

Texas Formative Assessment Resource

Educator Guide



2021-2022

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) Educator Guide provides an overview, instructions, and support for educators creating and administering assessments using TFAR. This guide supplements the [Test Information Distribution Engine \(TIDE\) User Guide](#) and [Test Delivery System \(TDS\) User Guide](#). After reviewing these guides, you should become familiar with managing user accounts, student registration and test attributes, and assessments using TFAR.

This guide is divided into five sections:

[ABOUT THE TEXAS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT RESOURCE \(TFAR\)](#)

[PURPOSE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS IN TFAR](#)

[AUTHORING, ADMINISTRATION, AND REPORTING](#)

[TFAR TESTING REQUIREMENTS](#)

[APPENDICES](#)

The intended audience for the About the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) and Purpose of Formative Assessments in TFAR sections of this guide is educators. The intended audience for the Authoring, Administration, and Reporting; TFAR Testing Requirements; and Appendices sections are testing coordinators and technology staff. The five sections are linked and meant to be cross-referenced.

Frequently asked questions can be found in the [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.

ABOUT THE TEXAS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT RESOURCE (TFAR)

Overview

The Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) is a free platform that allows teachers to create, administer, and share formative assessments. When educators create assessments in TFAR, they can choose items from a bank of TEA-provided, TEKS-aligned questions or they can author questions themselves. These assessments can be administered to students through an online portal that includes accommodations or exported as PDFs to be printed and administered on paper. All tests administered online will generate data accessible to the educator through a reporting system. Teachers also have the ability to share the assessments they create in TFAR with other teachers in their district.

TFAR is meant to supplement and support existing district resources and formative assessment practices. Quizzes built using this tool should be combined with a broader set of classroom formative practices as part of a coherent instructional framework.

If you are a teacher who would like to use TFAR, contact your campus or district testing coordinator.

In the 2021–2022 school year, the following grades and subjects will have questions available in TFAR. They are:

- grades 3–8 mathematics
- grades 3–5 Spanish mathematics
- grades 3–8 reading language arts
- grades 3–5 Spanish reading language arts
- grades 5 and 8 science
- grade 5 Spanish science
- Grade 8 social studies
- Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History
- More items will be added for many grades and subjects throughout the school year, including new item type samplers.

In September 2021, the available questions will be multiple-choice and griddable STAAR-released questions and STAAR-like questions that had not been released previously. In addition, a teacher or testing coordinator can create assessment questions and quizzes in

the TFAR platform and administer them to students. To accommodate the current use of campus common assessments and professional learning communities (PLCs), teachers and campus officials will be able to share items and assessments among campuses within their own district.

Most STAAR accommodations and support tools will be available. Educators may determine which accessibility tools are most appropriate for their students. The accessibility tools must be selected in the TFAR platform prior to publishing a test. Teachers may want to refer to the [Accessibility Features](#) that are available for STAAR. Most of the standard accessibility tools (e.g., highlighter, color contrast, and magnifier) that students are used to seeing in an online testing environment will be available in the TFAR platform. Not all accommodations will be available for teacher-created questions.

Student assessment data are reported in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS). The [User Role Permissions](#) is available on the Resources page of [TexasAssessment.gov](https://www.texasassessment.gov). Teachers can access data for only students assigned to their roster.

Registration and Setup

A district that chooses to participate in TFAR must register by providing a data file that connects students directly to teachers. A campus or teacher that would like to register and implement this resource should contact their district testing coordinator. Registration opened on July 31, 2021.

Tasks:

1. The district or campus coordinator registers students who will participate in TFAR in TIDE. Refer to the [TIDE User Guide](#) for information on how to register students and submit test attribute information in TIDE.
2. The teacher creates items or a test in the TFAR platform. Refer to the Authoring modules in the [LMS](#) for information on accessing and navigating the Authoring system, creating questions, and building formative tests.
3. Once students are registered in TIDE and the teacher has created items or a test in TFAR, the teacher must log in to the [Test Administrator Interface](#) and create a test session. Refer to the [Test Delivery System \(TDS\) User Guide](#) for instructions on creating test sessions.
4. The teacher should provide the session ID to the students. The student needs the session ID to access and take the test.

Roles and Permissions

To administer formative assessments or view results, educators will need to have an active TIDE account. Refer to the [User Roles Permissions](#) for a list of the system user roles and permissions.

Training

Trainings for all Texas assessments will be posted and accessible through the Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS can be accessed by going to the *Educators* or *Testing Personnel* pages of [TexasAssessment.gov](https://www.texasassessment.gov). A recorded training specific to formative assessments will be available on October 1, 2021, on the LMS. In addition, technology- and system-specific recorded trainings will be available.

District and campus personnel administering the formative assessments should ensure that they have read through this guide. Additionally, personnel can review the resources available online and those listed in the following table to familiarize themselves with current testing guidelines and procedures.

Title	Location	Audience
Technology Webinar	LMS	Testing Coordinators
Authoring System Training	LMS	Classroom Teachers
Introduction to Centralized Reporting System	LMS	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers
TFAR Educator Module	LMS	Classroom Teachers
Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Test Delivery System (TDS) User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Quick Guide for Setting Up Your Online Testing Technology	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Centralized Reporting System User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers

PURPOSE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS IN TFAR

Overview

TFAR is an optional, online tool that consists of a TEKS-aligned item bank and test-builder. TFAR works best when used within a coherent instructional framework to support formative assessment practices.

Districts and educators can use all, part, or none of the functionalities within TFAR.

Authoring – Educators can create questions aligned to the TEKS, create quizzes, and assign quizzes to students to take online.

Item banks – Educators can select questions from the TEA-provided item bank, build quizzes, and download those quizzes to use in their classroom outside of the TFAR platform.

Test Builder – Educators can use the questions created in authoring or from any item bank to construct tests and quizzes.

Share – Educators can share questions and tests they've created among campuses within their own district.

Data – Student results from tests created in TFAR and administered online through the Student Interface will be added to the Centralized Reporting System (CRS).

TFAR is one of many optional assessment resources that will be available to support districts and educators in the 2021–2022 school year. Unlike STAAR Interim Assessments, which measure a broader span of student expectations, TFAR should be used to measure student performance on specific student expectations to inform a teacher's instructional choices, such as making adjustments to unit and lesson plans. Quizzes built by this tool should be part of a broader set of classroom formative practices (e.g., checks for understanding, presentations, discussions).

The distinctions between the formative, diagnostic, interim, and summative assessments are as follows:

- **Formative assessments** measure student performance on specific student expectations throughout the year to inform a teacher's instructional choices,

enable timely adjustments to unit plans, and guide changes to lesson plans (Examples: class quizzes, exit tickets).

- **Diagnostic assessments** measure student knowledge and skills on a variety of student expectations before a new instructional cycle or year to inform instructional plans and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students (Examples: Beginning-of-Year assessment, Early Reading Assessment).
- **Interim assessments** measure student understanding of a broader span of student expectations at checkpoints during the year to monitor progress, predict summative performance, and identify students for intervention (Examples: benchmarks, STAAR Interim Assessments).
- **Summative assessments** measure student mastery of a broader range of student expectations at the end of an instructional unit or course. They enable comparison of academic growth and performance to determine program effectiveness (Examples: student portfolios, STAAR summative assessment).

This resource can be used to create and deliver assessments that are aligned and connected with existing instructional plans, lessons, and curriculum. TFAR can be used to help create formative class assessments as part of a broader student progress monitoring system presented here:

Assessment Type	Sample Frequency	Sample Make-up
✓ Mini quiz	Every 2–3 days	About 4–5 questions covering 1–2 content standards
✓ Weekly quiz	Once a week	About 7–10 questions covering 3–4 content standards
✓ Monthly assessments	Every 3–4 weeks	About 15 questions covering about 10 content standards
✓ Warm-up ✓ Exit ticket	While warm-ups and exit tickets may occur daily, it is important to note that class period time constraints often only allow for a single question tied to a single standard. A teacher should review the cumulative reporting of a standard to understand a student’s progress towards mastery.	

Best Practices

The following tips are provided on how to implement formative assessments in TFAR successfully:

- **Read this Guide**—Ensure that teachers, administrators, and anyone involved in formative assessments have read through the resources available on the [TFAR webpage](#) on TEA’s website, [TexasAssessment.gov](https://www.texasassessment.gov), and the [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of this document.
- **Complete the Trainings**—Classroom teachers should complete the educator module and TFAR training to understand what formative assessments are and how the data are helpful in their classroom. School administrators should complete the trainings to understand how to register students and set up teachers for success.
- **Understand the Purpose**—Clarify that TFAR allows educators to create formative assessments by writing or selecting questions from an item bank. Educators will be able to analyze the results of these formative assessments to help inform instructional choices, such as making lesson plan adjustments or providing specific interventions for students at the level of individual standards.
- **Register Users and Students**—Teachers will need a TIDE account to administer formative assessments. Students will need to be registered in TIDE to take a formative assessment. Testing coordinators should read more about registration in the [TIDE User Guide](#).
- **Schedule Tests**—Be strategic when scheduling an administration. Teachers can administer formative tests every 2–3 days, weekly, or monthly, but teachers should consider the sampling frequency and test make-up provided on the previous page.
- **Confirm Setup**—Install the Cambium Secure Browser application and provide teachers and students time to practice interacting with the Test Delivery System (TDS).
- **Analyze the Results**—Ensure that teachers have access to the CRS to view their students’ results. For a teacher to view their students’ performance data, the students must be included in a roster associated with that teacher. Instructions for creating rosters are available in the [CRS User Guide](#).

AUTHORING, ADMINISTRATION, AND REPORTING

How to Author Questions and Assessments in TFAR

Educators will use the [Authoring](#) system to create questions that they can align to standards and add to tests. Refer to the Authoring modules in the [LMS](#) for information on accessing and navigating the Authoring system, creating questions, and building formative tests.

How to Administer Assessments to Students

Students must be registered in TIDE to be eligible to take a formative test. Refer to the [TIDE User Guide](#) for information on how to register a student for testing.

Once students are registered in TIDE and the teacher has created items or a test in TFAR, the teacher must create a test session in the [Test Administrator Interface](#). Refer to the [Test Delivery System \(TDS\) User Guide](#) for instructions on creating test sessions.

The teacher should provide the session ID or test link to the students so they can join the session when it starts. Students using the secure browser application enter their first name, TSDS ID, and session ID when signing into the [Student Interface](#) to take the test.

How to Access Data in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS)

Student assessment data are reported in the CRS. Refer to the [CRS User Guide](#) for information on how to access the data.

TFAR TESTING REQUIREMENTS

System Requirements

Test administrators must have a supported browser installed on their computer to use CAI systems. For a detailed list of system requirements, including supported operating systems and web browsers, refer to the [Secure Browsers](#) section in the *Testing Personnel* page on [TexasAssessment.gov](#) and the [Minimum System Requirements](#) and [Quick Guide for Setting Up Your Online Testing Technology](#) on the *Resources* page. For file uploads and extracts, test administrators will need to be familiar with a spreadsheet application.

Technical Tasks

The following is a list of tasks that the campus technology coordinator should complete:

- 1. Set Up the Administrator Device**—An administrator must have an approved version of a web browser installed on any device used for testing. Refer to the Secure Browsers section on TexasAssessment.gov.
- 2. Install the CAI Secure Browser**—Students will need to install the Secure Browser on their devices to participate in testing. The application is available for download from the Secure Browsers section on TexasAssessment.gov. Refer to [Appendix B: TFAR In-Browser Testing](#) for in-browser testing information.
- 3. Prepare Network for Online Testing**—Several network configuration tasks must be completed before testing, such as allow-listing, configuring filter systems, and enabling domain name resolution. Technology coordinators should read the *Quick Guide for Setting Up Your Online Testing Technology* for directions.
- 4. Run the Network Diagnostic Tool**—Ensure proper configuration by running CAI's [diagnostic tool](#) on each device students will use for testing.

Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) Platform and Tasks

TIDE is the user and student management system for all Texas assessments. Users must be added to TIDE before they can access any system. Students must be added to TIDE before they can test in TDS. Rosters may be added in TIDE so teachers can access student scores in the CRS for students associated with their roster. Teachers may create subrosters within CRS to further group students rostered to them. During testing, authorized TIDE users can print test tickets and monitor test progress. Users must familiarize themselves with the [TIDE User Guide](#) and the tasks they will need to complete.

TIDE Tasks

The following is a list of four essential TIDE tasks:

1. **Register Users**—Educators authorized to administer the formative assessments or review results will need a TIDE account. Instructions on how to upload users can be found in the [TIDE User Guide](#).
2. **Register Students**—Students need to be uploaded and registered into TIDE to participate in a formative assessment. No additional registration steps are necessary. Students will be able to log in to a TFAR test with the correct session ID. More information on creating session IDs can be found in the [Test Delivery System \(TDS\) User Guide](#).
3. **Create and Modify Rosters**—Rosters represent classes or other groups of students. After testing, TIDE sends rosters to the CRS so that the system can display scores at the classroom, campus, and district levels. For instructions on how to create and modify rosters, refer to the How District-level Users Manage Rosters section in the [TIDE User Guide](#).
4. **Print Test Tickets**—Students will need a test ticket to enter the test session.

Test Delivery System (TDS) Platform and Tasks

TDS will deliver Texas online assessments. TDS consists of two components: the Test Administrator Interface and the Student Interface. The Test Administrator Interface is used to schedule or start student testing, and the Student Interface (accessed via the Secure Browser or the in-browser option) allows students to take the formative assessments.

NOTE: TEA is providing an in-browser option for accessing formative assessments that does not require Secure Browser installation. Students taking formative assessments at home should use the in-browser option.

Test administrators will need to familiarize themselves with the [Test Delivery System \(TDS\) User Guide](#) and the tasks they will need to complete during testing.

TDS Tasks

The following list describes four key tasks in TDS:

1. **Schedule or Start a Test Session**—Test administrators will need to schedule a test session or plan to start a session on the day of testing using the Test Administrator Interface.
2. **Launch the CAI Secure Browser**—Ensure that the application is launched on each student's device.

- 3. Assist Students with Logging In**—Students must have the test session ID and their test tickets to log in to the test.
- 4. End Testing**—Students must ensure that they click the *Submit Test* button for their results to appear in the CRS.

Reporting

Reports for the formative assessments will be provided through the CRS. Access to student data reports is controlled by a user's role in TIDE. Teachers must also have a roster association with students to view student results. User accounts and role assignments are determined by a district coordinator. Refer to the [User Role Permissions](#) for a complete list of system roles and corresponding permissions.

Available Reports

Results for the formative assessments are available in the CRS. Immediately after tests are submitted, the CRS will display district-, campus-, roster-, student-, and question-level reports and customization. Users can filter results by specific student demographics. This feature displays the student's score, the student's responses, and the student expectation for each test question. The student-level report also includes each test question.

Examples of student reports can be found in the [CRS User Guide](#). Results are also available via district downloads that can be imported into local student information systems.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR)?

TFAR is an optional, online tool that consists of a TEKS-aligned item bank, test-builder, and data reports. TFAR works best when used within a coherent instructional framework to support formative assessment practices.

Districts and educators can use all, part, or none of the functionalities within TFAR.

Authoring – Educators can create questions aligned to the TEKS, create quizzes, and assign quizzes to students to take online.

Item banks – Educators can select questions from the TEA-provided item bank, build quizzes, and download those quizzes to use in their classroom outside of the TFAR platform.

Test Builder – Educators can use the questions created in authoring or from any item bank to construct tests and quizzes.

Share – Educators can share questions and test they've created among campuses within their own district.

Data – Student results from tests created in TFAR and administered online through the Student Interface will be added to the Centralized Reporting System (CRS).

2. What are the differences between diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments?

Formative assessments measure student performance on specific student expectations throughout the year to inform a teacher's instructional choices, enable timely adjustments to unit plans, and guide changes to lesson plans (Examples: class quizzes, exit tickets).

Diagnostic assessments measure student knowledge and skills on any variety of student expectations before a new instructional cycle or year to inform instructional plans and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students (Examples: Beginning-of-Year assessment, Early Reading Assessment).

Interim assessments measure student understanding of a broader span of student expectations at checkpoints during the year to monitor progress, predict summative

performance, and identify students for intervention (Examples: benchmarks, STAAR Interim Assessments).

Summative assessments measure student mastery of a broader range of student expectations at the end of an instructional unit or course. They enable comparison of academic growth and performance to determine program effectiveness (Examples: student portfolios, STAAR summative assessment).

3. Does my district need permission to participate in formative assessments?

No. Permission or confirmation from TEA is not required. TFAR is free and open for any public Texas school district or open-enrollment charter school to use at their discretion.

4. Who should I contact at my district or campus to learn about TFAR?

Contact your testing coordinator. A district or campus testing coordinator manages student registration. If a district chooses, it can grant teachers access to the TFAR authoring system and student data in the CRS. Be sure to view the training videos and [CAI resources](#).

5. How are the formative assessments in TFAR administered at school?

The formative assessments are delivered online through CAI systems. To use TFAR, districts or their schools should

1. check that their device and online network systems are adequate for testing;
2. install and configure the secure browser application (if preferred) for testing devices;
3. review testing resources;
4. register students for formative tests;
5. print or distribute test tickets, if preferred;
6. provide the session ID to students; and
7. prepare students for testing.

For detailed information, refer to the [TFAR Testing Requirements](#) section of this guide.

6. What grades and subjects are tested?

In the 2021–2022 school year, the following grades and subjects will have questions available in TFAR. They are:

- grades 3–8 mathematics
- grades 3–5 Spanish mathematics
- grades 3–8 reading language arts
- grades 3–5 Spanish reading language arts

- grades 5 and 8 science
- grade 5 Spanish science
- Grade 8 social studies
- Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History
- More items will be added for many grades and subjects throughout the school year, including new item type samplers.

7. What are the registration and testing timelines for using TFAR?

Registration opened on July 31, 2021. Educators can use TFAR to create, share, and administer formative assessments throughout the year, beginning September 2021.

8. What types of questions are in TFAR?

TFAR currently contains STAAR-released questions, non-released STAAR-like questions, and some new question types. Over the course of the school year, more questions, including new question types, will be added to the TFAR item bank.

9. What online supports are available?

The formative assessments in TFAR include text-to-speech.

Formative assessments in TFAR are available in Spanish for mathematics, reading language arts, and science.

For teacher-authored questions, a Desmos calculator, periodic table, thesaurus, dictionary, and text-to-speech can be added.

American Sign Language (ASL) videos, refreshable braille, and speech-to-text are not available for formative assessments in TFAR.

10. As a testing coordinator, how do I register my students?

Students can be registered in TIDE through a student data file upload or manual additions of individual students. Specific instructions for registering students can be found in the [TIDE User Guide](#).

Districts should verify that all test attributes and demographic values have been updated in the system for all tests prior to administering the first online assessment. Districts needing to make updates to a student record after an online test has started may do so manually in TIDE.

11. Are there trainings available for TFAR?

Trainings for all Texas assessments will be posted and accessible through the [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#). The LMS can be accessed by going to the Educators or Testing *Personnel* pages of [TexasAssessment.gov](https://www.texasassessment.gov). A recorded training specific to formative assessments will be available on September 17, 2021, on the new LMS. In addition, technology- and system-specific recorded trainings will be available.

Title	Location	Audience
Technology Webinar	LMS	Testing Coordinators
Authoring System Training	LMS	Classroom Teachers
Introduction to Centralized Reporting System	LMS	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers
TFAR Educator Module	LMS	Classroom Teachers
Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Test Delivery System (TDS) User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Quick Guide for Setting Up Your Online Testing Technology	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators
Centralized Reporting System User Guide	TexasAssessment.gov	Testing Coordinators and Classroom Teachers

Continued professional education (CPE) credit is awarded for the completion of the TFAR Educator Module and Authoring System Training.

Lastly, districts, campuses, and teachers using TFAR should ensure that they have read through this guide and the applicable user guides and Authoring videos.

12. What reports of student performance are available?

The CRS will display district-, campus-, roster-, student-, and question-level reports. Users can filter results by specific student demographics. This feature displays the student's score, the student's responses, and the student expectation for each test question.

Results are also available via district downloads that can be imported into local student information systems.

13. Who has access to the student data reports?

Educators who have been granted access to CRS by their district has access to TFAR student data for the students assigned to them. Additionally, district and campus leaders can access and track TFAR student data.

Access to student data reports is controlled by a user's role in TIDE. User accounts and role assignments are established by a district coordinator or administrator. Reference the [User Role Permissions](#) for a full list of system roles and corresponding permissions. Parents do not have access to the reports online but may speak with their student's school for a report.

Appendix B: TFAR In-Browser Testing

TEA has developed guidance around formative testing at home. This appendix provides local education agencies (LEAs) information needed to address at-home testing for the formative assessments in TFAR.

General Information for Testing Coordinators and Educators for At-Home Testing

TFAR is an optional tool to supplement and support existing district resources and formative assessment practices. Formative assessment occurs in many ways throughout a lesson and the school year. While TFAR is not designed to replace formative assessment practices, it is a resource that educators can use to supplement existing classroom formative practices, inform teaching decisions, and improve instructional supports. The formative assessments in TFAR are not part of the accountability system and are available at no cost to districts and open-enrollment charter schools. Because they measure student performance and inform a teacher's instructional choices, schools must provide clear guidelines to students and parents about expectations for completing a formative assessment in TFAR at home (e.g., parents should not assist students with answering test questions, students should not receive accommodations that are not regularly provided, students should not access external information to support responses) to ensure the most accurate student results based on their current academic proficiency.

Online Secure Browser

Users can download the secure browser application from the Secure Browsers page on [TexasAssessment.gov](https://www.texasassessment.gov).

In-Browser at Home Testing

Students can access the tests via the in-browser option by entering the following URL into the browser URL search bar: <https://tx.cambiumtds.com/student>.

Test Registration

Students testing at home will need to be registered in TIDE in the same manner as they would if they were testing on campus. Refer to the [Test Information Distribution Engine \(TIDE\) Platform and Tasks](#) section for more registration information.

Supported Browsers

Students using personal computers running Windows, macOS, Ubuntu, Fedora, or Chrome OS should download and install either the Chrome or Firefox web browsers. Technology staff may need to work with students and their families to install one of these web browsers. iPads running iPadOS 14.2 or older are not supported for taking a test from home.

Refer to the [Supported Browsers](#) webpage for a complete list of supported browsers.

NOTE: Browsers should be set to full screen while taking the test for optimal rendering of test content. Additionally, Internet Explorer (IE) is not supported.



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