

ACTION REQUIRED

September 19, 2007

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Assessments for Students Served by Special Education for the 2007–2008 School Year

This letter provides important updates regarding assessment options for students served by special education and the use of these assessments in the state and federal accountability systems for the 2007–2008 school year. There are significant changes to the assessment options available for students with disabilities.

- The State-Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II) and locally determined alternate assessments (LDAAs) are no longer options under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.
- The program formerly known as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills–Inclusive (TAKS–I) has been expanded to all grades and subjects in which TAKS is administered and is now called TAKS (Accommodated). TAKS (Accommodated) is a general assessment that is available to students served by special education who require specific accommodations.
- TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M) is being implemented to fulfill the requirement of an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards for certain students served by special education who meet the participation requirements.

The chart below outlines the new assessment options.

Federal Requirements for the Assessment of Students with Disabilities	Texas Options for the Assessment of Students with Disabilities
General assessment with or without accommodations	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Includes TAKS (Accommodated)
Alternate assessment based on modified grade-level achievement standards	TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M) Available for all grades/subjects tested on TAKS
Alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards	TAKS–Alternate (TAKS–Alt) Available for all grades/subjects tested on TAKS

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) measures a student’s mastery of the state-mandated curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). TAKS includes a form called TAKS (Accommodated) for students served by special education who meet the eligibility requirements for certain specific accommodations. For further information regarding eligibility for TAKS (Accommodated), please see the publication titled *Revised Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment*

Program that will be posted to the TEA website by October. TAKS (Accommodated) will be available for **all** English and Spanish TAKS tests beginning in spring 2008. Retest opportunities for TAKS (Accommodated) exit level assessments will be offered beginning in July 2008.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills–Modified (TAKS–M)

TAKS–M is an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards designed to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Spanish versions of TAKS–M are not available. TAKS–M is intended for a small number of students served by special education who meet participation criteria. **The decision to administer TAKS–M to a student must be made by the student’s ARD committee; it cannot be based solely on disability category or placement setting, nor can it be determined administratively for accountability purposes.**

TAKS–M is based on the grade-level TEKS curriculum, but the assessment itself is simplified. General information regarding the TAKS–M format and modifications is available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksm/8_13_07_TETN.ppt.

Participation criteria for this assessment can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksm/index.html>.

A TAKS–M field test for all students that meet the participation requirements in reading, mathematics, and/or science will be conducted from October 8–October 19, 2007. Please note that it is not necessary for the ARD committee to convene to determine field-test participation and/or accommodations. The current individualized education program (IEP) should contain enough information for school personnel familiar with the student to determine whether the TAKS–M field test is appropriate.

The TAKS–M field test in October will be limited to reading, mathematics, and science only; participants will be students enrolled in grades 4–9 and 11. Note that the TAKS–M field test will assess content associated with the previous grade. For example, students enrolled in grade 4 at the time of the field test will be given a TAKS–M grade 4 test booklet containing grade 3 content.

The grades and subjects not field-tested in October 2007 (writing at grades 4 and 7; reading and mathematics at grade 9; social studies at grades 8 and 10; and English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies at grade 11) will be field-tested in spring 2008 on the same dates as the comparable TAKS administrations. The grades and subjects field-tested in October 2007 (reading, mathematics, and science at the AYP grades) will be administered as operational tests in spring 2008. (Please see the testing calendar at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/calendar/2007_2008_revised_07_26_07.pdf for further information.)

In spring 2008 TAKS–M retests will not be available for the Student Success Initiative (SSI) grades. Because TAKS–M standard setting will occur after the spring 2008 administration, results cannot be reported in time to inform districts whether accelerated instruction and retesting are needed. In addition, there will be no grade 11 retest opportunities in 2007–2008. Make-up tests for reading/ELA and mathematics will be offered using only the primary form at grades 3–8 and 10 for AYP purposes. The *Revised ARD Committee Decision-Making Manual for the Texas Assessment Program* will provide guidance on addressing these testing limitations for the 2007–2008 school year.

The necessity of phasing in TAKS–M assessments at specific grades and subjects is a function of the April 2007 availability of final federal regulations governing the requirements for this alternate assessment. Texas Education Agency staff have worked with the testing contractor since that time to ensure the availability of TAKS–M assessments for the 2007–2008 school year that meet the requirements of these new federal regulations.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills–Alternate (TAKS–Alt)

TAKS–Alternate (TAKS–Alt) is an assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards and is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the participation requirements. TAKS–Alt is administered in the same grades and subjects as TAKS. For additional information regarding the TAKS–Alt assessment program, please go to <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksalt/index.html>.

In fall 2007 the TAKS–Alt operational test window will open for students whose ARD committee has determined that the student meets the eligibility criteria. Please note that student data for those who participated in the TAKS–Alt field test in spring 2007 will still be in the system in the 2007–2008 school year. The TAKS–Alt assessment is designed to keep the student demographic information and assessment data in the system from year to year.

Please note the following important dates for the TAKS–Alt operational assessment:

- **August 20, 2007**—The TAKS–Alt online system became available to district/campus testing coordinators.
- **September 12, 2007**—Date by which districts could supply a data file of NEW students to the district and those that are now enrolled in grade 3.
- **October 1, 2007**—TAKS–Alt online system will be available to teachers.

The TAKS–Alt Training Modules 1–3 became available on August 13, 2007. Training Module 4 will be available on October 1, 2007. All individuals assessing students with TAKS–Alt are strongly encouraged to take the training modules for the first time or to retake them, as they have been updated since the 2007 field test.

Accommodations Manual

A newly developed accommodations manual will be posted to the Student Assessment Division website in September. When the manual is posted, districts will be alerted via broadcast e-mail and listserv announcements. Printed copies of the manual will be distributed approximately six weeks later.

The purpose of the *Accommodations Manual* is to provide guidance to ARD committees, Section 504 planning committees, general and special education teachers, administrators, and district- and campus-level assessment staff in selecting, administering, and evaluating the use of accommodations in instruction and assessment.

Revised Manual—ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program

The purpose of the revised ARD manual is to provide districts and ARD committees with information about the available assessments for students served by special education. The revised ARD manual will replace the current ARD manual. This document will be available on the TEA website by October 2007. When the manual is posted, districts will be alerted via broadcast e-mail and listserv announcements.

State Accountability

Beginning with the 2007–2008 school year, the TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated) results will be combined for use in the state accountability ratings for both standard and alternative education accountability (AEA) procedures. However, only the following TAKS (Accommodated) grades and subjects will be included in the 2008 state accountability ratings: science (grades 5, 8, 10, and 11 English, grade 5 Spanish); social studies (grades 8, 10, and 11); English language arts (grade 11); and mathematics (grade 11). The remaining TAKS (Accommodated) grades and subjects will not be included in the state accountability ratings until the 2009–2010 school year. The TAKS–M and TAKS–Alt test results will not be

used in the state accountability ratings in 2008. The earliest possible use for the TAKS–M and TAKS–Alt results in the state accountability ratings is the 2009–2010 school year.

The state accountability standards for 2008 are published in Chapter 16 of the *2007 Accountability Manual*.

Federal Accountability

The 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for all districts and campuses will be based on the reading/ELA and mathematics results for grades 3–8 and 10 from the TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, and TAKS–Alt assessments. As required by federal regulations, the proficient results from the TAKS–M assessment will be subject to a 2% cap, and the proficient results from the TAKS–Alt assessment will be subject to a 1% cap. Since standard setting for the TAKS–M assessment will not be completed until August 2008, the agency is currently in discussions with the United States Department of Education to determine whether the preliminary 2007–2008 AYP status and the corresponding 2008–2009 School Improvement Program (SIP) status can be released after the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year. More detailed information about the 2008–2009 AYP release schedule will be provided to you when available.

Attachment A provides an overview of the use of the TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, and TAKS–Alt results in the state and federal accountability systems in the 2007–2008 school year.

We hope this information will help facilitate planning for the 2007–2008 school year. As always, we appreciate your diligent efforts on behalf of Texas students and look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure that our statewide testing program encourages all students to grow, to learn, and to demonstrate their best performance.

If you have questions about assessments for students served by special education, please contact the Student Assessment Division. Questions about the state or federal accountability systems can be directed to the Division of Performance Reporting.

Assessment Contact Information

Texas Education Agency
Office of Assessment, Accountability, and Data Quality, Criss Cloudt, Associate Commissioner
Student Assessment Division, Gloria Zyskowski, Senior Director
Special Education Assessments, Cari Wieland, Director (512) 463-9536
alternate.assessments@tea.state.tx.us

Accountability Contact Information

Texas Education Agency
Office of Assessment, Accountability, and Data Quality, Criss Cloudt, Associate Commissioner
Division of Performance Reporting, Shannon Housson, Director
(512) 463-9704
performance.reporting@tea.state.tx.us

cc: Education Service Center (ESC) Executive Directors
ESC and District Testing Coordinators
ESC and District Special Education Coordinators

Use of TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS-M, and TAKS-Alt Results in State and Federal Accountability 2007-08 School Year		
	State	Federal
TAKS (Accommodated)		
Reading/ELA (grades 3 – 8 and 10) Reading (grades 3 – 6 Spanish) Mathematics (grades 3 – 8 and 10) Mathematics (grades 3 – 6 Spanish)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS/ Not Used in State Ratings	Use in AYP
Reading (grade 9) Mathematics (grade 9) Writing (grades 4 and 7) Writing (grade 4 Spanish)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS/ Not Used in State Ratings	Not used in AYP
ELA (grade 11) Mathematics (grade 11) Science (grades 5, 8, 10, and 11) Science (grade 5 Spanish) Social Studies (grades 8, 10, and 11)	Use in State Ratings	Not used in AYP
TAKS-Modified (TAKS-M)		
Reading/ELA (grades 3 – 8 and 10) Mathematics (grades 3 – 8 and 10)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS (TBD)/ Not Used in State Ratings	Use in AYP
Science (grades 5, 8, and 10)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS (TBD)/ Not Used in State Ratings	Not used in AYP
Field Tests: Reading (grade 9) ELA (grade 11) Mathematics (grades 9 and 11) Writing (grades 4 and 7) Science (grade 11) Social Studies (grades 8, 10, and 11)	Not Reported in AEIS/ Not Used in State Ratings	Not used in AYP
TAKS-Alternate (TAKS-Alt)		
Reading/ELA (grades 3 – 8 and 10) Mathematics (grades 3 – 8 and 10)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS/ Not Used in State Ratings	Use in AYP
Reading (grade 9) ELA (grade 11) Mathematics (grade 9 and 11) Writing (grades 4 and 7) Science (grades 5, 8, 10, and 11) Social Studies (grades 8, 10, and 11)	Report Only Indicator in AEIS/ Not Used in State Ratings	Not used in AYP