**SUBJECT: Important Changes to and Upcoming Activities for the Texas Assessment Program in the 2013–2014 School Year**

August 30, 2013

**To the ESC and District Testing Coordinators Addressed:**

Please DO NOT reply to this email.

The purpose of this email is to provide information about important changes to and upcoming activities for the Texas assessment program in the 2013–2014 school year.

**STAAR END-OF-COURSE TRANSITION FOR ENGLISH I AND ENGLISH II**

In the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 school years, students were required to take separate State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) English I and English II reading and writing assessments. To provide additional flexibility for these students during the transition period from separate assessments to combined reading and writing assessments, TEA is proposing to use the minimum—and cumulative—score concepts to determine whether students taking these separate assessments have met their English I and English II graduation requirements. These concepts would be applied within each course, not across courses, and would require students who took separate reading and writing assessments to meet three criteria:

* pass one assessment (either reading or writing);
* meet at least the minimum score on the other; and
* achieve a combined scale score of 3750 (the phase-in 1 standard), which represents the sum of the scale scores needed to reach Level II for reading (1875) and Level II for writing (1875).

In order to assist districts in identifying students that have met their English I and/or English II assessment graduation requirements, a file that lists the students who have met the above three criteria (and did not previously pass both reading and writing) will be provided to each district. A report identifying the scores for reading and writing as well as the combined score will also be provided for each student identified. This information will be sent in early October for students who have met the criteria as a result of their test performance. Administrations from spring 2012 through July 2013 will be used to make this determination. In addition, information about students who have met the criteria as a result of testing during December 2013 will be sent to districts after that administration.

**STAAR ALTERNATE**

House Bill 5, passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature in May 2013, requires a redesign of the STAAR Alternate program. As work on the redesign proceeds, it will be critical to gather information in the early stages of development to provide the most appropriate and accurate assessment for these students.

A pilot test of redesigned STAAR Alternate tasks/items is scheduled to occur during the 2013–2014 school year. Participation in this pilot test is currently planned to be voluntary; however, mandatory district participation may be required if the student sample group from volunteering districts is not large enough to yield reliable results.

**STAAR STANDARDIZED ORAL ADMINISTRATION**

Standardized Oral Administration (SOA) for the STAAR program will be offered statewide as an online option for oral administration in several grades and subjects in the 2013–2014 school year. Districts will be given the opportunity to test students using SOA in the following grades and subjects:

* grade 4 reading and mathematics
* grade 7 reading and mathematics
* grade 8 science and social studies

Specific information about SOA will be posted to the Student Assessment Division’s website in fall 2013. This information will include the student tutorial for SOA as well as the STAAR test forms that districts used in the April 2013 SOA pilot for grade 4 reading and mathematics and grade 8 science and social studies and that were released in August 2013.

**STAAR GRADE 4 WRITING PROMPT STUDY**

As a result of input from committees of Texas educators, TEA does not include a field-test prompt on the operational grade 4 English- and Spanish-version writing assessments. Instead, a prompt study is being conducted every three years to collect the necessary student performance data on grade 4 prompts that have been developed for STAAR. The first prompt study for both English and Spanish is scheduled for March 3, 2014.

Grade 4 students at selected campuses will participate in the English version of the STAAR writing prompt study on March 3, 2014. Districts selected to participate in the writing prompt study will be notified in a subsequent communication. For those districts selected, campus assignments will be posted to the Texas Assessment Management System, delivered through PearsonAccess.

A grade 4 writing prompt study for the Spanish version of STAAR will also be administered on March 3, 2014. Because of the small number of testers statewide, all grade 4 students who will take the STAAR Spanish grade 4 writing assessment in spring 2014 will be required to participate in this study. Materials for the STAAR Spanish writing prompt study will be sent to districts based on the 2014 participation information provided to Pearson in fall 2013.

**STAAR L AND THE STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVE**

In the 2012–2013 school year, students in grades 5 and 8 who took the April 2013 STAAR L mathematics assessment and did not achieve Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance were not subject to Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion requirements and, therefore, were not required to retest during the May or June administrations. Beginning in the 2013–2014 school year, 5th and 8th grade students assessed with STAAR L in mathematics will be held to the same SSI requirements for both mathematics and reading, including retesting, as students taking the general STAAR assessments.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND THE 60-DAY RULE**

Recent legislation was passed that requires an English language learner (ELL) to be enrolled for 60 consecutive days in a school year for that school year to count as one year in the calculation of years in U.S. schools. Therefore, ELL students enrolling in U.S. schools within the last 60 school days of a school year will be considered to be in their first year in U.S. schools for the following school year.

**PRIMARY ADMINISTRATIONS OF TAKS**

In previous school years, a primary administration of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exit level was available for students who were taking the test for the first time and were classified as 11th graders. This administration was given in March (English language arts) and April (mathematics, social studies, and science). Primary test administrations will no longer be provided for TAKS. Instead, beginning this school year, any student for whom TAKS is a graduation requirement may test during any of the TAKS test administrations, regardless of the student's grade classification. TAKS exit level tests are administered in October, March, April, and July. Please note that the 2013–2014 school year will be the last year for paper administrations of TAKS. Beginning in October 2014, TAKS will become an online test only.

If you have any questions or need additional information about the 2013–2014 assessment activities, please call TEA’s Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

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