2 — Form 21 3/4 — Form 31	
	Reading Nonscorable Booklets 4 — Form 41 5 — Form 51 6 — Form 61 7 — Form 71 8 — Form 81 9 — Form 91	Mathematics Nonscorable Booklets 4 — Form 41 5 — Form 51 6 — Form 61 7 — Form 71 8 — Form 81 9 — Form 91 10 — Form 101	Writing Nonscorable Booklets 5 — Form 51 6/7 — Form 61 8/9 — Form 81	ELA Nonscorable Booklet 10 — Form 101

NOTE: Large-print test booklets were available for all forms of these tests.

Braille SDAA II tests were available by instructional level for

Writing	3/4, 5, 6/7, and 8/9
Mathematics	K–10
Reading	2–9
ELA	10

SDAA II Achievement Levels

The SDAA II test is designed to measure a student’s academic growth. Growth may be demonstrated as a student progresses through instructional and achievement levels. Each subject area tested by SDAA II is considered separately when measuring growth. During a particular school year, a student may take SDAA II for one subject-area test and TAKS for another subject-area test. Because the SDAA II writing test is administered only to students enrolled in Grades 4 and 7, writing assessment decisions are discussed separately from assessment decisions for reading and mathematics, which are administered each year to students enrolled in Grades 3–9 for reading, Grades 3–10 for mathematics, and Grade 10 for English language arts.

Student performance results on the SDAA II reading, mathematics, and writing tests are reported as one of three achievement levels: beginning skills, developing skills, or proficient skills. Raw-score-to-achievement-level conversion tables for the spring 2005 SDAA II reading and mathematics tests can be found in Table 2.

For example, a student who earns a raw score of 14 in reading at Instructional Level 3 demonstrates skills at Achievement Level II for that test.

Table 2. SDAA II Achievement Levels—Spring 2005

READING			MATHEMATICS			
Level I Raw Score Range	Level II Raw Score Range (Rasch Scale Cut)	Level III Raw Score Range (Rasch Scale Cut)	Level I Raw Score Range	Level II Raw Score Range (Rasch Scale Cut)	Level III Raw Score Range (Rasch Scale Cut)	
K	0–3	4–11 (-1.569)	12–19 (0.681)	0–7	8–14 (-0.639)	15–22 (0.877)
1	0–7	8–13 (-0.871)	14–23 (0.622)	0–8	9–14 (-0.606)	15–24 (0.745)
2	0–11	12–16 (-0.165)	17–26 (0.673)	0–10	11–18 (-0.486)	19–28 (0.976)
3	0–11	12–21 (-0.426)	22–30 (1.136)	0–9	10–22 (-1.024)	23–34 (1.004)
4	0–12	13–22 (-0.531)	23–34 (0.896)	0–13	14–27 (-0.617)	28–38 (1.292)
5	0–14	15–27 (-0.375)	28–36 (1.454)	0–15	16–32 (-0.539)	33–42 (1.459)
6	0–10	11–22 (-0.894)	23–36 (0.728)	0–19	20–31 (-0.181)	32–44 (1.104)
7	0–14	15–30 (-0.627)	31–42 (1.153)	0–16	17–29 (-0.553)	30–46 (0.765)
8	0–14	15–32 (-0.606)	33–42 (1.430)	0–19	20–31 (-0.354)	32–48 (0.841)
9	0–15	16–26 (-0.095)	27–34 (1.760)	0–21	22–31 (-0.241)	32–50 (0.719)
10	N/A	N/A	N/A	0–19	20–39 (-0.569)	40–54 (1.207)

Note that the achievement level cut scores may vary from year to year. The test equating process keeps the ability level necessary to fall within an achievement level consistent across years. Although the ability level remains consistent, the raw score cut may change slightly.

Achievement levels (I, II, III) for the SDAA II writing/ELA tests for Instructional Levels 2, 3/4, 5, 6/7, 8/9, and 10 were assigned based on a combination of scores from the multiple-choice portion and written composition portion of the writing test.

Table 3. Achievement Levels for SDAA II Writing/ELA

Instructional Level 2—Spring 2005 SDAA II Writing

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

Instructional Level 6/7—Spring 2005 SDAA II Writing

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

Instructional Level 3/4—Spring 2005 SDAA II Writing

		Essay Score			
		0 & 1	2	3	4
Multiple-Choice Raw Score	0–11	I	I	II	II
	12–19	I	II	II	III
	20–24	I	II	III	III

Instructional Level 8/9—Spring 2005 SDAA II Writing

		Essay Score			
		0 & 1	2	3	4
Multiple-Choice Raw Score	0–19	I	I	II	II
	20–31	I	II	II	III
	32–40	I	II	III	III

Instructional Level 5—Spring 2005 SDAA II Writing

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

Instructional Level 10—Spring 2005 SDAA II ELA

		Essay Score			
		0 & 1	2	3	4
Multiple-Choice/Open- Ended Raw Score	0–23	I	I	II	II
	24–38	I	II	II	III
	39–48	I	II	III	III

For SDAA II writing at Instructional Level K/1 (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 (numbers, names, letters, and labeling), plus the weighted score on the response to the prompt.

A K/1 SDAA II writing total score is derived as follows:

Total Score = Numbers score + Name score + Letters score + Labeling score + (Prompt score * 2)

The holistic scores for numbers, name, letters, and labeling range from 0 to 3 on each of these tasks. The picture prompt language level score ranges from 0 to 6 (unweighted) and 0 to 12 (weighted). The total score range is therefore from 0 through 24 (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 12 = 24). Using this weighted composite total score for K/1 SDAA II writing the assignment to achievement levels is as follows:

K/1 TOTAL SCORE RANGE		ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL
0–12	(0–50%)	I
13–19	(51–79%)	II
20–24	(80–100%)	III

SDAA II Test Development and Field Testing

Beginning in the 2004–2005 school year, the SDAA program was more closely aligned to the TAKS program at Grades 3–10. The newly aligned SDAA program, SDAA II, has been 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 includes the addition of 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.

A total of nine SDAA II development meetings were held in January and February 2003 to determine which TEKS objectives and student expectations would 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 classroom instruction, SDAA II, and TAKS.

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

For additional information about SDAA II, refer to the Student Assessment Division website at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/.

LDAA Data Collection

A locally determined alternate assessment (LDAA) is used to measure the learning of a student receiving special education services whose ARD committee has determined that both TAKS and SDAA II are inappropriate.

The Texas Education Agency requires districts and charter schools to report performance results for students exempt from the state tests, TAKS or the SDAA II, on an annual basis. In spring 2005, districts reported this information on the LDAA reporting field that was included on all applicable TAKS and SDAA II answer documents.

