

Dated Material Action Required
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March 12, 2004

TO THE PRINCIPAL ADDRESSED:

The Texas Education Agency is currently developing a middle school science test as part of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) program. This assessment will fulfill two legislative mandates—the federal No Child Left Behind legislation and House Bill 411—which require the state to add a science assessment at the middle school level to the science assessments already in place at the elementary and high school levels. You may remember that in October 2000 your district participated in a survey that provided feedback on the objectives proposed to be included in the new TAKS program for all subjects and grade levels tested. Your input, as well as input from other educators across the state, was vital to the development of a high-quality assessment program. Therefore, we are once again asking for your help.

Enclosed with this letter are the TAKS Middle School Science Grade 8 objectives as well as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) student expectations proposed to be included on the test. We are asking each campus to conduct one or more meetings with teachers, administrators, parents, and other interested community members to review and discuss these objectives and TEKS student expectations and then to complete the Survey Response Form by April 16, 2004. This review and discussion will serve as the basis for a campus recommendation on the proposed TAKS Middle School Science Grade 8 test. All middle school science teachers as well as bilingual/ESL and special education teachers who work with students in grades 6, 7, or 8 should be involved in these meetings. Members of the campus-level planning committee should also be included, as required under Texas Education Code §11.251.

The Survey Response Form should reflect the consensus of all educators and other stakeholders who attend the meeting(s) about the TAKS Middle School Grade 8 Science test. This form requires that your campus vote on two issues: first, whether students will have received enough instruction in the TEKS student expectations under each objective to be successful on that objective by April of their eighth grade year; and, second, whether there are additional TEKS student expectations that should be added to the objectives to provide a stronger transition, or bridge, between elementary and high school science.

Your campus will receive five copies of the TAKS objectives and proposed TEKS student expectations and one copy of the Survey Response Form. If you need more than five copies, you may make additional copies. After your meeting(s), someone from your campus will need to fax the Survey Response Form to 512-989-5043 or mail it to Austin Operations Center, 2201 Donley Dr., Suite 100, Austin, Texas 78758.

As principal you are being asked to do the following:

- Decide how to best organize your campus meeting(s).
- Determine who should facilitate the meeting(s). Remember that the facilitator is responsible for reflecting the consensus of the meeting participants and ensuring that the Survey Response Form reflects this consensus
- Make sure that the Survey Response Form is completed by the April 16th deadline.

Education Service Center directors will also receive a notification letter to distribute to their science specialist(s) so that they may assist the teachers in your middle school science department.

Feedback from Texas educators is crucial to the development of a reliable, accurate, and fair middle school science test that is closely linked to the curriculum, reflects sound classroom instruction, and is vertically aligned with the TAKS science tests already in place at grades 5, 10, and exit level. We very much appreciate your important contribution to this worthwhile goal.

If you have any questions, please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,



Lisa Chandler  
Director, Student Assessment

Enclosures: Five copies of the TAKS Middle School Science Grade 8 objectives and proposed TEKS student expectations  
One copy of the Survey Response Form