

**Aug. 2, 2013**  
**TEA provides school districts and charters  
more information regarding HB 5 transition**

AUSTIN - Commissioner of Education Michael Williams today announced that he informed school districts and charters that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will be proposing a number of significant policy changes concerning the state's assessment program for the 2013-2014 school year.

"As we begin the new school year, I know students, parents, teachers and administrators are seeking answers to many questions regarding the transition to House Bill 5," said Commissioner Williams. "TEA staff is working diligently to share information regarding this transition as quickly as possible so everyone at the local level can make the best decisions possible."

The following policy changes - which will be proposed and adopted under commissioner of education rules - are designed to assist districts in implementing new requirements under House Bill 5 (HB 5), as well as follow established federal requirements, related to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®):

**STAAR English I and English II Assessments:** Redesign Reading and Writing are currently assessed separately in the STAAR English I and English II end-of-course (EOC) tests. To comply with the provisions of HB 5, TEA is in the process of redesigning the English I and II reading and writing assessments. Beginning in spring 2014, STAAR English I and II will measure reading and writing achievement through a single assessment given in one day.

Students will receive a single score. "Many students in the graduating classes of 2015 and 2016 have already taken and passed separate English I and English II reading and writing assessments," said Commissioner Williams. "I want a fair and common sense way to equitably transition those students who, at this point, have passed one assessment but not both in reading and writing." To provide additional flexibility for students in the 2015 and 2016 graduating classes during the transition period from separate assessments to combined reading and writing assessments for English I and English II, TEA is proposing to maintain the minimum - and cumulative - score to determine whether students taking these assessments have met their English I and English II graduation requirements. This would be applied within each course (not across courses) and 2 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).

These three criteria would apply only to the current STAAR English I and II reading and writing assessments administered prior to the roll-out of the redesigned (combined) English I and II assessments in spring 2014. Under this proposal, students who have not met this requirement by that time would need to take and pass the redesigned assessment(s) to meet their English EOC testing requirement for graduation.

**Benchmark Testing HB 5** prohibits districts from

administering more than two benchmark assessments for any corresponding grade/subject or course STAAR assessment. To ensure that students are truly prepared for STAAR, schools must develop strong, coherent academic programs and provide students with high-quality instruction.

**Performance Standards for 2013-2014 School Year:** TEA is proposing to maintain the phase-in 1 performance standards for the STAAR program for the 2013-2014 school year. The two primary reasons for this proposal:

1. For grades 3-8, schools did not receive performance-level data on students until January 2013, which limited the time available to adjust instruction prior to the spring 2013 test administrations.
2. For all grades and courses, schools did not have access either to a released test form (as they had in the first year of TAKS) or to the associated item-level analysis for their students.

"I believe Texas students are fully capable of reaching the high expectations reflected in the final recommended performance standards, but I also realize the development of strong instructional programs requires time and sustained effort," said Commissioner Williams. "Extending the phase-in 1 standard through the 2013-2014 school year gives schools additional time to raise the level of student performance."

Requirements for students who took Algebra I prior to 2011-2012 school year TEA is proposing that students who took Algebra I and received course credit prior to the 2011-2012 school year not be required to take the STAAR Algebra I assessment. However, students cannot use a passing score for a STAAR EOC assessment that is no longer required for

graduation as a substitute for an assessment that is still required. For example, a passing score on STAAR geometry cannot be used in place of a required passing standard on Algebra I to satisfy the mathematics testing requirement for graduation (since the two are not equivalent courses with regard to content).

### **Substitute Assessments to Fulfill Graduation**

**Requirements for STAAR:** A proposed substitute assessment rule will allow students to substitute certain comparable tests for corresponding STAAR EOC assessments for graduation purposes. To comply with the provisions of HB 5, TEA will implement this rule in the 2013-2014 school year with an effective date retroactive to the 2011-2012 school year. Under the proposed rule, TEA will determine the cut scores that can be used to satisfy a student's testing requirement for graduation. It will be the responsibility of the school district and the student to verify the results on substitute assessments for graduation purposes. The substitute assessment rule is expected to be posted for public comment in August.

### **Assessing Middle School Students Taking**

**Algebra1:** Current federal accountability requirements specify that students have a mathematics score every year in grades 3-8 as well as a mathematics score in high school. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) requires states that offer only one mathematics assessment at the high school level - which can also be taken by middle school students - to ensure there is a mathematics result that can be attributed to a high school. Based on this federal requirement and a related provision within HB 5, districts should either plan on administering multiple assessments to students taking Algebra I in middle school or understand the potential federal accountability consequences of testing

these students only on Algebra I. By administering multiple tests to students taking Algebra I in middle school, assessment results for the current grade level (STAAR grade 8 mathematics score) can be used for federal accountability purposes, while STAAR Algebra I results can be applied in subsequent years where appropriate.

"I reluctantly make this recommendation to districts," said Commissioner Williams. "I do not agree with this federal requirement and would encourage districts to continue to make the best instructional choices for students regardless of the potential accountability impact. Where possible, TEA will pursue other options with the federal government to minimize any negative consequences for students. However, I am not aware of other options that are feasible for the 2013-2014 school year that would satisfy current federal accountability requirements and the legislative requirements of HB 5."

### **Application of Performance Standards on EOC**

**Assessments:** To meet the testing requirements for graduation, TEA is proposing that the performance standard in place when students take their first EOC test will apply to all five EOC assessments (Algebra I, English I, English II, biology, and U.S. history).

English Language Learners and English EOC Graduation Requirements As a result of changes regarding assessment requirements for graduation mandated by HB 5, the Commissioner's rule pertaining to English language learners (ELLs) and STAAR English EOC graduation requirements will be amended. Specifically, the STAAR English II assessment will replace the STAAR English III assessment as the English EOC graduation requirement for ELLs who meet the special provisions of the rule. ELL students who qualify will still have to take the English I EOC assessment

but will not have to pass it to meet the assessment graduation 4 requirements. However, they will need to take and pass the English II assessment to meet this requirement.

**Redesign of the STAAR Alternate Program HB 5** requires TEA to develop an alternate assessment for the most severely cognitively disabled students - one that does not require teachers to prepare tasks or materials. This newly designed alternate assessment will be administered for the first time in the spring of the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, Senate Bill 906 (which goes into effect in the 2013-2014 school year) prohibits TEA from "adopting a performance standard that indicates that a student's performance on the alternate assessment does not meet standards if the lowest level of the assessment accurately represents the student's developmental level as determined by the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee." To comply with this requirement, TEA will propose in commissioner rule that the adjusted phase-in standard that was used for the STAAR Alternate program in 2011-2012 be applied to the 2013-2014 results.

**STAAR Modified Program:** The U.S. Department of Education has informed states that assessments based on modified standards for students served by special education cannot be used for accountability purposes after the 2013-2014 school year. As a result of that federal directive, all STAAR Modified assessments will be administered for the final time during the 2013-2014 assessment cycle. Further information regarding plans for the inclusion of this population of students in the general assessment program beginning with the 2014-2015 school year will be forthcoming.

Because some of these policy changes must be made under commissioner of education rules, TEA will post and receive public comment for each proposal. Information about additional provisions in HB 5 and other education-related legislation will be communicated as soon as it is available. To read the commissioner's letter to school districts and charters or for general information regarding the assessment program, visit the TEA web site at: **[www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us)**.