

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) A New Assessment Model

The state assessments will continue to be based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the standards designed to prepare students to succeed in college and careers and to compete globally. However, consistent with a growing national consensus regarding the need to provide a more clearly articulated K–16 education program that focuses on fewer skills and addresses those skills in a deeper manner, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is implementing a new assessment model for the STAAR tests for elementary, middle, and high school.

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. While STAAR mathematics, reading, writing, and social studies assessments in grades 3–8 will continue to address only those TEKS taught in the given subject and grade, the content of other STAAR assessments will change in the following ways.

- Although the new science assessments for grades 5 and 8 will continue to address TEKS from multiple grade levels, these tests will focus on the science TEKS for those respective grades. The science assessments at these two grades will emphasize the 5th and 8th grade curriculum standards that best prepare students for the next grade or course; in addition, these assessments will include curriculum standards from two lower grades (i.e., grades 3 and 4 or grades 6 and 7) that support students' success on future science assessments. In contrast, the current Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessments uniformly address TEKS from multiple grade levels without any specific emphasis.
- The new end-of-course assessments will address only the TEKS for a given course, as opposed to the high school level TAKS assessments, which address TEKS from multiple courses.

By focusing on the TEKS that are most critical to assess, STAAR will better measure the academic performance of students as they progress from elementary to middle to high school. Based on educator committee recommendations, TEA has identified for each grade or course a set of knowledge and skills drawn from the TEKS eligible to be assessed and emphasized this set of knowledge and skills, called readiness standards, on the assessments. The remaining knowledge and skills are considered supporting standards and will be assessed, though not emphasized.

Readiness standards have the following characteristics.

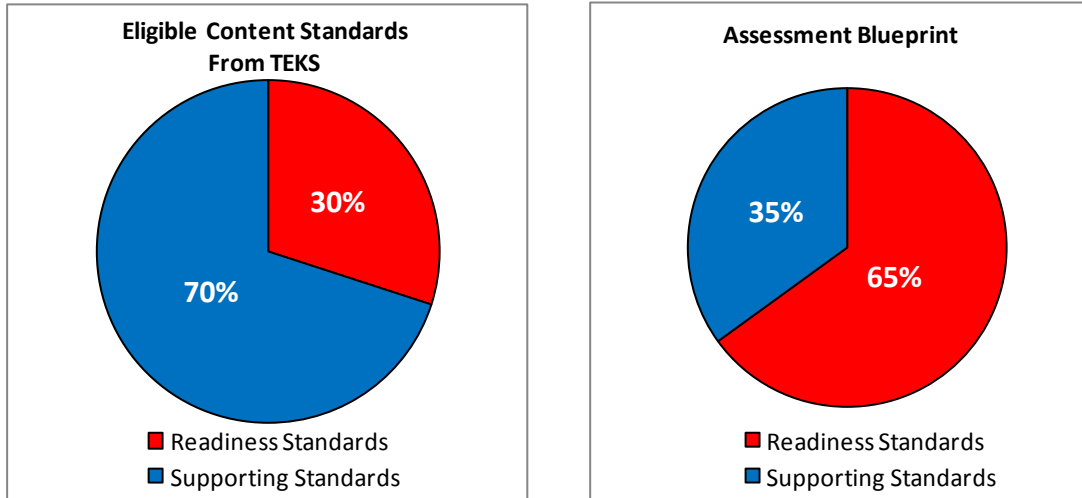
- They are essential for success in the current grade or course.
- They are important for preparedness for the next grade or course.
- They support college and career readiness.
- They necessitate in-depth instruction.
- They address broad and deep ideas.

Supporting standards have the following characteristics.

- Although introduced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a subsequent year.
- Although reinforced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a previous year.

- They play a role in preparing students for the next grade or course but not a central role.
- They address more narrowly defined ideas.

Example



TEA is also implementing a number of changes that should serve to test knowledge and skills in a deeper way.

- Tests will contain a greater number of items that have a higher cognitive complexity level.
- Items will be developed to more closely match the cognitive complexity level evident in the TEKS.
- In reading, greater emphasis will be given to critical analysis than to literal understanding.
- In writing, students will be required to write two essays rather than one.
- In social studies, science, and mathematics, process skills will be assessed in context, not in isolation, which will allow for a more integrated and authentic assessment of these content areas.
- In science and mathematics, the number of open-ended (griddable) items will increase to allow students more opportunity to derive an answer independently.