

# **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about the Texas Student Assessment Program**

**Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division  
512-463-9536**

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment>

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## Questions Related to General Test Administration

### *Testing Schedule*

**1. Question:** If a student is marked absent at 10 a.m. and arrives at school later, should she be allowed to take the test even though she has been marked absent?

**Answer:** Districts may establish starting times for testing. A student who arrives after testing has begun may be tested if sufficient time remains in the day and if the student has not had contact with students who have already completed testing. If the student tests, the scorable document should be marked “S” for Score. (The absence marked on the school’s roll is for purposes of Average Daily Attendance [ADA] for funding purposes and is not necessarily related to testing. However, it is advisable that the district keep documentation on the discrepancy between attendance reported for ADA and for testing in case of an audit.)

### *Test Booklet or Scorable Document Issues*

**2. Question:** A seal was broken accidentally or was already broken when it arrived in our shipment. What should we do?

**Answer:** The campus coordinator or test administrator should simply tape that section until the student is authorized to view it. It is not necessary to file an incident report with the Security Task Force in the Student Assessment Division if it is determined that the seal was broken accidentally and confidentiality was maintained.

**3. Question:** A student accidentally started filling out the wrong section on the scorable document (e.g., during a math test, he marked answers in the science section of the scorable document). What should we do?

**Answer:** The campus should ascertain why the student was recording responses in the wrong section on the scorable document in the event the student was attempting to complete or preview an assessment that is not scheduled for that day. If it is determined that the student made a careless mistake and there has been no breach in confidentiality, a new scorable document should be hand-graded and issued to the student. For information about transcribing, see TAKS Campus Coordinator Activity 11 “Transcribing” in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Remember that the test administrator or campus coordinator will need to record the student’s demographic information on the new scorable document as well as all other test responses if the student took a test on the previous day(s).

**4. Question:** A student who is already halfway through the reading section of his test accidentally tears his scorable document or scorable test booklet while erasing. What should we do?

**Answer:** The student may not continue to use the torn scorable document or scorable test booklet because the tear might interfere with machine scoring. The test administrator should give the student a new scorable document or

test booklet and instruct him to begin marking his answers on the new document at the point where he left off on the unusable document. **NOTE:** A new scorable test booklet must have the same form number as the booklet it replaces. When the student turns in his new scorable document or test booklet, the test administrator will need to transfer verbatim the student's responses and all the demographic information from the unusable scorable document or test booklet to the new one. For information about transcribing, see TAKS Campus Coordinator Activity 11 "Transcribing" in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

If a replacement scorable test booklet with the same form number is not available, call the Student Assessment Division for guidance.

If the student tested on a previous day, the test administrator will need to transfer the student's responses for that test section as well. The test administrator should then void the unusable scorable document. When the campus coordinator returns the scorable materials to the district testing coordinator, he or she should submit the student's voided document with any other voided documents and the new scorable document with the scorable materials.

**5. Question: A student who has already begun testing discovers that there is a page missing from her test booklet. What should we do?**

**Answer:** If the student was using a nonscorable test booklet (grades 4–11/exit level), try to acquire a new test booklet that is not defective and provide the new booklet to the student. The new booklet must have the same form number as the original booklet, if applicable; otherwise, the student's answers will not be scored correctly. If a non-defective replacement booklet with the same form number is not available, contact the Student Assessment Division.

If a scorable test booklet is defective and a non-defective replacement booklet with the same form number is available, the test administrator should give the new booklet to the student and have the student begin recording her answers in the new booklet at the point where she left off in the defective booklet. When the student turns in her new test booklet, the test administrator will need to carefully transfer the student's answers from the defective booklet to the new booklet without making any changes. For information about transcribing, see TAKS Campus Coordinator Activity 11 "Transcribing" in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. When the campus coordinator returns the scorable materials to the district, he or she should submit the defective test booklet with the voided test booklets and the new test booklet with the scorable test booklets.

*Homebound Students*

**6. Question: How should districts handle testing of homebound students?**

**Answer:** Testing of homebound students is handled in the same manner as other enrolled students and must follow the published testing calendar, except that a certified test administrator must go to the student's home to administer the test. If on the day of testing the student is too ill to take the test, the student may be administered the assessment on the make-up day (for applicable grades and subjects). Otherwise, the document should be marked "A" for Absent. For students with a serious condition who are too ill to attempt the assessment, the scorable document may be coded "O" for Other.

## *Test Materials*

### **7. Question:** We don't have an adequate number of test materials. What should we do?

**Answer:** Districts are notified in advance of the quantity of materials to be sent for each administration. You should verify that the quantities will be sufficient and order additional materials at that time if needed. It is also important that you inventory all the materials in all boxes well before the week of testing to ensure that you have enough materials for testing. If you discover materials are missing or you do not have sufficient amounts, you should order more materials from Pearson through the Texas Assessment Management System if time allows. However, if you discover the day before or the day of testing that your supply of materials is inadequate, you should contact other campuses or districts in your area to see if they have extra materials that you can use. Documentation of any materials transfers should be kept locally.

## *Large-Print Test Booklets*

### **8. Question:** I ordered a large-print test, but it has not arrived (and this is test day). Is it allowable for the campus to enlarge a regular test booklet?

**Answer:** If the test coordinator cannot obtain a large-print test from a neighboring campus/district, call the Student Assessment Division and ask to speak to a member of the Accommodations Task Force.

## *Reading the Writing Prompt Aloud*

### **9. Question:** If several grade 4 TAKS students in a class ask to have the writing prompt read aloud, should the test administrator have the other students wait to begin working on their compositions until the prompt has been read to each student who has made the request?

**Answer:** No. If several grade 4 students want the writing prompt read aloud, the test administrator should instruct the other students that they may begin working on their compositions. The test administrator should then read the prompt to each student who has requested it, being careful not to disrupt the other students.

**NOTE:** This direction will not be appropriate for students in grades 7, 10, or 11 because additional directions must be read aloud to the entire room after addressing the writing prompt. At these grades, students do not begin work on the composition immediately after hearing the prompt. The test administrator must read the prompt to any student who has requested it. Then the test administrator continues with the rest of the directions, which the whole room must hear before students begin to work on the test.

### *Preparing Materials for Scoring*

**10. Question:** How do I mark the score code of a student who took the TAKS math test in our school district but then withdrew from our district the next day before he took the TAKS reading test?

**Answer:** Mark the student's math test "S" for Score and leave the score code field blank for the reading test. The score code for the reading test will default to "O" for Other, and the state's testing contractor will indicate this on the data file.

### *Make-up Testing*

**11. Question:** A student was suspended from school and was absent on the day of testing. Can he participate in an eligible make-up test?

**Answer:** Because the student is enrolled in school and was absent on the regular test day, he can be tested on the make-up day if applicable.

**12. Question:** A student was enrolled the day after the math administration. Can she participate in an eligible make-up test for math?

**Answer:** In this situation the campus where the new student is enrolling should contact the sending district to determine whether the student was already tested in the applicable subject. If the student was not tested in the district from which she moved, the campus where the student is currently enrolled should test the student on the make-up day.

**13. Question:** A student who started testing on the regular testing day became ill and was not able to complete testing. Can this student take a make-up for the test he was unable to finish?

**Answer:** The student is not eligible to take a make-up test. Make-up testing is allowed for specified tests only for students who were absent on the regular day of testing. If the student is unable to complete the test, the campus or district should determine whether the student's scorable document should be marked "S" for Score or "O" for Other, depending on how much of the test the student was able to complete before becoming ill.

### *Test Security/Irregularities*

**14. Question:** A test administrator witnessed a student passing a note to another student during the test but intercepted the note before it reached the other student. What should the district do?

**Answer:** It is up to the district to determine if any cheating occurred or if the test was compromised in some way. Disciplinary action is at the discretion of the campus. If the test administrator believes that he or she was able to intervene before any cheating took place, the students may be allowed to continue testing. If the district determines that cheating has occurred, the scorable documents for the students involved should be marked "O" for Other. Any disciplinary action taken against a student for cheating on a state assessment, such as

invalidation of the student's test or suspension, must be reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). An online form, "Locally Determined Disciplinary Actions Form" has been developed for submitting this information and can be accessed and completed at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/security>.

**15. Question:** If a student refuses to take the test or is obviously recording answers randomly, how should I mark his scorable document?

**Answer:** First, ask an authority (e.g., district coordinator, campus coordinator, principal, teacher) at the campus to encourage the student to take the test seriously. If the student still refuses to take the test, find out if his parent or guardian is willing to encourage the student to take the test. Finally, if the student still will not take the test, mark the student's scorable document "S" for Score. Documentation of these events should be kept locally.

**16. Question:** A student was taking the math test and then opened the reading section of her test and started working on it. What should we do?

**Answer:** Collect the student's test materials, keep the student in a monitored environment, and contact the Student Assessment Division immediately for guidance.

**17. Question:** A test administrator gave the TAKS test to a student who should have been administered the TAKS–M test. Can the school correct the situation by giving the TAKS–M test to the student?

**Answer:** The student may be allowed to take the correct test on another day or on that same day if there is time, if permission is granted by TEA. In addition, the district or campus must receive permission from the student's parent/guardian to administer two tests in one day or to test the student twice. An incident report must be filed with the Security Task Force for this type of testing irregularity.

**18. Question:** Can a teacher use or discuss the writing prompt from the test after it has been administered?

**Answer:** Districts may retain a copy of each student's TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated), composition and/or open-ended reading responses for assessments administered in March 2011, except the grade 10 TAKS ELA make-up test and all TAKS–M tests. For additional details, see TAKS Campus Coordinator Activity 11 in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Districts are never permitted to make copies of field-test compositions or field-test open-ended responses. For specific dates for review, distribution, and discussion, see the Calendar of Events on pages 2–3 of the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

**19. Question:** We gave a student the wrong test on the wrong day. (We were supposed to give the mathematics test, but we gave the science test instead.)

**Answer:** The district must call the Student Assessment Division for instructions. The Student Assessment Division will decide on a case-by-case basis whether the campus will be given permission to administer the appropriate test on another day. An incident report and documentation should be filed with the Security Task Force in the Student Assessment Division.

**20. Question:** A seal on a test booklet was broken intentionally by someone at our campus. What should we do?

**Answer:** If someone other than a student intentionally broke a seal on a test booklet, the district should investigate and determine whether any unauthorized viewing has taken place. If an irregularity occurred, an incident report and supporting documentation must be filed with the Security Task Force as indicated on pages 18–20 in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

*Charter School Participation in Statewide Assessment Program*

**21. Question:** Are charter schools required to administer state assessments?

**Answer:** Yes. Charter schools, like all Texas public schools, are required to administer all appropriate assessments to enrolled students.

*Access to Assessments for Private School or Home-Schooled Students*

**22. Question:** Do private schools and home schools have access to the TAKS assessments?

**Answer:** Yes. TEA makes the secure TAKS tests available for administration to Texas private schools and Texas home schools at a per-student cost that does not exceed the cost of administering the same test to a Texas public school student. To obtain a copy of the agreement packet for this assessment, contact the Texas testing contractor, Pearson, at 800-252-9186, or at [Texasmarketing@pearson.com](mailto:Texasmarketing@pearson.com).

Texas private schools and Texas home schools may also administer any TAKS tests that have been released to the public. These released tests may be downloaded free of charge from the TEA website at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/release/taks>. Contact the Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 for more information.

**23. Question:** Can the TAKS test be used outside the state of Texas?

**Answer:** Out-of-state or commercial use of TAKS is subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the TEA Copyright License. Contact TEA's Office of Intellectual Property at 512-463-9270, or by e-mail at [Copyrights@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:Copyrights@tea.state.tx.us).

*Use of Mentors as Test Administrators*

**24. Question:** Can an after-school mentor or a volunteer participate in testing or serve as a test administrator?

**Answer:** In general, these individuals are not eligible to serve as test administrators because they do not meet the criteria outlined in TAKS Campus Coordinator Activity 3 in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

Certified and noncertified paraprofessionals who are currently employed by the district and routinely work with students in the classroom may serve as test administrators, monitors, or assistants, provided they are under the direct or indirect supervision of a certified professional on the same campus. These paraprofessionals must be trained in test administration procedures prior to each administration.

Districts and campuses are strongly encouraged to give careful consideration to the selection of all testing personnel participating in the state assessment program. Test administrators should be professionals or under the supervision of professionals who hold valid education credentials, such as a Texas teacher certificate.

Also, remember that all personnel who will be serving as test administrators must be trained in test administration procedures prior to each administration.

### *Dyslexia Bundled Accommodations*

**25. Question:** Who is eligible to take a TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) reading test with the dyslexia bundled accommodations?

**Answer:** Students with dyslexia and students receiving special education services who have a severe reading disability that causes them to have difficulty reading words in isolation are eligible to take the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) reading tests at grades 3 through 8 with these accommodations if they routinely use accommodations in the classroom that are directly related to their difficulties with decoding words in isolation. Students do not have to be using all of the specific accommodations in the bundle, but they do need to be receiving similar accommodations in the classroom. These accommodations need to be documented annually by the campus in the student's individual accommodation plan (IAP), in the individualized education program (IEP), or in appropriate campus records for students who do not receive services through Section 504 or special education. Students receiving special education services do not need to be specifically identified with dyslexia to receive this accommodation; however, the student's IEP should address the student's difficulty in decoding words in isolation and reflect specific accommodations the student is receiving in the classroom to compensate for these difficulties.

**26. Question:** Will students receiving special education services be permitted to receive the dyslexia bundled accommodations on the TAKS–M reading tests?

**Answer:** No. There are no dyslexia bundled accommodations for TAKS–M because similar accommodations are built into the TAKS–M reading assessment.

**27. Question:** If a student begins testing with the dyslexia bundled accommodations on day 1 and testing proceeds rapidly, may we continue and administer the day 2 portion of the test on the same day?

**Answer:** No. The test administrator must adhere to the two-day schedule specified for the administration of the dyslexia bundled accommodations. The directions in the TAKS test administrator manual supplements must be followed exactly as written. Research findings have indicated that students who need these accommodations require a two-day administration because of the fatigue factor associated with the student's reading difficulties at the isolated word level.

**28. Question:** Are students who are absent on the first day of the dyslexia bundled accommodations administration eligible to take a make-up test?

**Answer:** In April and May, districts may administer make-ups as long as they maintain the regular testing schedule and the shipping date for scorable materials. In June, no make-ups are allowed.

*Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Students*

**29. Question:** Where can I get information about the Military (or Interstate) Compact?

**Answer:** The most current information on the implementation of the Interstate Compact can be found on TEA's website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/mil>.

### Questions Related to the Assessment of English Language Learners (ELLs)

*Years in U.S. Schools Unknown*

**30. Question:** A student from another country has just enrolled in our school, and we are not sure how many years the student has been in U.S. schools.

**Answer:** The campus coordinator should collaborate with the student's language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) to obtain this information. Instructions for officially determining and documenting this information are included in the "Documentation Requirements" section beginning on page 46 of TEA's *2010–2011 LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual.

It is important for this information to be supplied accurately and consistently from year to year. It is used for instructional planning, in determining eligibility for limited English proficient (LEP) exemptions, and in determining performance standard requirements in federal adequate yearly progress (AYP) and annual measurable achievement objective (AMAO) accountability measures.

*Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)*

**31. Question:** Why are LEP students who will be administered the TAKS reading test in English also required to take the TELPAS reading test?

**Answer:** Federal guidelines require that LEP students take annual English language proficiency tests in listening, speaking, reading, and writing until they are no longer classified as LEP. English language proficiency tests indicate how well the students are learning English. TELPAS reading results can help schools examine to what extent the student's academic performance on TAKS may be affected by a limited understanding of English. This information helps schools plan instructional interventions that appropriately address the student's language and academic needs.

**32. Question:** A LEP student enrolled on our campus during the TELPAS testing window. Do we need to administer TELPAS to this student?

**Answer:** For information regarding the testing of students who move into or out of your district or campus, refer to the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*, Appendix H.

**33. Question:** What is the procedure for an ELL student who is absent on the reading test day?

**Answer:** Every effort should be made to administer the TELPAS reading tests to students who are absent on a given day of testing. If students are not present for the online test session for which they were originally scheduled, they should be moved to another online test session later in the testing window. See Reading Test Administrator Activity 4 in the *TELPAS Manual for Raters and Test Administrators* for instructions on how to move a student to a different test session.

**34. Question:** Can a Foreign Exchange Student be exempt from TELPAS by signing an intent to waive a Texas public high school diploma?

**Answer:** The Foreign Exchange Student waiver applies only to TAKS. It does not exempt a student from federally required assessments, such as TELPAS.

**35. Question:** Can we use a paraprofessional to verify that the TELPAS writing collections have been assembled correctly?

**Answer:** No. The TELPAS writing collection verifier may be an LPAC member (other than the parent), school counselor, teacher, or other suitable designee but may not be a paraprofessional or a teacher assigned as a TELPAS rater for the current year's administration. The individual must also be trained to perform the verifying tasks and receive training in TELPAS administration procedures. Districts may choose to use the online course "Assembling and Verifying Grades 2–12 Writing Collections" as part of administration procedure training.

#### *Spanish Versions of TAKS*

**36. Question:** Do the English and Spanish versions of the TAKS tests contain the same test questions?

**Answer:** Not necessarily. The English and Spanish tests were field-tested and constructed separately. The two tests may contain some of the same questions in mathematics and science. The writing and reading tests are unique. The English and Spanish versions have the same total number of questions and the same number of questions per objective. For more information about the development process for the Spanish versions of TAKS, see the *Technical Digest* for the Texas Student Assessment Program at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/techdigest>.

**37. Question:** Who determines whether a student should take TAKS in English or Spanish?

**Answer:** Decisions regarding the language of testing are based on several factors, including the student’s language of instruction, and are to be made by the student’s LPAC. For more information, see the *2010–2011 LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual, page 8.

*Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) Questions*

**38. Question:** A new immigrant student has just enrolled. Due to time constraints, the campus has not been able to officially designate the student as limited English proficient or obtain all of the necessary information to make appropriate testing decisions. How should the LPAC proceed?

**Answer:** When a new immigrant student enrolls just before testing, the LPAC should make every effort to obtain the appropriate information from the student’s prior campus or district. Ultimately the LPAC will need to make an educationally sound assessment decision using the information available. The LPAC should maintain careful documentation of both the effort it has made to obtain the information and the reasons for the assessment decision. This information should be kept in the student’s permanent record file.

**39. Question:** If the LPAC made the decision to administer the TAKS mathematics and reading tests in Spanish in grade 5, which is part of the Student Success Initiative (SSI), and the student did not meet the standard on the first administration, is it possible for the LPAC to change the decision and have the student take the second administration in English?

**Answer:** Only in rare circumstances would a change in the language of the test be permissible. If after careful consideration the LPAC feels that such a change is warranted and has thorough documentation to justify the change, it is permissible for the LPAC to make a new decision. (Refer to the *2010–2011 Grade Placement Committee Manual* for more information about grade placement committee procedures.)

*Linguistically Accommodated Testing (LAT) Administrations of TAKS*

**40. Question:** The LAT instructions say that certain accommodations, such as translation assistance or reading aloud a word or phrase, are to be provided “only at the request of the student.” Is this also the case with the accommodations allowing use of a bilingual dictionary or glossary?

**Answer:** No. Students eligible for these accommodations will be issued a bilingual glossary or dictionary for use throughout the test. All dictionaries and glossaries must, however, meet the criteria of not providing explanations, definitions, pictures, or examples of mathematical or scientific terms. **NOTE:** Dictionaries and other reference materials are not allowed on the revising/editing portion of the grade 10 ELA test.

**41. Question:** Are students permitted to use a hand-held translating device, bilingual Internet dictionary, or other type of electronic bilingual dictionary?

**Answer:** District and campus testing coordinators will determine the viability of such devices in cooperation with other knowledgeable personnel. However, just as with paper bilingual dictionaries, if the device is comprehensive enough to provide examples, pictures, explanations, or definitions of mathematical or scientific terminology, it is not permitted. In addition, district and campus coordinators will need to discuss whether they will be able to ensure that students who use an Internet bilingual dictionary do not access other Internet sites or resources. Only linguistic accommodations used routinely in the student's classroom instruction and testing are permitted during LAT administrations.

**42. Question:** What should a test administrator do if a student asks for a translation of a word that the test administrator does not know?

**Answer:** If a test administrator who speaks the student's native language is providing a LAT administration and does not know the appropriate translation of a word, the test administrator may use a bilingual dictionary to look it up. If the LPAC has documented the student's need for linguistic accommodations in addition to translation (e.g., linguistic simplification), the test administrator will have other options to assist the student with the unknown word if an appropriate translation is not known or cannot be found.

**43. Question:** Is it permissible to administer LAT to a LEP student with a parental denial?

**Answer:** No, LEP students who are not participating in a bilingual or ESL program because of a parental denial are not eligible for a LAT administration. These students must take the general TAKS tests. For additional information about LEP exemptions, refer to the *2010–2011 LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual.

**44. Question:** Are the LAT forms of Spanish and English TAKS interchangeable with the general Spanish and English TAKS tests?

**Answer:** No. Students who qualify for LAT must take the LAT forms of TAKS, not the general TAKS forms.

**45. Question:** Do first-year LEP-exempt recent immigrants take LAT forms of TAKS reading?

**Answer:** No. LEP-exempt students in their first school year in the United States take only the TELPAS reading test to fulfill federal AYP accountability requirements.

## Questions Related to Alternate Assessments

### *Test Selection*

**46. Question:** Are students who receive special education services permitted to take TAKS in some subject areas and TAKS (Accommodated) or TAKS–M in others?

**Answer:** Yes. Each assessed subject area must be considered separately. The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee’s decision should be based on two considerations: the amount of support needed to access the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum and the testing accommodations needed by the student. The only exception is TAKS–Alt, which must be given for all subjects if the student meets the participation requirements. Due to the pervasive nature of significant cognitive disabilities, TAKS–Alt would be the appropriate assessment for all subjects.

**47. Question:** Can a student in grades 3–11 take a different test this year than he or she took last year?

**Answer:** Yes. Each year the ARD committee must determine the most appropriate assessment in the assessed subject areas (reading, mathematics, writing, ELA, science, and/or social studies) for students in grades 3–11. The assessment decision may change from year to year. For example, the ARD committee may determine that a student should take TAKS–M in mathematics in grade 5, but if the student makes significant academic progress in the mathematics TEKS curriculum, the ARD committee may determine that the student should take the TAKS (Accommodated) mathematics test the following year in grade 6.

### *Accommodations*

**48. Question:** Who makes decisions about testing accommodations for a student receiving special education services?

**Answer:** The ARD committee makes decisions regarding testing accommodations for the student based on supports the student routinely uses in classroom instruction. The ARD committee should review the allowable accommodations for the recommended assessment. Allowable accommodations can be found in the *2010–2011 Accommodations Manual*. Accommodation decisions for LEP students served by special education are made collaboratively by the LPAC and the ARD committee.

**49. Question:** When is reading aloud permitted on a TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M mathematics, social studies, or science test?

**Answer:** Only students served by special education, Section 504, or a dyslexia program may receive an oral administration. Refer to pages 77–78 of the *2010–2011 Accommodations Manual* and pages 40–42 of the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* for more information.

**50. Question:** Will large-print tests also be allowed for students with visual perception disabilities or other disabilities?

**Answer:** Yes, but this is considered only on a case-by-case basis through the submission of an accommodation request form.

**51. Question:** Are braille tests available for TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M?

**Answer:** Yes. For TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M, braille test booklets are available for eligible students in all grades and subject areas tested. Braille test booklets are not available for field-test administrations.

#### *General Questions about TAKS–Alternate*

**52. Question:** What is TAKS–Alt?

**Answer:** TAKS–Alternate (TAKS–Alt) is an assessment designed for students receiving special education services who have the most significant cognitive disabilities and are unable to participate in the other statewide assessments even with substantial accommodations and/or modifications. Unlike other statewide assessments in Texas, TAKS–Alt is not a traditional paper or multiple-choice test. Instead, the assessment involves teachers observing as students complete state-designed assessment tasks that link to the grade-level TEKS curriculum. Teachers then answer a series of questions in the online instrument to evaluate student performance.

**53. Question:** How do I know if my students should participate in TAKS–Alt?

**Answer:** TAKS–Alt assesses students receiving special education services who have the most significant cognitive disabilities and are unable to participate in the other statewide assessments, even with *substantial* accommodations and/or modifications. Once the ARD committee has determined that a student is significantly cognitively disabled, it must ensure that the student meets all the requirements in the Participation Requirements document in order to take TAKS–Alt. This document is located on the TAKS–Alt Resource page of the TEA Student Assessment Division website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksalt>. ARD committees should also consult the *2010–2011 ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program Manual* at [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ard/ard\\_manual.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ard/ard_manual.pdf). Students qualifying for special education services with a specific learning disability are not eligible for TAKS–Alt because this disability category rules out a cognitive disability.

#### *Implications for Graduation, Retention, and Program Exit*

**54. Question:** What are the graduation implications for students receiving special education services who do not take the TAKS exit level tests?

**Answer:** A student receiving special education services who completes graduation requirements but does not take the TAKS exit level tests receives the same diploma as a student who passes the TAKS exit level tests. A

student's transcript will reflect whether or not the student took the TAKS tests. The student's ARD committee uses assessment results and other campus records to determine whether the student has met graduation requirements. For more information, reference the flowcharts posted at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ard>.

**55. Question:** Can students who receive special education services be retained based on their performance on TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M?

**Answer:** The ARD committee makes decisions about promotion and retention for students receiving special education services. If the student is enrolled in a grade that is affected by the SSI, refer to the SSI section of the ARD Manual or the GPC Manual.

**56. Question:** Can student performance on state assessments be used to dismiss a student from special education services?

**Answer:** No. State assessments should not be used by themselves for this purpose. However, the ARD committee may use testing information in conjunction with other information typically used in making dismissal decisions.

### Questions Related to ELLs Who Receive Special Education Services

**57. Question:** Who is responsible for making assessment and accommodation decisions for LEP students who receive special education services?

**Answer:** Assessment and accommodation decisions for LEP students served by special education are made in conjunction by the LPAC and the ARD committee.

**58. Question:** May recent immigrant LEP students receiving special education services be exempted from TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M based on limited English proficiency?

**Answer:** Yes. The state LEP exemption policy applies to recent immigrant LEP students whether or not they receive special education services. These students may be exempted as long as they meet the state LEP-exemption criteria delineated in the *LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual. However, to meet federal assessment and AYP requirements, students in grades 3–8 and 10 who are LEP-exempt are required to participate in linguistically accommodated test (LAT) administrations in reading/ELA, mathematics, and science. LEP-exempt students are not required to be assessed in other subjects or grades.

**59. Question:** Are LAT administrations available for all state assessments designed for students served by special education?

**Answer:** LAT administrations of TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M, are available for LEP-exempt students served by special education. LEP-exempt students for whom a TAKS (Accommodated) form is appropriate will take a LAT version of TAKS. Because there are no LEP exemptions from TAKS–Alt,

LAT administrations are not available. Observational assessments can be conducted using any language or other communication method routinely used by the student being assessed with TAKS–Alt.

**60. Question: Are there Spanish versions of TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M?**

**Answer:** TAKS (Accommodated) is offered in Spanish for grades 3–5 in the grades and subjects for which TAKS is offered in Spanish. A Spanish version of TAKS–M is not available. A Spanish-version LAT form is available for students eligible for a LAT administration of TAKS, including TAKS (Accommodated).

**61. Question: Are LEP students who are eligible for TAKS–M and receive instruction in a language other than English required to take TAKS–M if they do not qualify for a LEP exemption?**

**Answer:** Yes. LEP students who receive instruction in their native languages are also required to receive instruction in English. If they are recent immigrants, they may be considered for a LEP exemption for up to three school years. During the LEP exemption period, these students are required to participate in LAT administrations to meet federal testing regulations in designated grades and subjects. After that time, LEP students served by special education are required to take non-LAT administrations of TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M. The ARD committee in conjunction with the LPAC determines which assessment to administer in accordance with the participation criteria for each assessment.

**62. Question: Are LEP students served by special education required to be assessed with TELPAS?**

**Answer:** Yes. Federal guidelines require all LEP students in grades K–12 to be assessed annually for English language proficiency. In rare cases it may be necessary for the ARD committee in conjunction with the LPAC to determine that it is not appropriate for a LEP student served by special education to be assessed in one or more TELPAS language domains (listening, speaking, reading, or writing). For more information, see the *2010–2011 LPAC Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual or the *2010–2011 ARD Committee Decision-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program* manual.

**63. Question: Is IEP documentation needed concerning a LEP student’s participation in TELPAS?**

**Answer:** Yes. Documentation of the decision to participate or not participate in each TELPAS language domain is required for LEP students receiving special education services. The ARD committee must document the decision in the student’s IEP, and the LPAC must document the decision in the student’s permanent record file.

**64. Question: What accommodations are allowable for LEP students receiving special education services during TELPAS reading tests for grades 2–12?**

**Answer:** The accommodations allowable during TELPAS reading tests for LEP students receiving special education services are outlined in the *2010–2011 Accommodations Manual* at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/accommodations>.

## Questions Related to the Student Success Initiative (SSI)

**65. Question:** What assessment information must be documented in the IEP for SSI requirements?

**Answer:** The following assessment information must be documented in the IEP for SSI requirements:

- an accelerated instruction plan prior to additional test administrations;
- ARD committee decisions regarding grade placement; and
- appropriate test accommodations to be provided for each test based on the accommodations that the student receives routinely in the classroom.

**66. Question:** What action must the school take if a student does not meet expectations on the first administration required in the SSI?

**Answer:** A student who has not met expectations on the first administration must be provided appropriate accelerated instruction to help prepare the student for the second testing opportunity if that student was administered TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M. For more information, see the *2010–2011 Grade Placement Committee Manual* at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi>.

**67. Question:** What is a parental waiver request, and does it apply to students receiving special education services?

**Answer:** A parent or guardian may request that a student not participate in the third testing opportunity due to potential harm to the student. Documentation must be provided that specifies the student’s individual situation and/or needs. If a parental waiver is granted, the student must still participate in all required accelerated instruction. Parents of students receiving special education services may request a waiver for the third administration of any assessment that is required under SSI. A sample waiver form is available on the TEA website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi>.

**68. Question:** Is a student receiving special education services subject to the automatic retention requirements of SSI?

**Answer:** The grade advancement requirements stipulate that a student may advance to the next grade level only by passing the tests required under SSI or, if the student does not pass and a parent appeals the retention, by unanimous decision of the grade placement committee.

Although all SSI requirements apply to students who take TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M, retention and promotion decisions for students receiving special education services are made by the ARD committee.

TAKS–Alt is not part of the SSI grade advancement requirements because multiple testing opportunities are already part of the TAKS–Alt process.

**69. Question:** Because the ARD committee serves as the grade placement committee for students served by special education, do promotion decisions made by the ARD have to be unanimous?

**Answer:** No. The ARD committee decision regarding promotion does not have to be unanimous but must follow the general rules governing ARD committee decision-making as set forth in 19 TAC §89.1050.

**70. Question:** If the student does not pass the TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M grade 5 or 8 reading or mathematics test, can the ARD committee choose a different assessment?

**Answer:** Yes. The district may select, and the ARD committee may designate, only one test for each applicable grade and subject, and the substitute assessment must be administered during the period established in the testing calendar to coincide with the date of the **third** administration of the statewide assessment. Test publishers are required to provide results of the substitute assessments to school districts within ten working days following receipt of the test materials from the school district. School districts and charter schools are required to follow the same procedures for ensuring test security and confidentiality that are required during the regular administrations of the TAKS tests.

Currently four assessment instruments have been approved for the SSI substitute assessment option:

1. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Form B, Grade 5 English Reading Test, produced by the Riverside Publishing Company.
2. ITBS, Form B, Grade 5 English Mathematics Test, produced by the Riverside Publishing Company.
3. ITBS, Form B, Grade 8 English Reading Test, produced by the Riverside Publishing Company.
4. ITBS, Form B, Grade 8 English Mathematics Test, produced by the Riverside Publishing Company.