

September 19, 2008

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: **Student Assessment Online Testing and Training for the 2008–2009 School Year**

This letter contains the following information to assist districts in planning for 2008–2009 online testing and training activities:

- Online test administrations for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), and end-of-course (EOC) assessments
- Online assessment activities for TELPAS and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills–Alternate (TAKS–Alt)
- Online training for the TELPAS holistic rating process and for the TAKS–Alt assessment
- Technology requirements and planning resources

ONLINE TEST ADMINISTRATIONS

The assessments scheduled to be administered online to students this year include

- TAKS exit level retests;
- TELPAS reading for grades 2–12; and
- EOC assessments for Algebra I, geometry, biology, chemistry, and U.S. history.

A brief description of each of these assessments is found below. More detailed information is provided in Attachment A.

TAKS Exit Level Retests. These tests will be offered both on paper and online in October, March, April, and July. Districts may choose to place individual students in any combination of paper and online testing that best meets the needs of the student and the district. The online TAKS exit level subject-area tests must be administered on the same day scheduled for each of the paper subject-area tests. Districts will continue to receive paper test booklets and precoded labels for all students who have not met the passing standard in at least one exit level subject. Please note that these administrations are for retesters only. Those students who need to be assessed using the TAKS (Accommodated) form must test on paper because the accommodated form is not available online. **The registration deadline for the online administration of the October TAKS exit level retests is September 29, 2008.**

In order to evaluate the comparability of the scores between students testing online and students testing on paper, a sufficient number of students and districts testing online is needed. **The availability of March and April 2010 online TAKS exit level retests is dependent on adequate student and district participation in 2009.** Without sufficient participation, the state will not be able to continue offering the March and April online TAKS exit level retests beyond the 2008–2009 school year.

For this reason, districts that plan to participate in TAKS exit level online testing are encouraged to test as many students as possible to allow for the continuation of TAKS exit level online testing during the March and April administrations.

TELPAS Reading. For spring 2009, the TELPAS reading tests for English language learners (ELLs) in grades 2–12 will be administered **only online**. This decision was made based on input from a number of student assessment advisory groups. Last spring approximately two-thirds of the state's ELLs in grades 2–12 participated in online testing. The tests will be administered during the five-week period of March 9–April 10, 2009.

In rare instances, such as when a student needs a testing accommodation that is not available in an online administration or when there is an unavoidable technological problem, a student may take the TELPAS reading test on paper. More information about paper-based testing will be provided in the spring 2009 administration materials.

EOC Assessments. The optional EOC assessments for Algebra I, geometry, biology, chemistry, and U.S. history will be offered to students completing the specified coursework in the spring semester. These assessments will be offered **only online during a three-week period of May 11–29, 2009.**

As we move closer to the 2011–2012 school year, when EOC assessments become high stakes, we are providing additional information with regard to student performance on the optional EOC assessments. Districts that participate in these assessments may obtain Confidential Student Reports and Confidential Lists of Students' Results via the online testing system. Algebra I EOC assessment reports will provide raw scores, scale scores, and performance standards for Met Standard and Commended Performance levels. In addition, summary reports for the Algebra I EOC assessment will be available to districts following the close of the testing window. Reports for EOC assessments for geometry, biology, chemistry, and U.S. history will provide only raw scores until performance standards are established for those assessments. Starting in spring 2008, data files containing individual student results for all operational EOC assessments were made available to districts. As we move forward, we hope that this additional information will serve as a meaningful early indicator of students' readiness to perform well on high-stakes EOC assessments.

EOC Field Tests. In addition to the five optional operational EOC assessments listed above, selected districts will be required to participate in EOC field tests in physics and world geography. The EOC field test window is May 4–22, 2009. Campuses selected to participate in the 2009 EOC field tests will test either online in physics, online in world geography, or on paper in world geography. Those campuses selected for the paper-based EOC field test in world geography will be provided materials prior to the testing window. Districts were notified of their participation in the field-test letter dated August 20, 2008.

ONLINE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

TELPAS Student Data and Holistic Rating Submission

Beginning in spring 2009, all TELPAS student information and holistic ratings for grades K–12 will be submitted online. Paper answer documents will be used only in the rare instances in which students take the TELPAS reading test on paper. (See Attachment A of this letter for information about how student data will be loaded in the online system.) The new online system will enable districts to monitor the online

submission of ratings and student data. Additional information about this new process will be provided in training sessions and manuals for the spring 2009 administration.

TAKS–Alt

An online system will again be used to submit assessment information for the TAKS–Alt assessment. Student ID and demographic information for students who participated in TAKS–Alt for the spring 2008 administration will remain in the system. Districts will have an opportunity to submit student data files (similar to the submission of files for precoding purposes) for eligible TAKS–Alt students in order to update student information or to add students that are new to their district. Information concerning the submission of the student files will be sent to districts in September 2008.

The TAKS–Alt system will be available to administrators on November 17, 2008, and will be available for teachers to begin recording assessment information on January 5, 2009, through April 10, 2009.

Additional information regarding the TAKS–Alt assessment program is available at:
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksalt/index.html>.

ONLINE TRAINING

Spring TELPAS Holistic Rating Training

As in the past, online training courses and qualification activities will be used for spring TELPAS holistic rating training. The opening dates for these trainings, listed below, have been communicated to TELPAS holistic rating trainers.

January 12, 2009 Level 1 online training window opens for new 2–12 raters and individuals trained previously but not yet qualified

February 2, 2009 Spring online qualification window opens; Level 1 online training window opens for new K–1 raters, Level 2 online refresher training window opens for previously trained K–1 raters and previously qualified 2–12 raters

Online course descriptions and other TELPAS holistic rating training information are accessible from the TEA website listed below.

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/rpte/index.html>.

TAKS–Alt Training

Online training for TAKS–Alt is **mandatory** beginning in 2008–2009. Teachers who will administer the TAKS–Alt assessment are required to complete all three training modules and the qualification activities for each module. District and campus testing coordinators should also review the training modules in order to familiarize themselves with the updated TAKS–Alt assessment. In addition, coordinators will be able to monitor the progress of test administrators in completing training and qualification activities. The modules will be available beginning November 3, 2008, continuing throughout the school year. For additional information regarding the changes to the TAKS–Alt assessment, please see the letter (Assessments for Students Served by Special Education for the 2008–2009 School Year) that was sent to districts on August 29, 2008 and can also be found at
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/letters/2009/082908_Aug08SpedLetter.pdf.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND PLANNING RESOURCES

Beginning with the spring 2009 administrations, a new version of the TestNav test delivery software must be used for all online tests. In order to administer the online state assessments, districts will need to download and install the new version of TestNav, available **AFTER** November 7, 2008, from <http://www.etesttx.com> under "Test Delivery."

To reduce the occurrence of TestNav updates that must be done manually by district staff, this release of TestNav includes a feature that automatically updates the software for most system enhancements. There may be a future need that requires a full installation of TestNav if the update cannot be accomplished through the auto-update feature.

Attachment B of this letter includes information about planning resources available to help districts prepare for online testing and training activities.

<i>For questions regarding:</i>	<i>Please call:</i>
General online and training policy information	512-463-9536 (TEA Student Assessment Division)
Texas Online Testing	
General	800-252-9186 (Option 3, M–F 7:30 am–5:30 pm)
Technical	888-597-1103 (M–F, 6:00 am–7:30 pm)
TAKS–Alt Assessments	
General	800-252-9186 (Option 1, M–F 7:30 am–5:30 pm)
Technical	877-TAKS-ALT (877-825-7258)
TELPAS Holistic Rating Training	800-627-0225

We hope that you find this information useful as you plan for the 2008–2009 online testing and training activities.

Assessment Contact Information

Texas Education Agency

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Student Assessment Division, Gloria Zyskowski, Deputy Associate Commissioner

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cc: Education Service Center (ESC) Executive Directors
ESC and District Testing Coordinators
ESC and District Special Education Coordinators
ESC and District Bilingual Education/ESL Coordinators
ESC and District Information Technology Staff