

Chapter 7: Test Administration Procedures

Overview

During the 2007–2008 school year, the English-version Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), including TAKS (Accommodated), was administered to approximately 2,924,000 students; the Spanish-version TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), to approximately 58,000 students; TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M) to approximately 129,000 students; and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) to approximately 690,000 students.

Districts administered the TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), tests to eligible examinees as indicated below.

Fall 2007

October: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies retests at exit level (online and paper)

Spring/Summer 2008

March: Writing at grades 4 and 7 (English) and grade 4 (Spanish version)
Reading at grades 3, 5, 8, and 9 (English) and grades 3 and 5 (Spanish version)
ELA at grade 10 and at exit level
ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies retests at exit level (online and paper)

April: Mathematics at grades 3–10 and at exit level (English) and grades 3–6 (Spanish version)
Reading at grades 4, 6, and 7 (English) and grades 4 and 6 (Spanish version)
Reading retests at grades 3, 5, and 8 (English) and grades 3 and 5 (Spanish version)
Science at grades 5, 8, 10 and at exit level and grade 5 (Spanish version)
Social Studies at grades 8, 10 and at exit level
ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies retests at exit level (online and paper)

May: Mathematics retests at grades 5 and 8 (English) and grade 5 (Spanish version)

- July: Reading retests at grades 3, 5 and 8 (English) and grades 3 and 5 (Spanish version)
- Mathematics retests at grades 5 and 8 (English) and grade 5 (Spanish version)
- ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies retests at exit level (online and paper)

In March 2008, TAKS–M writing tests were administered to students enrolled at grades 4 and 7. TAKS–M reading tests were administered at grades 3, 5, 8, and 9, and TAKS–M ELA tests were administered at grades 10 and 11. In April, TAKS–M mathematics tests were administered at grades 3–11, and TAKS–M reading tests were administered at grades 4, 6 and 7.

For TELPAS, which is administered at grades K–12, reading assessments were administered at grades 2–12 in March, along with holistically rated assessments of listening, speaking, writing, and reading (K–1).

Districts administered the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) exit level reading, writing, and mathematics retests in October 2007, and in March, April, and July 2008.

Training and Materials

Test administration procedures must be followed exactly so that all individuals eligible for testing have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their academic achievement. To meet this goal, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) develops and provides instruction to train all testing personnel across the state on test administration procedures. Each year preparation for test administration begins with a training session for testing coordinators and other personnel from each of the 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) as well as district testing coordinators from some of the state’s largest districts. Using information and materials provided in the TEA training session, the ESC regional testing coordinators train the district coordinators in their respective regions. District coordinators train campus testing coordinators, who are responsible for training any personnel participating in the assessment program.

For each test administration in the 2007–2008 school year, ESC personnel and district coordinators were provided a district testing coordinator packet containing the information and materials necessary for overseeing test administrations, including coordinator and test administrator manuals that provided an overview of the statewide testing program. Separate packets and manuals were provided for TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, TELPAS, and TAAS exit level.

Test Security

Maintaining test security is an important consideration throughout the test administration process. As defined by the Texas Education Code (TEC), [Chapter 39, Subchapter B](#), TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, TELPAS, TAAS, and end-of-course (EOC) assessments are secure testing programs. In addition, any field tests administered for the TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, TELPAS, and EOC programs are also secure. All test materials must be handled in strict accordance with the instructions contained in test and program administration materials. Each person with access to test materials must maintain and preserve the security and confidentiality of the TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, TELPAS, TAAS, and EOC tests. All district and campus personnel who handle secure test materials are required to sign a security oath.

Pearson assigns secure test booklets to districts by unique nine-digit bar-coded security numbers. Districts complete and return answer document packing lists with their test materials to help Pearson determine whether any student answer documents are missing. Pearson compares bar-code scan files of returned test booklets with test booklet distribution files to determine whether all secure materials have been returned from each campus and district. Districts are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of all test materials and their secure return. Pearson contacts districts with missing secure test materials in accordance with procedures summarized in the *Test Security Supplement*. During the 2007–2008 school year, Pearson scanned security barcodes on approximately 10.8 million TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M test booklets; 487,000 TELPAS reading test booklets; and 6,600 TAAS exit level test booklets returned by districts to ensure that all secure test booklets had been returned. In addition, Pearson scanned more than 550,000 TAKS/TAKS–M field-test booklets. See [Chapter 8: Test Security for more information](#).

Testing Accommodations

Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide equitable access during instruction and assessment for students with special needs. District and campus testing coordinators are responsible for communicating information about testing accommodations to test administrators and other interested stakeholders. Information about testing accommodations can be found in the *2007–2008 Accommodations Manual* and may be accessed online at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/AccommManual_2007_08_tagged.pdf

The *Accommodations Manual* provides guidance to district and campus personnel in selecting, administering, and evaluating the use of accommodations in instruction and assessment. To make certain that students receive accommodations they need during testing, district and campus personnel should familiarize themselves with the guidelines.

Linguistically Accommodated Testing (LAT)

TEA has implemented a LAT assessment process for students who by state law meet the criteria for a limited English proficiency (LEP) exemption from reading/ELA and mathematics testing in grades 3–8 and 10 and science testing in grades 5, 8 and 10. This assessment process is available for administrations of TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), and TAKS–M. Linguistically accommodated testing was instituted to meet No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requirements for including exempted recent immigrant LEP students in federally required assessments and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) accountability measures. LAT administrations were implemented in spring 2005 for mathematics, spring 2007 for reading/English language arts, and spring 2008 for science.

The federal English language learners (ELL) assessment requirements differ slightly for mathematics and science versus reading/ELA. All LEP-exempt recent immigrants are required to participate in LAT administrations of mathematics and science in AYP grades. For reading/ELA, however, first-year LEP-exempt immigrants take just the reading component of TELPAS. Other LEP-exempt recent immigrants must take LAT reading/ELA assessments in AYP grades.

The linguistic accommodations used in the LAT process are categorized according to whether they provide indirect or direct linguistic support. Indirect support accommodations are built into the test administration procedures for all LAT students. Decisions concerning accommodations that provide direct linguistic support must be made and documented by the language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC). In the case of a LEP student served by special education, decisions are made by the the student's admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee in conjunction with the LPAC. The decisions must be based on the individual needs of the student and whether the accommodation is used routinely in instruction and testing.

Allowable accommodations providing direct linguistic support for LAT mathematics and science include linguistic simplification, reading assistance, bilingual dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, oral translation, and use of Spanish-version and English-version tests side by side. Secure LAT linguistic simplification guides are provided to test administrators for use with the linguistic simplification accommodation for TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated). These guides provide suggested linguistic simplifications and delineate which subject-area terms may not be simplified. The accommodations made during LAT administrations must not include explanations, definitions, pictures, gestures, or examples related to mathematical or scientific terminology, concepts, or skills assessed since such assistance would invalidate the test results.

Allowable accommodations providing direct linguistic support for LAT reading/ELA include bilingual dictionaries, English dictionaries, reading aloud a word or phrase, reading aloud the entire test item, oral translation of a word or phrase, and clarification of a word or phrase. During LAT reading administrations students must not be provided any direct or

indirect assistance or reinforcement that identifies or aids in the identification of the correct response to a test item.

Students taking LAT administrations are also eligible to receive accommodations allowable for TAKS if they qualify based on other special needs. More information about LAT accommodations may be found in the LAT test administration manual available on the TEA web site at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/rpte/LAT_Manual_2009.pdf.

Educational Materials Required for Testing—TAKS

Dictionaries and Thesauruses

English-language dictionaries and thesauruses must be provided to examinees for

- the written composition portion of the grade 7 writing test,
- the entire grade 9 reading test, and
- the reading and written composition portion of the grade 10 and exit level (or grades 10 and 11 TAKS–M) English language arts (ELA) tests.

There must be at least one dictionary for every five examinees; it is also recommended that there be one thesaurus for every five examinees, if possible. Examinees may also use a combination dictionary/thesaurus. An English as a second language (ESL) dictionary, which uses simple English and pictures to define words, may be provided for LEP students.

A dictionary or thesaurus may not be used on the revising and editing section of either the grade 7 writing test or the TAKS ELA tests. A dictionary or thesaurus may not be used on the revising and editing section of the TAKS–M ELA tests unless documented in a student’s IEP. The grade 7 writing test and the ELA tests contain two sealed sections; the first section contains the written composition portion (grade 7) or the written composition and reading portion (TAKS grades 10 and exit level, TAKS–M grades 10 and 11), and the second sealed section contains the revising and editing portion. After an examinee completes the first sealed section, the test administrator collects the examinee’s dictionary and thesaurus. The examinee then may break the seal on the second sealed section and begin the revising and editing portion of the test.

Calculators

For the mathematics tests at grades 9 and 10 and exit level (or grades 9, 10, and 11 for TAKS–M), districts must provide each examinee with a graphing calculator for the entire administration. Students may use their own calculators instead of those provided by the district. Any kind of graphing calculator may be used except one with a typewriter-style keypad (known as QWERTY) or one that includes a computer algebra system (CAS) for TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated). TAKS–M students may use any type of graphing calculator except one that includes a CAS. Handheld minicomputers, personal digital

assistants (PDAs), or laptop computers may not be used. All types of memory, including standard memory, RAM, ROM, and flash ROM, must be cleared to factory default both before and after testing. In addition, any programs or applications must be removed or disabled prior to the test administration.

Calculators may also be used on the science tests at grade 10 and exit level (or grades 10 and 11 for TAKS–M). Students must have access to four-function, scientific, or graphing calculators. Again, students may use their own calculators instead of those provided by the district. There must be at least one calculator for every five students. If students share a calculator, the memory must be cleared after each student uses it. The guidelines for kinds of graphing calculators, clearing of memory, and removal of programs and applications for the science tests are the same as those listed for mathematics.

Dyslexia Accommodations—TAKS Reading

In spring 2004 a study was conducted to evaluate the effects of a series of accommodations on the performance of elementary students who have been identified with dyslexia on the TAKS reading test. This study focused on the following three accommodations that might benefit these students on the TAKS reading test:

- orally reading all proper nouns associated with each passage before students began individual reading
- orally reading all questions and answer choices to students
- extending the testing time over a two-day period

These three accommodations were “bundled,” meaning they were provided together. The purpose of the study was not to determine which accommodation was most effective, but whether these bundled accommodations leveled the playing field for students who have been identified with dyslexia or who have difficulty reading words in isolation, allowing them to demonstrate their best reading performance without invalidating the test as an accurate measure of reading comprehension.

The three bundled accommodations were first available in spring 2006 for eligible students in grades 3, 4, and 5. These accommodations were used to administer both English and Spanish version TAKS reading tests, including all three Student Success Initiative (SSI) tests at grades 3 and 5. In spring 2006 an additional study was conducted to evaluate the effects of a bundled accommodation package for older students with dyslexia on the TAKS test. To determine whether a bundle of accommodations shown to be effective with third graders was also effective with older students, an accommodated assessment was administered to students in grades 7 and 11 who were in dyslexia or special education programs. In the grade 7 study, test administrators administered the reading test in three formats: with all three accommodations as a “bundled” package, with the first two accommodations only, or in the standard manner. In grade 11 the test was administered with all three accommodations as a bundled package or in the standard manner. Study results at grade 7 supported extending the bundled accommodations (including the

administration over two days) to students in middle school who show clear evidence of decoding problems. Study results at grade 11 were not clear and indicated that more research is needed on accommodations for high school students. See Appendix 7 in the *2005–2006 Technical Digest* for more information about the study. This digest can be found online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/techdigest/>. Beginning in spring 2007, the three bundled accommodations were available for eligible students in grades 6, 7, and 8, as well as students in grades 3, 4, and 5.

Information regarding dyslexia bundled accommodations for students taking TAKS assessments, including eligibility requirements and the decision-making process, is in the *2007–2008 Accommodations Manual*, which is available online at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/AccommManual_2007_08_tagged.pdf.

Oral Administration

Oral administration is a standard accommodation for any eligible student taking TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M mathematics, science, or social studies tests.

Information regarding oral administrations for students taking TAKS assessments, including eligibility requirements and the decision-making process, is in the *2007–2008 Accommodations Manual*, which is available online at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/AccommManual_2007_08_tagged.pdf.

Students with Visual Impairments

Large-print test booklets are available for all TAKS (LAT included), TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, and TELPAS reading operational administrations. Large print and braille books are not available for the field test administrations (except for spring 2008 TAKS–M field testing).

Braille test booklets are only available for

- TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), and TAKS–M operational administrations; and
- TAAS operational administrations.

Braille test booklets are not available for TELPAS reading or LAT except for LAT administrations of TAKS–M.

Test administrators receive instructions for testing visually impaired students with braille or large-print test booklets. Districts are instructed to indicate on the answer document whether a student used a large-print or braille version of a test. For information regarding braille and large print test administrations, including eligibility requirements and decision-making authority, see the *2007–2008 Accommodations Manual* available online at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/AccommManual_2007_08_tagged.pdf.

Make-Up Testing

Background

In 2003, TEA received numerous requests from district superintendents to institute make-up testing. Participation requirements for making AYP under the federal NCLB are stringent at 95%. These requirements are particularly challenging to meet at the high school level, but middle and elementary schools are also affected.

Although other changes, such as a refinement of the definition for participation rate that takes into account small numbers, did in part address superintendents' concerns, there was still a strong desire for make-up testing.

Spring 2008 Make-Up Testing

For the 2007–2008 school year, make-up tests were allowed for the TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M subject-area tests and grade levels that were included in the calculation of AYP. This policy change was implemented in the 2003–2004 school year and marked a significant departure from previous administration procedures that required, with few exceptions, all students in the same grade to take the same subject-area test at the same time. The intention of the policy change was to be responsive to the requirement of federal law without jeopardizing the integrity and validity of the Texas assessment program. Major features of the make-up test policy include the following:

- The tests involved were those included in the AYP calculation: reading at grades 3–8, ELA at grade 10, and mathematics at grades 3–8 and grade 10. Spanish-version tests were also included.
- A separate test form for the grade 10 ELA make-up test was administered on an assigned day (March 6, 2008).
- The regular testing schedule was maintained, with districts allowed to give make-up tests during the remainder of the week, including Saturday, only to those students who were absent on the regularly scheduled test administration day.
- No make-up tests were allowed for the writing, science, and social studies tests, or for any subject-area test at grade 9 and exit level.

Out-of-District Testing

For the summer TAKS assessments (grade 3 reading, grades 5 and 8 reading and mathematics, and all subjects at exit level), students who are unable to retest at their home district's designated test site may test out of district. Enrolled out-of-district students are required to complete the out-of-district registration form, and exit level students must also present picture identification. For example, a student from Houston who spends the summer in Dallas and who wants to test in Dallas is required to register to test

out-of-district. Out-of-district also applies to students who are part of the Texas Tech or University of Texas high school programs.

A campus or district must accommodate the request of an out-of-district student to participate in the third administration of an [SSI](#) test (reading in grade 3; reading and mathematics in grades 3, 5, and 8 in 2007–2008) if that campus or district is testing one or more local students on the applicable test and if the student has registered in advance for out-of-district testing. A district may choose to test walk-in students or out-of-district students who register after the deadline, but the district is not required to do so.

Out-of-School Testing

Individuals who have completed all graduation requirements but have not passed all four sections of the exit level TAKS test (or, if applicable, all three sections of the TAAS exit level test) and who are no longer enrolled in a district may retake the appropriate sections each time the test is administered. Districts are required to publicize the designated dates, the precise location(s) and times of testing, and the actions that out-of-school individuals interested in retesting must take to ensure access to the testing areas and to testing materials.

A district may select out-of-school testing site(s) within the district or collaborate with an ESC or neighboring district to test out-of-school examinees at an alternate testing site. Districts are provided with registration packets so that individuals who are no longer enrolled in school may register for the exit level test. Out-of-school examinees may register online or by mail. Registered individuals receive an admission letter informing them of the date, time, and location of testing. Districts may accept walk-in examinees, as long as the examinee can provide proper identification. Test results are mailed to the individual and to the district from which he or she is eligible to receive a diploma.

