

STAAR to replace TAKS for Class of 2015 and beyond New state assessment goes into effect this school year

In 2011-12, the state is launching STAAR, the new student assessment replacing TAKS. This will affect the graduation plan for all BISD students, starting with the Class of 2015.

This year's ninth-graders will be the first class to graduate under the new state system.

The following FAQ gives an overview of the state's new assessment plan, which was recently released to school districts. Much of the language is taken from a document highlighting the House Bill 3 Transition Plan. As we learn more specifics, we will share that information with you.

STAAR FAQ

1. What is STAAR?

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is the new state assessment for students in grades 3-12. It is replacing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

2. How is the STAAR different from TAKS?

STAAR will be more rigorous as it is aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards as well as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. The majority of the new STAAR assessments will test content students studied that year, as opposed to testing content studied over multiple years. Doing so will strengthen the alignment between what is taught and what is tested for a given course of study.

In grades 9-12, students will take 12 STAAR End of Course (EOC) tests throughout their years in high school. In order to graduate, students will be required to have satisfactory performance on all 12 STAAR EOC tests and have a minimum cumulative total in the four core areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Social Studies, Math and Science. In addition to meeting cumulative score requirement in each of four core content areas, students on the Recommended High School Program have to perform satisfactorily on English III and Algebra II assessments, students on the Distinguished Achievement Program have to perform satisfactorily on the college-readiness component of both the Algebra II assessment and English III assessment.

The high school STAAR EOC tests will focus solely on the curriculum covered in that course. In contrast, the TAKS measured overall knowledge of the general subject, along with some specific questions from course curriculum.

3. When will students start taking the STAAR?

The new test will be introduced in the 2011-12 school year for students graduating in 2015 and beyond. Students in grades 3 through 8 will take STAAR tests beginning in the Spring of 2012. Ninth grade students will take STAAR End of Course Tests during 2011-2012. Tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders will continue to take TAKS and TAKS Exit Tests which they need to pass to graduate from high school.

4. What are the STAAR tests for grades 3-8?

- Math and Reading (grades 3-8)
- Writing (grades 4 and 7)
- Science (grades 5 and 8)
- Social Studies (grade 8)

5. What are the STAAR EOC tests for grade 9?

- Algebra I
- Geometry
- Algebra II
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- English I
- English II
- English III
- World Geography
- World History
- U.S. History

6. What are the performance levels on STAAR?

The state has established three performance levels:

- a. minimum
- b. satisfactory
- c. college readiness

The state has not yet announced the cut scores that correspond with the three performance levels.

7. When will the performance cut scores be announced?

STAAR EOC performance levels will be set in February 2012, and reports will be available in June 2012 after the first May 2012 administration.

Performance levels for grades 3-8 will be set in fall 2012 after the first spring administration of STAAR.

8. What is required in grades 3-8 in order to advance to the next grade?

Since the state has not established passing standards, promotion requirements will not include the use of STAAR results for the 2011-12 school year. Other academic information (student grades and teacher recommendations) will be used for promotion decisions.

After 2011-12, performance on the STAAR will be used for promotion decisions and as was true with TAKS, students in grades 5 and 8 must perform satisfactorily on reading and math in order to be promoted.

9. Do the requirements differ according to the graduation plan?

Yes. Different levels of performance on English II and Algebra II EOC tests will be required for each of the three graduation plans (minimum, recommended and distinguished). The state has not released the specific guidelines.

10. When will the state's requirements regarding graduation go into effect?

The Class of 2015 will be the first class to undergo EOC testing, and therefore, the first class to be required to fulfill the state's new graduation requirements. Students graduating before 2015 will continue to take TAKS.

11. Will students be allowed to retake STAAR tests?

Yes. Students at the high school level will be able to retake any of the STAAR assessments. Students in grades 5 and 8 will be able to re-test in reading and math in order to meet their promotion criteria beginning in 2013.

12. How many more testing days will the STAAR assessment require?

STAAR significantly increases the number of testing days at the high school level. Currently, there are 25 TAKS testing days, including exit-level retesting. STAAR EOC will require up to 45 testing days when it is fully implemented.

13. How will the state modify STAAR for students with special needs?

Testing accommodations will be made as needed according to each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

As with current modified assessments, the STAAR Modified assessment will cover the same content area for grades 3-8 and for nine of the 12 STAAR EOC assessments, but will be modified in format and test design. Modified assessments are not being developed for Algebra II, chemistry or physics, as those courses are not required on the Minimum High School Program, and all students taking STAAR Modified assessments are on the MHSP.

The STAAR Alternate assessments will be very similar to the current TAKS-Alt assessments. Students will continue to perform tasks linked to the appropriate grade-level TEKS. At the high school level, assessments will move from grade-level assessments to course-based assessments.

16. How will the state modify STAAR for English Languages Learners (ELL)?

ELL students will continue to take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). There are plans to adjust items on TELPAS to align more closely with the rigor of the STAAR assessments. Plans are also being made for the development of linguistically accommodated versions of STAAR.

17. Will STAAR replace AP exams?

No. Students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses will be required to take both STAAR EOC and AP exams. AP exams are national exams tied to Advanced Placement courses. STAAR is tied to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and under new state law, passage is required for graduation.

If you have questions, please contact the following district and campus contacts:

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