

ACTION REQUIRED

August 4, 2003

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR/SUPERINTENDENT ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Released Test Items

During the past month the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has been made aware of concerns regarding the content of a few items on released 2003 TAKS science and mathematics tests. The Student Assessment Division and the Division of Curriculum and Professional Development are committed to developing test items that measure the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and are fair for all Texas students. It is important to remember that 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 who have subject-area and grade-level expertise and who are recommended by their district. Despite these multiple reviews, the following test item was found to have more than one possible correct answer. Because of this, the agency has revised score reports and is sending these to you under separate cover.

Grade 10 Mathematics Released Test: Item 8

Item 8 asked students to find the perimeter to the nearest centimeter of the regular octagon given. This item was intended to measure the Objective 10 mathematics TEKS 8.14 (B), which required students to combine problem-solving strategies. For example, in item 8, students had to be able to use a picture, the Pythagorean Theorem, and the geometric concept of perimeter to solve the problem. The triangle included in the octagon shows the dimensions of the hypotenuse and one leg, as 4.6 cm and 4 cm, respectively. The intent of the item was to use 4.6 cm and 4 cm in the Pythagorean Theorem to find the length of the other leg of the triangle and then use the length of that leg to determine the perimeter of the octagon. If the item is solved in this manner, the perimeter is 36 cm (answer choice G). However, if a student used one of the 45-degree angles at the center of the octagon and trigonometry to solve the problem, he or she may have chosen answer choice H (27 cm) or determined that there was no correct answer.

Action Taken:

Because there was more than one possible answer to this problem, we have determined that students did not have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of this mathematical skill. Therefore, TEA has decided that all students should be credited with a correct response to item 8 of the Grade 10 mathematics test. When this credit is given, an additional 4,640 Grade 10 students (1.8% of the 246,816 tested statewide) will meet the standard, and an additional 936 students (.3% of the total tested) will achieve commended performance.

TEA has requested that Pearson Educational Measurement provide districts with revised Confidential Student Reports and Labels for each Grade 10 student who originally gave a response other than G or who did not respond to item 8 on the Grade 10 mathematics test. Revised campus rosters, campus and district summary reports, and optional reports will also be provided. These revised reports and labels should replace those that you originally received in May. We regret that item 8 was not a valid question, and we apologize for the inconvenience this will cause campus and district personnel.

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Concerns were also raised regarding several science items. However, upon review, these items were determined to be correct and no action was taken by the agency. For additional details regarding these science items, please visit our web site at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment> and look in the *What's New* box.

We appreciate the time that was taken by the public to review the released TAKS tests. Some important issues have been raised and we intend to explore revising the test-development process to add an additional level of review. We will continue to rely on the input of professional educators in developing future items for all content areas.

Please share this information with your science and mathematics coordinators and teachers. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,

Ann Smisko, Associate Commissioner
Curriculum, Assessment, and Technology