

STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS (STAAR™)

English I, II, and III Writing

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Behind the STAAR Writing Design

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- **Provides a broader picture of students as writers**
Can students write essays for two different purposes equally well? If not, why not?
- **Provides a more accurate assessment of the degree to which students are internalizing skills inherent in the writing process**
As students become more experienced writers, are they better able to apply writing skills in the context of actual writing tasks?

STAAR Writing Performance Labels Based on the Rubric

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- **Score Point 1—VERY LIMITED**
- **Score Point 2—BASIC**
- **Score Point 3—SATISFACTORY**
- **Score Point 4—ACCOMPLISHED**

The goal: moving *all* students from the lower half of the score-scale range to the upper half of the range

Scoring Model for STAAR

Rubrics → Summed Scores → Weighting

- **Rubrics (used in conjunction with student responses representing each score point) are the basis for assigning scores.**
- **Two readers score each student response. If there is perfect or adjacent agreement, the two readers' scores are summed.**
- **Summed scores range from 2–8
(0 = nonscorable)**

Scoring Model for STAAR

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SCORE 1	SCORE 2	SUMMED SCORE	CSR RATING
0	0	0	Nonscorable Performance
1	1	2	Very Limited Performance
1	2	3	Between Very Limited and Basic Performance
2	2	4	Basic Performance
2	3	5	Between Basic and Satisfactory Performance
3	3	6	Satisfactory Performance
3	4	7	Between Satisfactory and Accomplished Performance
4	4	8	Accomplished Performance

Scoring Model for STAAR Writing

Weighting

- **Grade 4: compositions not weighted**
- **Grade 7: compositions weighted by 2**
- **English I: compositions weighted by 2**
- **English II: compositions weighted by 2**
- **English III: compositions weighted by 2**

Scoring Model for STAAR Writing

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Grade/ Course	MC Points	Comp Points (2 comps)	Points Overall Test	MC Percent	Comp Percent
4	28	16 (8 + 8)	44	64%	36%
7	40	32 (8 + 8) x 2	72	56%	44%
Eng I	30	32 (8 + 8) x 2	62	48%	52%
Eng II	30	32 (8 + 8) x 2	62	48%	52%
Eng III	30	32 (8 + 8) x 2	62	48%	52%

Scoring Model for STAAR Reading

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Students answer two short answer questions.

Reading Performance Labels

- **Score Point 0—Insufficient Response**
- **Score Point 1—Partially Sufficient Response**
- **Score Point 2—Sufficient Response**
- **Score Point 3—Exemplary Response**

Perfect agreement is required between two readers.

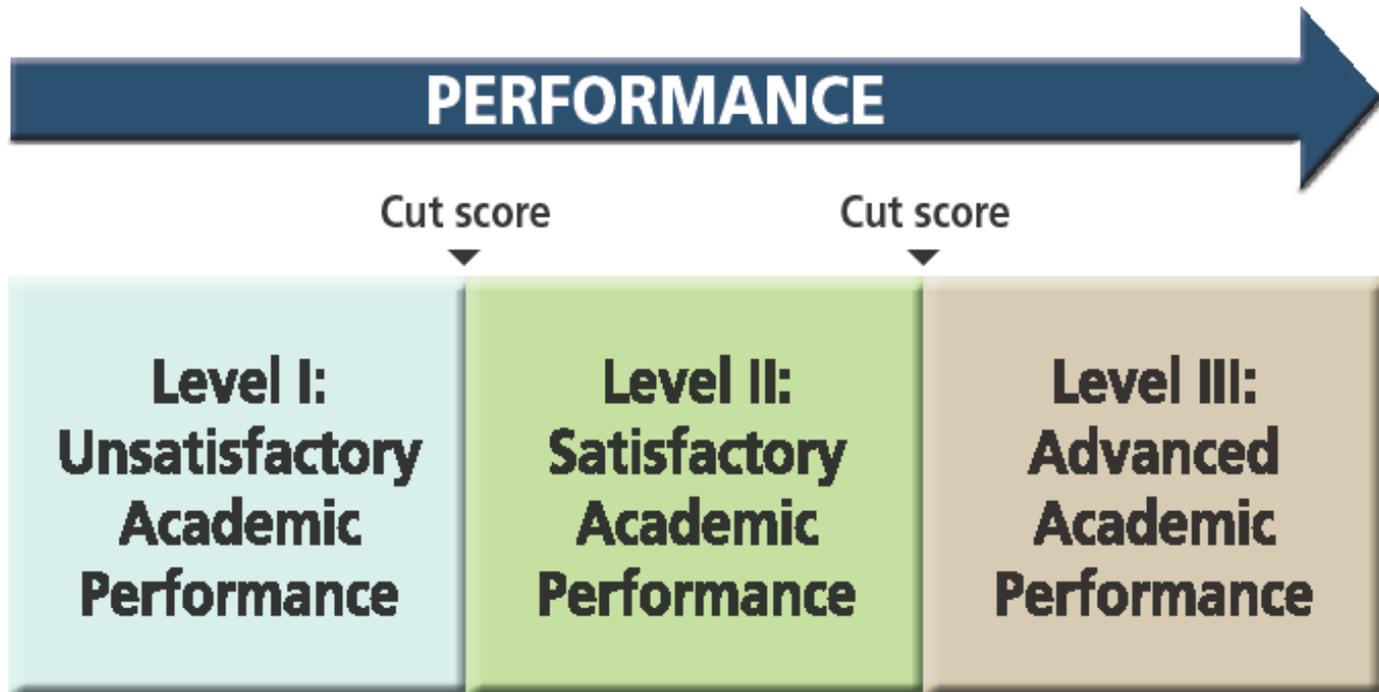
Scoring Model for STAAR Reading

- Each short answer question is weighted by 3, for a possible total of 9 points.

MC Points	Short Answer Points (2 questions)	Points Overall Test	MC Percent	SA Percent
38	18 (3x3) x 2	56	68%	32%

Performance Labels

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What the Performance Levels Tell Us About Students

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- **The degree to which students are prepared for the next grade (well prepared vs. sufficiently prepared vs. unprepared)**
- **The degree to which students can think critically**
- **The degree to which students can apply the assessed knowledge and skills**
- **The likelihood of success in the next grade (high vs. reasonable vs. unlikely to succeed)**
- **The type of academic intervention students need (little or no vs. short-term, targeted vs. significant, ongoing)**

What Happened in English I Writing

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Spring 2012 Results (334,947 students)

- Level I: 45%
- Level II: 52%
- Level III: 3%

Summer 2012 Results (79,002 students)

- Level I: 76%
- Level II: 24%
- Level III: 0%

What Happened in English I Reading

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Spring 2012 Results (334,825 students)

- Level I: 32%
- Level II: 60%
- Level III: 8%

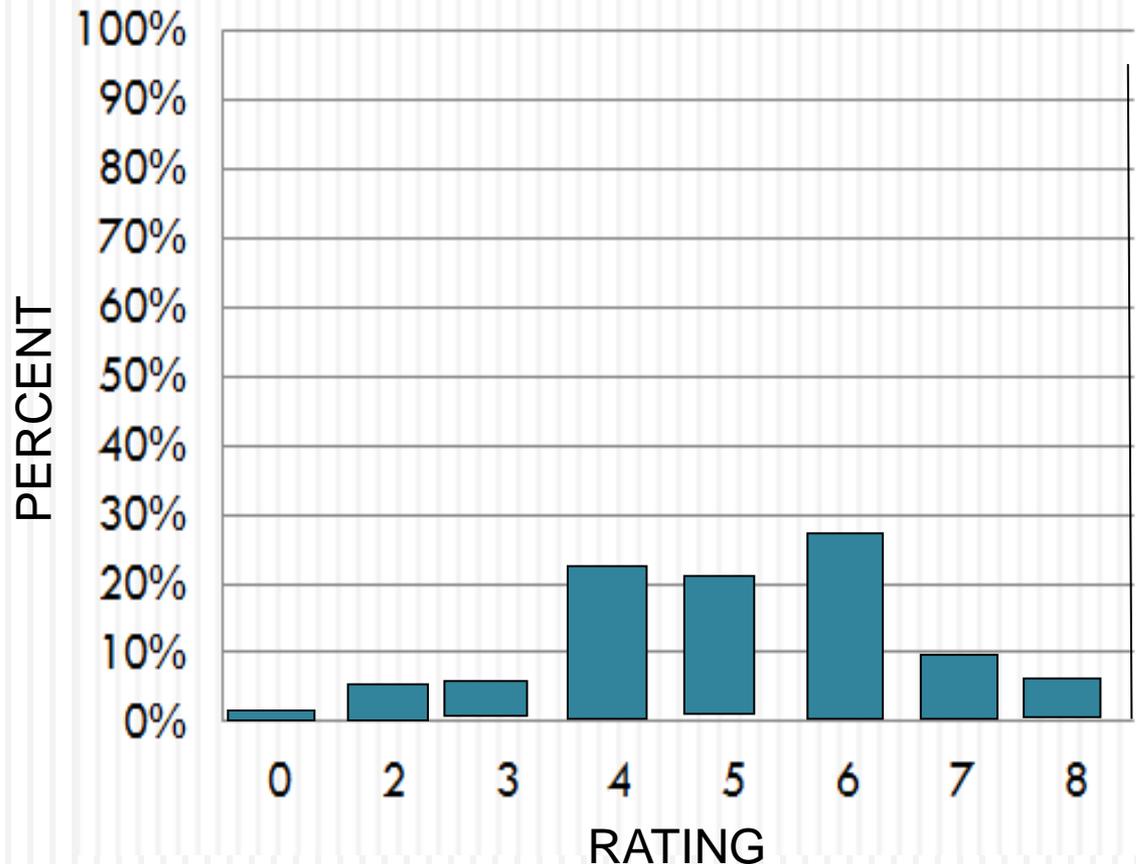
Summer 2012 Results (53,765 students)

- Level I: 62%
- Level II: 38%
- Level III: 0%

How Students Did Statewide English I Literary—Spring 2012

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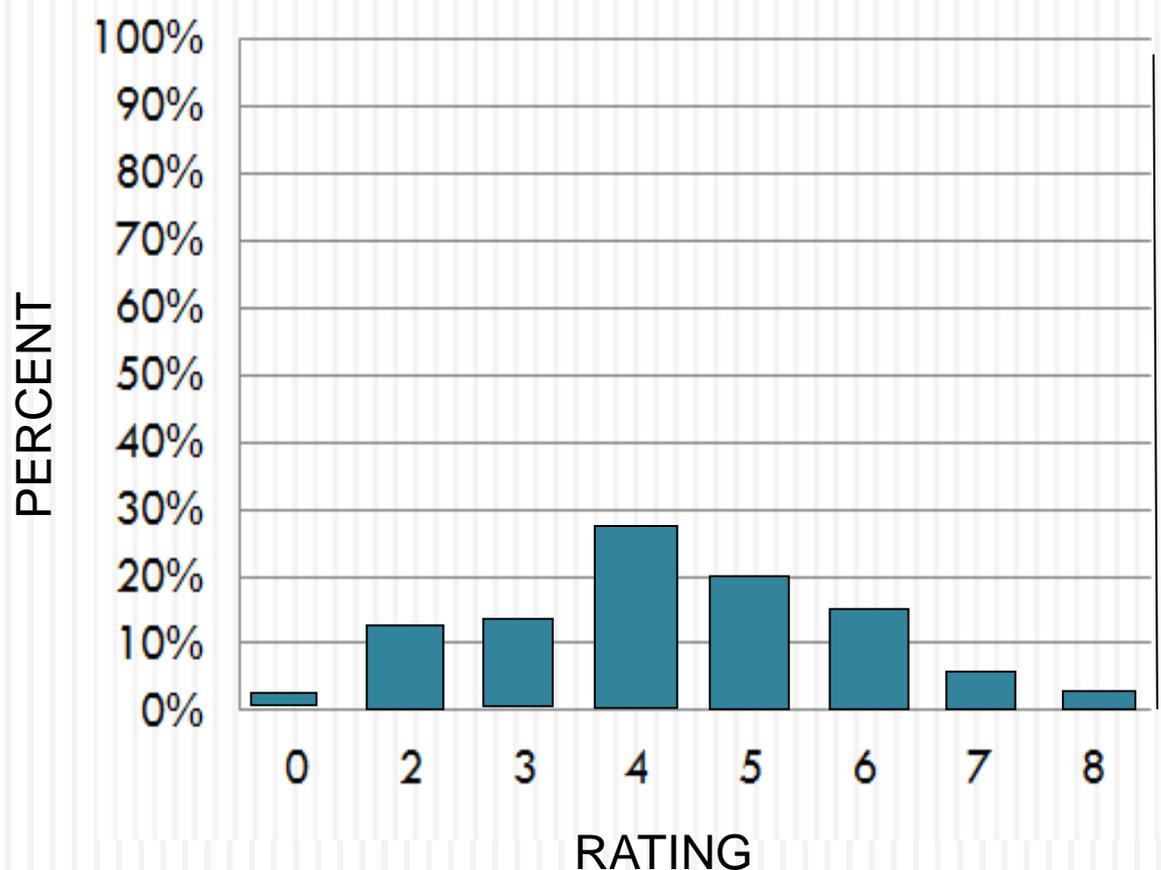
Rating	#	%
0		1
2		5
3		6
4		23
5		22
6		28
7		10
8		6
Total	334927	100



How Students Did Statewide English I Expository—Spring 2012

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Rating	#	%
0		2
2		11
3		13
4		28
5		20
6		17
7		6
8		3
Total	334927	100



Preparing Students for STAAR: What Teachers Can Do

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- **Understand the rubric for each type of writing assessed so that you know the real differences between the levels of writing performance.**
- **Focus on how the different parts of the rubric fit together to help you make a holistic judgment about a student's piece of writing.**
- **Teach students the rubric using language they can understand—it's important that they learn to make accurate judgments about their own writing (throughout the writing process) based on the expectations of STAAR.**

Preparing Students for STAAR: What Teachers Can Do

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- **Help students understand that good writing starts with good thinking.**
- **Emphasize that the quality of writing is more important than the quantity of writing.**
- **Balance writing instruction to ensure that students are writing pieces of varying lengths and for different purposes.**
- **Teach students how to grapple with problems or roadblocks during the writing process. (This will help them on STAAR, when they have to write completely independently.)**

Preparing Students for STAAR: What Teachers Can Do

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- **Emphasize that good writers are good readers. Help students see the connections between reading and writing. Teaching students how an author crafts a piece they're reading can help them learn how to craft their own writing to make it more effective.**
- **Focus vocabulary and grammar instruction on application, not on memorization.**
- **Help students learn that revision and editing are not the same thing. Provide students with multiple opportunities to learn/practice how to revise and edit their own writing.**

Preparing Students for STAAR: What Teachers Can Do

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- **Remember that limited or formulaic strategies that short-cut the thinking/writing process do not prepare students for STAAR (or academic success).**
- **Create a writing classroom that allows students the time and space to think their way through a topic, to understand what it means to write for an outside audience, and to practice the skills they're learning in a "safe" environment.**
- **See the big picture: teaching students how to craft an effective piece of writing helps to ensure high academic achievement in the classroom as well as high test performance.**

Preparing Students for STAAR: What Teachers Can Do

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- Remember that a coherent and scaffolded writing program is the best preparation for STAAR. That means
 - developing a shared vision of what students need from writing classrooms each year to grow as writers,
 - teaching writing *every* year (whether or not it's assessed that year), and
 - using the concepts and skills students have already acquired in elementary and middle school as the building blocks for introducing new concepts and skills.

Preparing for STAAR: Literary Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students what literary writing is on STAAR: a story based on real, fictional, or even fantastical events, people, or ideas. They have only one page to tell their story, so their story line has to be manageable from a space perspective.**
- **Emphasize that the story should not include details or events that do not further the reader's understanding. Extraneous details and events always weaken the story line.**

Preparing for STAAR: Literary Writing Reminders

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- **Emphasize that no matter what type of story they're writing, their characters have to be believable. This means that characters act consistently in relation to the traits the student gives them. Characters don't necessarily have to be like people the reader has actually encountered, but the reader has to understand why characters feel, think, or act as they do.**

Preparing for STAAR: Literary Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students to use literary strategies and devices judiciously. Two examples:**
 - **Description can be effective, but too much description may cause disruptions in the story line.**
 - **Dialogue can be effective, especially in developing the characters or conflict, but dialogue (because of its “back and forth” nature) takes up space, and too much may preclude the student from developing the story in 26 lines.**

Preparing for STAAR: Expository Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students to thread all the way through the Read, Think, Write. They have to know what the real topic/issue is.**
- **Teach students that an expository piece must have a thesis statement. Its function is to provide the reader with an explicit statement (in a sentence or two) about the goal of the paper (in effect, the lens through which the student is viewing the topic). Having a strong thesis (early in the paper) helps the student write a focused and coherent essay.**

Preparing for STAAR: Expository Writing Reminders

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- **Emphasize that sometimes, in the act of writing an essay, the writer's thesis can change, or evolve. Students should always reread to ensure that their thesis is consistent throughout the paper (and that all their development supports it). If it isn't, they have to revise the essay to make the thesis consistent. Evolving thesis statements are a major cause of weak expository writing on STAAR.**
- **Help students understand what writing for an outside audience requires, but remember that in expository writing, they are NOT trying to convince the reader to think a certain way or to accept a single viewpoint as valid.**

Preparing for STAAR: Expository Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students that they can write in 1st or 3rd person as long as they're clearly explaining what they think about something.**
- **Teach students that there are different ways to organize their ideas in expository writing and then give them multiple opportunities to practice. Some common ways to develop a thesis include anecdotes, examples, compare/contrast, and cause/effect.**

Preparing for STAAR: Expository Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students that the words they choose have to “fit” the expository purpose. Students’ language use can be somewhat informal, but it is important that their word choice sets an appropriate tone. Help students understand that the most effective word choice always makes the writing clearer, more precise, and more interesting.**
- **Remember that most students have internalized story structure, but nonfiction (informational) writing has to be taught.**

Preparing for STAAR: Persuasive Writing Reminders

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- **Emphasize the importance of knowing what the central issue is. STAAR persuasive prompts focus on issues that are relevant to teenagers but that don't require them to bring particular background knowledge or facts to the table in order to write a good essay.**
- **Remember that it is not so much the breadth of the argument as its depth that makes it convincing. Students have to think about the limitations of space when they're planning how to approach the issue.**

Preparing for STAAR: Persuasive Writing Reminders

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- **Emphasize that in a persuasive essay the writer's purpose is to convince the reader to accept the writer's viewpoint or to take a particular action. That's why the essay must be centered around a clear position, which represents the writer's viewpoint on the issue and forms the basis of the argument.**
- **Teach students that they can write in 1st or 3rd person as long as they establish and sustain a persuasive tone.**

Preparing for STAAR: Persuasive Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students to support their position with specific examples—from their own lives, from their experience in and knowledge of the world and modern life, and from what they've read, seen, and discovered through books, movies, television, news, and history. They can use ethos, logos, pathos, or a combination—but they have to rely on what they really know and understand.**

That means NO false evidence!

Preparing for STAAR: Persuasive Writing Reminders

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- **Help students understand how to develop their argument to make it convincing and forceful. Ideas should be ordered to maximize their persuasiveness—for example, building the argument so that the strongest evidence is at the end.**

Preparing for STAAR: Analytical Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students that the analytical writing task on STAAR is an interpretive essay about one aspect of a literary or informational text. The analytical essay requires students to demonstrate the skills required in expository and persuasive writing as well as the skills required on short answer reading questions.**
- **Emphasize that the writer's thesis statement must be a reasonable (though contestable) assertion about one aspect of a text that can be supported with textual evidence.**

Preparing for STAAR: Analytical Writing Reminders

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- **Teach students the differences between**
 - **analysis and summary**
 - **general text references and specific text evidence**
- **Teach student to integrate their analysis and their text evidence so that their essay is coherent. (This will also help their short answer reading responses!)**
- **Emphasize that analytical essays are scored on the quality of the interpretation, the strength of the text evidence, and the overall effectiveness of the essay.**

The Bottom Line...

Our primary purpose is to help students become confident, accomplished writers.

The primary purpose of STAAR is to provide a snapshot of students' progress as writers at different points in time throughout their K–12 education.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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