

## **State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

#### **1. What is STAAR?**

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, is the state testing program that was implemented in the 2011—2012 school year. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas educators, developed the STAAR program in response to requirements set forth by the 80th and 81st Texas legislatures. STAAR is an assessment program designed to measure the extent to which students have learned and are able to apply the knowledge and skills defined in the state-mandated curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Every STAAR question is directly aligned to the TEKS currently implemented for the grade/subject or course being assessed. The STAAR program includes STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L (a linguistically accommodated version), and STAAR A (an accommodated version).

#### **2. In what grades, subjects, and courses are students assessed under STAAR?**

At grades 3–8, students are tested in mathematics and reading. Students are also tested in writing at grades 4 and 7, science at grades 5 and 8, and social studies at grade 8. Students are tested at the high school level with STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments for Algebra I, English I, English II, biology, and U.S. history.

#### **3. What are the general testing requirements for students in grades 3-8?**

In most cases, students in grades 3–8 must be tested at their enrolled grade level as required in TEC §39.023(a). Exceptions to this requirement may exist for students receiving instruction above grade level.

#### **4. What are the general testing requirements for students enrolled in high school courses?**

Regardless of enrolled grade level, students should take STAAR EOC assessments (Algebra I, English I, English II, biology, and U.S. history) as they are completing the corresponding courses since these assessments are required for high school graduation based on TEC §39.025.

#### **5. Are districts required to provide accelerated instruction to students who do not pass the STAAR assessments?**

Yes. TEC §28.0211(a-1) requires school districts to provide accelerated instruction in the applicable subject area each time a student fails to perform satisfactorily on an assessment administered in grades 3–8 (i.e., who does not achieve Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance). Similarly, TEC §39.025(b-1) requires school

districts to provide accelerated instruction to each student who fails to perform satisfactorily on a STAAR EOC assessment. In Kerrville ISD this can occur through tutorials or summer school.

## **6. What are the Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion requirements?**

Under the SSI promotion requirements, students are required to pass (meet or exceed Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance) the STAAR grade 5 mathematics and reading tests to be promoted to sixth grade. Additionally, students are required to pass (meet or exceed Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance) the STAAR grade 8 mathematics and reading tests to be promoted to ninth grade. More information about these requirements can be found on the SSI webpage at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/ssi/>. SSI promotion requirements apply to students taking STAAR grade 5 or 8 mathematics and/or reading assessments, including STAAR Spanish, STAAR L, and STAAR A if:

- the students are enrolled in grade 5 or 8; and
- are receiving on-grade-level instruction in mathematics and/or reading.

## **7. How many testing opportunities are there for SSI grade levels?**

There are three testing opportunities for students in grades 5 and 8 to pass STAAR mathematics and reading assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade. The first SSI administration is typically in early April. This administration is earlier than other STAAR mathematics and reading administrations to allow sufficient time in the school year for targeted accelerated instruction and another testing opportunity. The second testing opportunity occurs in mid-May. The third testing opportunity for SSI is in late June. The specific testing dates each year can be found on the student assessment testing calendar at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/calendars/>.

## **8. What STAAR tests are required for high school graduation?**

In general, students must pass (meet or exceed Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance) the five STAAR EOC assessments—Algebra I, English I, English II, biology, and U.S. history—in order to earn a high school diploma from a Texas public or charter school as required in TEC §39.025.

## **9. Which students have to meet the STAAR graduation requirements?**

Students who were first enrolled in grade 9 or below in the 2011—2012 school year, the first year of the STAAR program, have to meet the STAAR graduation requirements to earn a high school diploma from a Texas public or charter school. Students who repeated grade 9 or were enrolled in grade 10 or above in the 2011—2012 school year have to meet the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) graduation requirements. Districts that determined a student who was reported in PEIMS in grade 9 during the 2011—2012 school year is a TAKS

graduate because of prior grade 9 attendance outside the Texas public school system must be able to provide documentation, upon request from TEA, to substantiate the district's designation of the student as a TAKS graduate.

#### **10. When are STAAR tests administered?**

A full calendar of testing dates is available [HERE](#).

#### **11. How many days per school year are students taking STAAR assessments?**

In general, students spend the following number of days testing during each school year: two days in grades 3 and 6; three days in grade 5; and four days in grades 4, 7, and 8. Due to Student Success Initiative promotion requirements, some students in grades 5 and 8 may need additional testing days for retests.

The number of testing days for high school students is dependent on when students take specific high school courses and whether students need to retest. A typical high school student would have five days of testing throughout his or her high school years—three in grade 9, one in grade 10, and one in grade 11.

#### **12. Is there a time limit for STAAR assessments?**

Yes. All STAAR assessments have a four-hour time limit with the exception of English I and English II. These two assessments have a five-hour time limit. The time limits were established as the maximum amount of time allowed to complete the assessment, although most students should be able to complete the assessment in less time. Accommodations for extra time or an extra day are available for students who meet eligibility criteria for their use.

Once a student has completed the test, he or she may be dismissed from the testing room and resume normal school activities. More information can be found in the STAAR Time Limits Policies and Procedures document at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/manuals/dccm/>.

#### **13. Are STAAR assessments mandatory?**

Standardized testing is required in Texas public schools by the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or "STAAR," program set out in Texas Education Code chapter 39 and 19 Texas Administrative Code chapter 101.

#### **14. Is there a right to "opt out" of standardized tests in Texas public schools?**

No. State law makes it clear that students may not opt out of standardized or any other tests. Texas Education Code section 26.010 states:

EXEMPTION FROM INSTRUCTION. (a) A parent is entitled to remove the parent's child temporarily from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs if the parent presents or delivers to the teacher of the parent's child a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the

class or other school activity. **A parent is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test** or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester.

## **STAAR Performance and Reporting**

### **1. How is student performance described on STAAR?**

There are two cut scores on STAAR assessments, which separate student performance into three categories. For the general STAAR program, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L, and STAAR A, the labels for the performance categories are:

- Level III: Advanced Academic Performance
- Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance
- Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

### **2. What is the passing standard for STAAR?**

The passing standard for STAAR assessments is Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance. A student who scores within Level II or III has passed the STAAR test, but a student who scores within Level I has not passed. More specific information about the passing standards is available on the STAAR Performance Standards webpage at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/performance-standards/>.

### **3. How are student scores reported to students and their parents?**

A student data portal is available to students and their parents through the Texas Assessment Management System. A student is able to see his or her test results from previous school years. Each student is provided a unique access code to log in to the data portal. The access code is found at the bottom of the student's Confidential Student Report. The student data portal is available at <http://www.texasassessment.com/>, and there is no charge for students or parents to use it.

### **4. What reporting data are available to teachers, campuses and districts?**

A teacher data portal is available through the Texas Assessment Management System. The teacher data portal provides results at the classroom level for teachers. Districts are able to upload information to create class groups and the assessment results for those students. This can be done at any time of the year so that teachers can see the past results of their current students. In addition, TEA receives classroom linking information from districts in the summer of each year. This information—the list of teachers, the classes they taught, and the students who were in those classes—is then provided to the assessment contractor, allowing class groups to be created to show the previous year's assessment results.

Districts also have access to an analytic reporting tool in the Assessment

Management System. Analytic reporting allows users to analyze results in order to compare current and historical data. Users can perform comparisons of campuses to campuses, campuses to districts, districts to districts, and districts to the state. Campus and district personnel are also able to organize the data to examine different demographic and program information groups, enabling access to cross-section analyses of the assessment data. The teacher data portal is available at <http://www.TexasAssessment.com>, and there is no charge for district personnel to use it.

## 5. How does Kerrville ISD utilize STAAR assessment results?

Kerrville ISD utilizes STAAR assessment results in a variety of ways.

- **Identification of specific knowledge and skills mastered** – assessment data is used to identify specific learning expectations of core subject areas and gives educators uniform information about the quality of resources.
- **Curriculum evaluation** – assessment data is used to analyze KISD curriculum and ensure that it is addressing TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) at a level of depth and complexity necessary for college and career readiness.
- **Curriculum development** – assessment data is utilized each summer as master teachers revise lessons and re-write curriculum based on new test data. Teacher teams evaluate the content area's scope and sequence to ensure that appropriate time is spent addressing each skill.
- **Individual student progress measure** – assessment data includes a measure of individual student progress from year to year. This data is critical for ensuring each child grows from one year to the next and has the foundation to be successful at the next grade level.
- **Interventions** – assessment data is used to create early intervention and build either a pre-teach or reteach model that targets specific areas for growth.
- **Evaluation of programs** – assessment data is used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and resources.

For further information, please call Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Heather Engstrom, at 830-257-2200 ext. 1020

[http://www.esc12.net/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_2954298/File/HB%205/staar-student\\_br.pdf](http://www.esc12.net/UserFiles/Servers/Server_2954298/File/HB%205/staar-student_br.pdf)