

ACTION REQUIRED
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September 21, 2004

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR/SUPERINTENDENT ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Social Studies Test Item

The Student Assessment Division and the Division of Curriculum are committed to developing test items that measure the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and are fair for all Texas students. All test items go through a rigorous review process that includes a field test of the items and two separate review sessions by professional educators from across the state who have subject-area and grade-level expertise and who are recommended by their districts. In addition, for tests at the high school level, the agency convenes a content validation review panel composed of recognized experts who review each test item critically as another quality control step. Despite these multiple reviews, it can be argued that an item on the April 2004 exit level social studies test has more than one possible correct answer.

As shown below, Item 55 on the test asked students to identify the social and political cause that led Susan B. Anthony to work for a constitutional amendment.

Susan B. Anthony worked for a constitutional amendment that would —

- A end slavery
- B give women the right to vote
- C protect the rights of African Americans
- D allow women to serve in the military

The item measures TEKS student expectation U.S. History 4.B under TAKS objective 3, which assesses students' knowledge of the effects of reform and third party movements and the impact of reform leaders, such as Susan B. Anthony, on American society. In this context, Susan B. Anthony is commonly studied as a main advocate for women's suffrage and women's rights. Further review of primary sources, however, shows that Anthony worked for a very brief time calling for signatures on petitions to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. Answer choice A of item 55 reads "end slavery," and choice C reads "protect the rights of African Americans." It has been determined that choices A and C could also be considered correct answers.

Because some students may have received instruction regarding Susan B. Anthony's work toward the Thirteenth Amendment, Item 55 of the Spring 2004 exit level test is being rescored to allow answer choices A and C to be counted as correct in addition to answer choice B. Statewide, 374 additional students (.2 percent of the 217,710 students tested) will now have met the passing standard on the Spring 2004 administration, and an additional 743 students (.3 percent of those tested) will now have met the commended performance standard.

Districts will be provided with revised Confidential Student Reports and Labels for each student with a change of status. Revised campus rosters and campus and district summary reports will also be provided for those districts with students affected by the rescoring. These revised reports and labels should replace those that you originally received in May. Additionally, updated optional reports will be available upon request if your district ordered them. You may request them by contacting the Austin Operations Center at 1-800-252-9186. We apologize for the inconvenience this causes campus and district personnel.

Because of the upcoming October retest, districts will also be faxed the confidential student reports of those students who have now passed the social studies test and do not need to retest at the October administration. Please notify these students of their rescored results.

In addition, the Student Assessment Division has communicated this information to the Division of Performance Reporting, which does not anticipate that the effect of this rescoring will have an impact on the accountability rating for any campus or district.

The agency would like to thank Deer Park ISD and its social studies teachers and specialists for bringing this matter to our attention.

Please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536 if you would like additional information or have questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa Chandler  
Director, Student Assessment

cc: District Test Coordinator  
Education Service Center Test Coordinator