

# Chapter 11: Student Success Initiative (SSI)

## Overview

The Student Success Initiative (SSI) includes three initiatives that provide a system of academic support to help ensure achievement on grade level in reading and mathematics so every student can succeed in school. The SSI incorporates a grade advancement component adopted by the Texas Legislature in 1999. The law ties promotion to performance on state-mandated assessments in reading at grade 3, and reading and mathematics at grades 5 and 8. The law applies to students who take the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and TAKS (Accommodated) tests in English or Spanish. The law does not apply to English language learners (ELLs) who are exempt on the basis of limited English proficiency and qualify for a linguistically accommodated (LAT) administration. In addition, the law did not apply in 2008 to students who were assessed with TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M).

Students must be allowed at least three opportunities to pass a test under the SSI grade advancement requirements. Except as follows, a student may advance to the next grade level only by passing these tests. If a student has not passed after three opportunities and a parent submits an appeal, the student may be promoted by unanimous decision of a grade placement committee (GPC), consisting of the principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or guardian, and the student's teacher for the subject area tested. The GPC may advance a student only if it determines that he or she is likely to perform at grade level by the end of the next year after accelerated instruction.

The academic support provided under the SSI takes many forms. Students who are identified as being at risk of failing an SSI assessment must receive extra instruction prior to the first test administration. Students who do not pass an SSI assessment must be provided additional instruction before each subsequent testing opportunity. In addition, a TAKS study guide is provided by the state to any student who does not meet the standard on a TAKS assessment. Funding and instructional support for the SSI also are provided through the Texas Reading Initiative and the Texas Math Initiative.

## The Grade Placement Committee

The *Grade Placement Committee Manual for Grade Advancement Requirements of the Student Success Initiative* provides detailed information about the grade advancement and accelerated instruction requirements of the law. The manual is designed to guide GPCs through the process of evaluating student performance, determining accelerated instruction, 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. The manual

and other information related to SSI requirements can be found online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/>. Links to other agency websites, such as those for the Texas Reading Initiative and the Texas Math Initiative, are also included in the manual.

## **Students Receiving Special Education Services**

The SSI also applies to students who receive special education services, whether they take TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated). The grade advancement requirements differ depending on which the student takes. The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee makes all assessment decisions for students served by special education. The ARD committee also serves as the GPC for students who receive special education services and fail to perform satisfactorily on any SSI assessment. ARD committee members are responsible for making all decisions about accelerated instruction and grade advancement.

In 2008 the SSI grade advancement requirements applied to all enrolled students who received special education services and took TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) in grades 3, 5, and 8 reading and grades 5 and 8 mathematics. Students who took TAKS–M in these grades and subjects were not subject to SSI grade advancement rules.

The *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Student Assessment Program* and the *Grade Placement Committee Manual* include sections on SSI requirements for students who receive special education services. Both manuals can be found online at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3320&menu\\_id3=793](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3320&menu_id3=793).

## **Alternate Assessment Option**

State law allows districts the option of administering a substitute assessment—approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in lieu of TAKS—to students who have failed an SSI assessment on the previous two testing opportunities. The GPC is responsible for deciding whether a student may take a substitute test.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Form B, Grade 3 English reading test was the only substitute assessment approved for use in 2008. Using data from a study conducted by Riverside Publishing in 2003 that links TAKS and ITBS, TEA's Student Assessment Division determined a comparable scale score passing standard for the ITBS that reflects the 2008 TAKS grade 3 reading scale score passing standard.