Chapter 21: Resources

In addition to the information provided in the *Technical Digest*, TEA's Student Assessment Division makes a number of resources available to parents and 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 http://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 version). These revised booklets were published on the Student Assessment Division website in August 2004. The grades 6 through exit level mathematics booklets were updated for 2007.

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 did not signify any change in the TAKS testing program; the objectives and TEKS student expectations assessed on TAKS remained unchanged. TEA chose to update the booklets in 2004 because several years of TAKS field testing and live administrations provided an even more comprehensive picture of the testing program. TEA clarified 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 instruction, 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 were eligible for testing on SDAA II. The SDAA II information booklets can be found online at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/techdig07/index.html. Beginning in 2008, SDAA II is no longer a testing option under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

RPTE Information Booklet

In spring 2004 TEA began developing a revised RPTE information booklet for grades 3 through 12 for publication on the Student Assessment Division website in fall 2004. The revised booklet replaced 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. A preliminary information booklet was issued as a web-based document in September 2007 to provide information about the new TELPAS reading assessment, which will be implemented in spring 2008. This information booklet can be found at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/techdig07/index.html.

Study Guides

In summer 2006, TEA contracted with Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM) for the revision, printing, and distribution of summer remediation study guides for parents to use in assisting students who did not perform satisfactorily on any section of the TAKS at Grades 3 through 10 and exit level. Study Guides are provided to students free of charge.

For spring 2007, Study Guides were reformatted and printed as single-subject books. In subsequent years, content revisions will follow the scheduled TEKS revisions.

All guides, including Spanish language versions at grades 3–6, can be found online at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/guides/study/index.html.

Personalized Study Guides

In summer 2004 TEA contracted with the Grow Network, a subsidiary of McGraw-Hill Publishing that designs instructional materials targeted to individual student needs, to produce a personalized study guide for each student who is not successful on one or more grade 9, 10, or exit level TAKS tests. Because the personalized study guides are customized for students based on their TAKS scores, they inform students of their individual needs and

provide resources to help them focus on specific areas in which improvement is needed. The personalized study guides are an additional resource for students who do not perform satisfactorily on any subject-area test of the grade 9, 10, or exit level TAKS. They are designed to be used in conjunction with the 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 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 TAKS administration, a personalized study guide is produced for each grade 9, 10, or exit level examinee who did not meet the passing standard on any subject-area test. The guides are shipped to districts, and a comprehensive guide can be requested by contacting the Grow Network online. Since January 2005, students have been able to input their TAKS results from their Confidential Student Report and download 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 are developed in both English and Spanish, are provided to districts each spring for distribution with individual student TAKS performance results. Parent brochures in both English and Spanish are also provided for TELPAS performance results.

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 receive 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 and posted on the Student Assessment Division website.

The purpose of the 2006–2007 ARD manual is to explain to ARD committees

- how to make decisions about a student's placement in the Texas Student 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 (SSI) 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*. The GPC manual was first made available on the Student Assessment Division website and distributed to districts in May 2003. A Phase Two update for the 2006–2007 academic year was posted on the Student Assessment Division website in August 2006. The GPC manual is updated annually.

The 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 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. The materials are provided in both English and Spanish to help districts meet the requirement of a good-faith effort to provide parent notifications in the parent's native language.

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 publication titled *LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* was developed to guide LPACs in making decisions about the inclusion of LEP students in the Texas Student 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,
- linguistically accommodated testing (LAT) assessment procedures,
- documentation requirements for LEP exemptions and LAT accommodations,
- using state assessment results to monitor progress,
- federal testing and accountability requirements for LEP students, and
- assessment 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 to ensure that exempted LEP students are administered TAKS 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 help ensure that schools 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 and training materials are updated annually and accessible on the Student Assessment Division website.

District and Campus Coordinator Manual

The *2007 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* explains the responsibilities of district and campus testing coordinators for the TAKS, TAKS–I, SDAA II, and TELPAS testing programs. This manual encompasses preparation and administration procedures for each program for the 2007 calendar year. Separate test administrator manuals and field-test administrator manuals are distributed to districts before each test administration.

A separate TAAS manual explaining the testing responsibilities for district and campus testing coordinators as well as test administrators is 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 Student Assessment Program after all districts have completed testing. Through 2007, 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 2006–2007 school year, all SDAA II tests were released.

All regional education service centers and districts were able to access copies of the released test forms, answer keys, and scoring guides through TEA's website. Additional hard copies of these materials are made available through PEM for a nominal fee.

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.

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. Scoring guides for spring 2007 SDAA II released tests are available for writing assessments at Instructional Levels K/1, 2, 3/4, 5, 6/7, and 8/9; reading assessments at Instructional Levels 9 and 10; and written composition assessments at Instructional Level 10.

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

Interpreting Assessment Reports

The guide entitled *Interpreting Assessment Reports* provides information about the assessments that make up the Texas Student Assessment Program through 2007 (these include TAKS, TAKS–I, SDAA II, TELPAS, and TAAS exit level) and the assessment reports and performance data provided to Texas 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 each report, as required by Section 39.030(b) of the Texas Education Code. Five copies of the guide are distributed each year to every district testing coordinator and campus, and one copy is provided to each district superintendent. Additional hard copies are available to Texas school districts through PEM. The guide can be found on the Student Assessment Division website.