

# Chapter 21: Resources

## Overview

In addition to the information provided in the *Technical Digest*, Texas Education Agency's (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. Additional information is available on TEA's 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 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) information booklets for grades 3 through 10, exit level, and grades 3 through 6 (Spanish version). These revised booklets were published on TEA's Student Assessment Division website in August 2004. Since 2004, there have been several additional updates to the booklets. The grade 8 science booklet was created in 2005. The grades 6 through exit level mathematics booklets were updated in 2007. The grades 3 through 5 mathematics booklets (English and Spanish versions) were updated in 2008.

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 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (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. The TEKS for mathematics were refined by TEA and approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE) in 2005. The revised mathematics information booklets reflect the refinements to the TEKS and to the TAKS mathematics tests.

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

- 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
- sample items that show some of the ways objectives are assessed

## **TELPAS Reading Information Booklet**

A preliminary information booklet was issued as a Web-based document in August 2007 to provide information about the new Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) reading assessment implemented in spring 2008. An updated version was issued in fall 2008. The purpose of the information booklet is to familiarize educators with the new TELPAS reading tests for English language learners (ELLs) in grades 2–12. This assessment replaced its predecessor, the Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE), beginning with the 2007–2008 school year. The information booklet shows the alignment of the tests to the English language proficiency standards (ELPS) in the TEKS and provides sample reading selections and test questions. Teachers who understand the types of English texts that ELLs can and cannot comprehend at various stages of learning English are able to tailor instruction more effectively in all content areas in which learning is dependent on the ability to understand written English. This information booklet can be found at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment//admin/rpte/TP07\\_2\\_12\\_InfoBook\\_tagged.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment//admin/rpte/TP07_2_12_InfoBook_tagged.pdf).

## **Study Guides**

TEA contracted with Pearson 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 3–10 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.

TEA also provides online interactive study guides covering the same grades and subjects as the printed guides, while providing content enhanced with dynamic images, engaging interactive activities, and practice questions with instant feedback. The TAKS interactive study guides—one for every printed TAKS study guide—are available online at no cost to districts or students and are available at <http://www.texasassessment.com/families/>.

## 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 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 Reports and download personalized study guides.

## Parent Brochures

To assist districts with the task of helping parents understand their child's TAKS test results, TEA's Student Assessment Division produces a series of brochures titled *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 (CSR) so 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, developed in both English and Spanish, are provided to districts each spring for distribution with individual student TAKS performance results.

TEA has developed a separate parent brochure that summarizes the TAKS–Alt assessment for students receiving special education services, explains a sample CSR, and summarizes each test objective for each subject area assessed with TAKS–Alt. The

brochure, also developed in both English and Spanish, is distributed with individual student results beginning in spring 2008. A similar brochure for the TAKS–M alternate assessment is being developed for distribution with test reports in fall 2008.

Parent brochures in both English and Spanish are also provided for TELPAS performance results.

## Procedural Manuals

### Accommodations Manual

First developed for the 2007–2008 school year, the *Accommodations Manual* is designed to guide admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees, Section 504 committees, language proficiency assessment committees (LPACs), administrators, and district- and campus-level assessment staff in selecting, administering, and evaluating the use of accommodations in instruction and assessment. The information in the manual is applicable to students requiring accommodations. The *Accommodations Manual* helps districts to understand the importance of

- expecting all students to achieve grade-level academic content standards,
- learning about accommodations for assessment,
- selecting accommodations for assessment of individual students,
- administering appropriate accommodations during assessment, and
- evaluating and improving accommodation use.

### ARD Manual

The *ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program: Revised Reference Manual for the 2008–2009 Testing Year* is designed to guide admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees, in selecting the most appropriate assessment for students receiving special education services. This manual explains to ARD committees how to make these decisions by using the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum as documented in each student’s individualized education program (IEP).

### GPC Manual

In response to district needs for more information and guidance related 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 TEA’s 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 TEA 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 sample forms and letters are provided in both English and Spanish to help districts meet the requirement of a good-faith effort to provide parental 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 Student 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 (TEC) 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 in order 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 TEA's Student Assessment Division website.

## **District and Campus Coordinator Manual**

The *2008 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* explains the responsibilities of district and campus testing coordinators for the TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, and TELPAS testing programs. This manual encompasses preparation and administration procedures for each program for the 2008 calendar year. Separate test administrator manuals and field-test administrator manuals are distributed to districts before each test administration.

A separate Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (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 TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, and Chapter 23, Subchapter E of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), every third year TEA shall release the questions and answer keys to each assessment instrument administered under Subsection (a), (b), (c), (d), or (1) after the last time the instrument is administered for that school year. Field-test items, which may be used to build future forms of the tests, are not released.

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

A document authorizing district superintendents and ESC directors to reproduce the copyrighted materials only for noncommercial purposes 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.

## **Interpreting Assessment Reports**

The guide titled *Interpreting Assessment Reports* provides information about the assessments that comprise the Texas Student Assessment Program (including TAKS, TAKS–M, TAKS–Alt, 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 TEC. 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 Pearson. The guide can be found on TEA's Student Assessment Division website.

