

CHAPTER 19: RESOURCES

In addition to the information provided in the *Technical Digest*, the Student Assessment Division makes a number of resources available to parents and school districts. This chapter provides an annotated list of the most widely used publications produced by the division. A more comprehensive listing is available on the Student Assessment Division website at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/.

Information Booklets

TAKS Information Booklets

In spring and summer 2004, content specialists from TEA's Student Assessment and Curriculum Divisions developed revised editions of the TAKS *Information Booklets* for Grades 3 through 10, exit level, and Grades 3 through 6 Spanish. These revised booklets were published on the Student Assessment Division website in August 2004. The booklets were originally developed in 2001 and distributed to districts and education service centers in 2002; minor updates were made in 2003. The 2004 revisions do not signify any change in the TAKS testing program; the objectives and TEKS student expectations assessed on TAKS remain unchanged. TEA chose to update the booklets in 2004 because several years of TAKS field testing and live administrations allowed the agency to provide an even more comprehensive picture of the testing program. TEA clarified some of the existing material and, in some cases, provided sample items and/or more explanations of certain item types.

Although the information booklets for each subject area contain information that is unique to that subject, all booklets include

- an overview of the subject within the context of TAKS;
- a blueprint of the test (the number of items under each objective and the number of items on the test as a whole);
- information that clarifies how to read the TEKS;
- the objectives and TEKS student expectations that are included on TAKS;
- the reasons each objective and its TEKS student expectations are critical to student learning and success;
- additional information about each objective that helps educators understand how it is assessed on TAKS; and
- sample items that show some of the ways objectives are assessed.

SDAA II Information Booklets

To provide a better understanding of SDAA II and its connection to the TEKS and to classroom teaching, TEA developed three SDAA II information booklets in spring and summer 2004: one for reading at Instructional Levels K–9, one for mathematics at Instructional Levels K–10, and one for writing at Instructional Levels K/1, 2, 3/4, 5, 6/7, and 8/9. The writing booklet also contains information about SDAA II English language arts at Instructional Level 10.

The purpose of these booklets is to inform educators about the components of the TEKS that are eligible for testing on SDAA II. These booklets provide information about the objectives and types of test items that may appear on an actual test form. They also contain sample items for each instructional level, although these samples are intended to show only some of the types of items that may appear on an actual SDAA II test; they may not represent all types of items eligible for testing.

The SDAA II *Information Booklets* are available on the TEA Student Assessment Division website.

RPTE Information Booklets

In spring 2004, TEA began developing a revised RPTE *Information Booklet* for Grades 3 through 12 for publication on the Student Assessment website in fall 2004. The revised booklet is an update of the *RPTE Educator's Guide to TEKS-Based Assessment* originally developed in 2001. The 2004 revision, which provides a comprehensive overview of the RPTE testing program, shows the alignment of RPTE to TAKS reading selections and items. The RPTE Information Booklet is available on the Student Assessment Division website.

Study Guides

In spring 2002, PEM contracted with Publisher's Resource Group (PRG), an Austin-based educational publications firm, to develop and produce study guides for all TAKS assessments. The TAKS study guides are provided free of charge to any student who fails to meet the passing standard on one or more TAKS tests. The development process incorporated frequent review of content and layout by PEM and TEA Student Assessment Division staff. At the end of the development process, educators were invited to attend external meetings to review and discuss the content and format of the guides. Ten meetings were held between October 2002 and January 2003 to review the English-version TAKS study guides for Grades 3 through 11, and in January and February 2003 four educator committees reviewed the study guides for Grades 3 through 6 Spanish TAKS. The guides were published in the spring of 2003 and are available on the Student Assessment Division website.

A Grade 8 Middle School Science study guide is currently in development. This publication will undergo the same rigorous review by TEA and educators from across the state as described above. The Grade 8 science study guide will be available for distribution to districts in April 2006.

Personalized Study Guides

In summer 2004 TEA contracted with the Grow Network, a New York City–based subsidiary of McGraw-Hill Publishing that produces instructional materials designed to target student needs, to produce the *Personalized Study Guide* for each student who is not successful on one or more exit level TAKS tests. Because the *Personalized Study Guide* is customized for students based on their TAKS scores, it informs students of their individual needs and provides resources to help them focus on specific areas in which improvement is needed. The *Personalized Study Guide* is an additional resource for students who do not perform satisfactorily on any subject-area test of the exit level TAKS. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the exit level *TAKS Study Guides* that are provided to students by TEA.

Each Personalized Study Guide contains

- an overview and explanation of the student’s individual TAKS results by subject area and by objective within each subject area;
- a personal study planner to help the student get organized;
- customized study sections for each subject area of the exit level TAKS in which the student did not meet the passing standard; and
- a tutor guide to enable teachers, tutors, and parents to help the student use the study guide.

After each exit level TAKS administration, a *Personalized Study Guide* is produced for each student who did not meet the passing standard on any subject-area test. The guides have been shipped to districts, and the complete guide is also available online. Beginning in January 2005, students were able to input their TAKS results from their Confidential Student Report and download their *Personalized Study Guides*.

Parent Brochures

To assist districts with the task of helping parents understand their child’s TAKS test results, the Student Assessment Division produces a series of brochures entitled *Understanding the Confidential Student Report—A Guide for Parents*. Each grade-level brochure provides a brief summary of the TAKS program, explains a sample Confidential Student Report so that parents can understand their child’s test report, and gives a brief summary of each TAKS test objective for each subject area tested. The brochures, which were developed in both English and Spanish, are provided to school districts each spring for distribution with individual student TAKS performance results. Similar brochures are provided for TELPAS.

Procedural Manuals

ARD Manual

After the first year of SDAA field testing (1999–2000), the SDAA steering committee reconvened to discuss the development of training materials to assist admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees in making assessment decisions for students who are receiving special education services. Phase One materials included the *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program Reference Manual* and a video, which were distributed to districts and regional education service centers in spring 2000. Phase Two materials were developed in summer 2001. ARD training materials are updated annually, distributed to districts and regional education service centers, and posted on the Student Assessment Division website.

The purpose of the 2004–2005 ARD manual was to explain to ARD committees

- how to make decisions about a student’s placement in the Texas assessment program by using the TEKS curriculum, as documented in the student’s individualized education program (IEP);
- how to determine which of the accommodations and/or modifications documented in the student’s IEP are appropriate and allowable for the assessments; and
- how to set a student’s expected achievement level (ARD expectation).

GPC Manual

In response to district needs for more information and guidance relating to the Student Success Initiative and the role of the grade placement committee (GPC), TEA developed the *Grade Placement Committee Manual for the Grade Advancement Requirements of the Student Success Initiative*. This publication was first made available on the Student Assessment Division website and distributed to districts in May 2003. An updated version for the 2004–2005 academic year was made available on the Student Assessment Division website in October 2004.

The GPC manual is designed to guide GPCs through the process of evaluating student performance, determining accelerated instruction plans (AIPs), and when applicable, making promotion decisions. The manual also provides districts with detailed instructions for implementing all the requirements of the SSI and includes timelines and flowcharts, as well as sample forms and letters to aid districts with parental notification and documentation of activities. A question-and-answer section and student scenarios are located in the appendix of the manual.

LPAC Manual

Section 101.1003 of the Commissioner’s Rules Concerning the Participation of Limited English Proficient Students in State Assessments requires language proficiency assessment committees (LPACs) to make assessment decisions on an individual student basis and in accordance with administrative procedures established by TEA. The *LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program (Grades 3–12) Procedural Manual* was developed to guide LPACs in making decisions about the inclusion of LEP students in the Texas assessment program and to promote an increased awareness of the educational needs of second-language learners.

The LPAC manual addresses

- decisions about administering TAKS in English or Spanish;
- LEP exemptions for students in Grades 3 through 10;
- exit level LEP postponements;
- documentation requirements for LEP exemptions and LAT accommodations;
- using state assessment results to monitor progress;
- federal testing and accountability requirements for LEP students; and
- provisions for LEP students served by special education.

The procedures included in this manual were developed in accordance with Section 39.023(m) of the Texas Education Code and ensure that exempted LEP students are administered the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills at the earliest practical date. The procedures reflect the efforts of Texas educators, policymakers, and citizens to include LEP students in state assessments without delay and in a manner that provides meaningful information about their instruction and learning. The procedures also encourage schools to act promptly to deliver the specialized instruction LEP students need to reach their potential and achieve long-term academic success. Training for school districts and charter schools on the procedures contained in the manual is provided annually by the regional education service centers.

The LPAC manual is accessible on the Student Assessment Division website.

District and Campus Coordinator Manual

The *2005 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* explains the responsibilities of district and campus testing coordinators for the TAKS, SDAA II, and TELPAS testing programs. This manual encompasses preparation and administration procedures for each program for the 2005 calendar year. Separate test administrator manuals and field-test administrator manuals are distributed to districts for each test administration.

A separate TAAS manual explaining the testing responsibilities for district and campus testing coordinators as well as test administrators is also distributed to districts for each administration of the TAAS exit level test.

Released Tests

In accordance with the Texas Education Code, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, and Chapter 101, Subchapter B of the Texas Administrative Code, every other year the Texas Education Agency releases test forms, answer keys, and scoring guides used to compute student scores for the Texas assessment program after all districts have completed testing. Released tests include the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills tests, the State-Developed Alternative Assessment II tests, and the Reading Proficiency Tests in English. Field-test items, which may be used to build future forms of the tests, are not released.

For the 2004–2005 school year, only the spring 2005 SDAA II tests (all instructional levels) were released.

All regional education service centers and school districts receive hard copies of the released test forms, answer keys, and scoring guides. Additional hard copies of these materials are made available through Pearson Educational Measurement for a nominal fee. The initial distribution includes five copies of each released test, an answer key for each test, and applicable scoring guides. Each answer key includes the objective and TEKS student expectation measured.

A document authorizing district superintendents and education service center directors to reproduce the copyrighted materials for noncommercial purposes only is also included with the released test materials. Appropriate noncommercial use of released test materials includes disclosing the released test items to the public and using the released tests for the formative evaluation of Texas students.

With the implementation of the TAKS tests in 2003, the TAAS tests, though still offered to exit level students and out-of-school examinees for whom TAAS is their graduation requirement, are no longer released. The TAAS tests were last released in 2002.

In addition to the hard copies provided to districts and education service centers, all released tests, answer keys, and scoring guides, including the 2002 release of the TAAS tests, are available on the Student Assessment Division website.

TAKS and SDAA II Scoring Guides

For each year that tests are released, the Student Assessment Division produces scoring guides to explain how the writing components of statewide student assessments are scored. TAKS scoring guides are available for released Grade 4 writing (both English and Spanish versions), Grade 7 writing, Grade 9 reading (short-answer items), Grade 10 English language arts, and exit level English Instructional Level 2 writing, language arts. SDAA II scoring guides are available for Instructional Level K/1 writing, Instructional Level 2, Instructional Level 3/4 writing, Instructional Level 5 writing, Instructional Level 6/7 writing, and Instructional Level 8/9 writing.

All of the scoring guides include scoring rubrics and a number of sample student responses for each composition or short answer score point. The guides are available on the Student Assessment Division website.

Interpreting Assessment Reports

The *Interpreting Assessment Reports* guide provides information about the assessments that make up the Texas Assessment Program, including TAKS, SDAA II, TELPAS, and exit level TAAS, and the assessment reports and performance data provided to Texas school districts following each test administration.

The guide is updated each year with examples of standard and optional assessment reports for each testing program as well as information to assist school personnel in understanding and interpreting the student performance data contained in the report, as required by Section 39.030(b) of the Texas Education Code. Five copies of the guide are distributed each year to district testing coordinators and each school campus, and one copy is provided to each district superintendent. Additional hard copies are available to Texas school districts through Pearson Educational Measurement. The guide can also be accessed on the Student Assessment Division website.