

STAAR Program

Starting Points

Revised August 31, 2011

Revisions to the STAAR Program Starting Points

On August 26, 2011, TEA released a STAAR Questions and Answers (Q&A) document, available at http://txetests.com/FAQS/STAAR_8_26_11.pdf. The Q&A addresses inclusion of the EOC assessment score as 15 percent of the final course grade and indicates that districts must base the decision of whether to award course credit on the final course grade that includes the EOC assessment score. See Questions 14 and 15 in the August 26 document.

This guidance from TEA affects the policy choices that TASB Policy Service offered in the March 2011 *STAAR Program Starting Points*. Specifically, the guidance eliminates two of the options offered in the *Starting Points*—Options 1 and 2 at CREDIT, which base the award of credit in some instances on the course grade before the EOC assessment score is added in as 15 percent of the final course grade. As a result of this guidance, the options originally offered in this *Starting Points* at CREDIT and RETAKES have been revised.

This *Starting Points* document is provided to Policy Service subscribers for educational purposes only, to inform your understanding of the topic and assist you in your local policy development. It contains information to facilitate a general understanding of the law, but it is not an exhaustive treatment of the law on this subject nor is it intended to substitute for the advice of an attorney. **It is important for you to consult with your own attorneys in order to apply these legal principles and make local policy choices.**

A NEW SYSTEM OF STATE ASSESSMENTS

Beginning in the 2011–12 school year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will implement the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) program, which includes new assessments in grades 3 through 8 and development of twelve end-of-course (EOC) assessments for students in grades 9 through 12. STAAR phases out the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) program, in place since 2003. Students enrolled for the first time in grade 9 in the 2011–12 school year must perform successfully on the EOC assessments to graduate. To graduate on the Recommended or Advanced/Distinguished Achievement Programs, students must also meet performance targets on certain assessments. As a result of this new testing framework, TASB Policy Service has reviewed policies concerning grading and class rank, along with a range of other issues associated with the implementation of EOC assessments.

WHAT IS STAAR?

STAAR differs significantly from the current TAKS program in the following ways:

- STAAR assessments evaluate content and skills from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills at greater depth and a higher level of cognitive complexity.
- STAAR assessments emphasize readiness in terms of subsequent grades or courses, and ultimately, college and career readiness.

- EOC assessments constitute a new form of exit-level testing. To graduate, students must achieve a cumulative score at least equal to the product of the passing standard times the number of EOC assessments in each foundation area (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). In general, students on the Recommended or the Advanced/Distinguished Achievement Programs are required to take all twelve EOC assessments. Students on the Minimum Program will usually take fewer EOC assessments.

For a complete overview of the STAAR program, see Section I of TEA's *Transition Plan for House Bill 3* at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/hb3plan> and the STAAR Questions and Answers document (August 26, 2011, version) at http://txetests.com/FAQS/STAAR_8_26_11.pdf.

POLICY IMPACT

Implementation of the STAAR program will have an impact on three board policies: EIA(LOCAL), EIC(LOCAL), and EIE(LOCAL). Policy Service has provided sample EIA policy text below concerning grading. Policy Service has also provided a sample resolution districts may use to address Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion requirements at EIE.

Two key EOC assessment concepts have significant policy implications for districts in the areas of course credit, grading, and class rank:

- First, districts are required to have local board policy stating that an EOC assessment score counts as 15 percent of the final course grade.
- Second, a student is permitted to retake an EOC assessment for any reason at any of the scheduled testing administrations, with the district determining whether to count the retake score as 15 percent of the final course grade.

Policy Service has developed this *Starting Points* worksheet to provide general information to districts on STAAR and to help districts explore options and formulate policy regarding how and whether retake scores will be used to calculate the student's final course grade.

The worksheet provides policy text on several topics based on TEA guidance and information Policy Service has gathered. Some districts may determine that locally developed text is better suited for their needs. For this reason, the worksheet offers the option for the district to include locally developed text, as appropriate.

Policy Service recommends that the district's decisions on how to use EOC assessment scores be addressed at EIA(LOCAL), which includes board policy related to the district's guidelines for grading. Procedural details regarding implementation of the district's policy decisions should be included in the district's grading guidelines.

Note for districts that serve only kindergarten through grade 6 or 8: Districts that only serve students in kindergarten through grade 6 will only need to review the last section of the worksheet, which includes a sample resolution on EIE(LOCAL), and need not submit anything to Policy Service. Districts that serve students in kindergarten through grade 8 will need to complete all sections of the worksheet.

WORKSHEET INSTRUCTIONS

Please do not adopt this worksheet or this text at the present time. Once Policy Service receives the completed worksheet, we will incorporate the selected provisions into EIA(LOCAL) and prepare a draft, which will be sent to you and **should then be taken to the board for adoption.**

1. Please make certain you have completed the contact information section.
2. In the worksheet's left-hand column, type an "X" beside every statement that applies for each block of policy text.
3. In the right-hand column, you can alter the default policy text or paste locally crafted policy text where appropriate. Word's "Track Changes" feature will annotate all of your edits.
4. If you need help with Track Changes (to turn off the "balloons," for instance) Ctrl+click the following links for instructions in [Word 2007](#) and [Word 2003](#).
5. **Before** the board has adopted any policy changes, **e-mail** the completed worksheet to your policy consultant or Policy.Service@TASB.org with the words "STAAR Worksheet" in the subject line. Your policy consultant will prepare a draft of EIA(LOCAL) for you and your board to review and adopt.
6. Make plans to communicate the new policy choices to your staff and students and to adjust handbooks or develop administrative regulations or procedures, as needed, to align with this new policy.
7. Be sure to notify us of adoption at pol-support@tasb.org so we can update the district's *Policy On Line* manual and our records.

Call your policy consultant at 800-580-7529 or 512-467-0222 if you have any questions.

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CREDIT—EIA(LOCAL)

BACKGROUND

A district must count an EOC assessment score as 15 percent of a student’s final course grade. The TEA STAAR Questions and Answers document (August 26, 2011, version) indicates that the award of credit must be made using the final course grade that includes the EOC assessment score. Therefore, a student who has a passing grade in a course before the EOC assessment score is calculated, but a failing grade in the course after the EOC assessment score is calculated in as 15 percent of the final grade, may not be given credit for the course. Districts will need to consider options to allow the student to gain credit for the course, which could include summer school or other remediation or retaking the EOC assessment. See RETAKES, below.

Districts will also need to determine how the assessment score will be calculated to count for 15 percent of the final grade. See GRADING, below. As indicated in the August 26, 2011, Q&A, TEA is not planning to provide a conversion table to convert the scale EOC assessment scores to percentage scores that can be used to calculate the final course grade. Therefore, each school district has local discretion to create its own conversion chart for this purpose.

For the reasons above, Policy Service recommends the adjacent text for inclusion in your policy.

END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENTS

When required by state law, a student’s score on the initial end-of-course (EOC) assessment shall count for 15 percent of the student’s final grade for the course as reported on the student’s transcript.

RETAKES—EIA(LOCAL)**BACKGROUND**

As mentioned above, a student may retake an EOC assessment for any reason at any scheduled test administration. In accordance with law, a district cannot prohibit a student from retaking an EOC assessment, but the law gives districts the option of whether to count retake scores in the calculation of the final course grade.

Students may want to retake an EOC assessment for a variety of reasons.

- Students who are trying to achieve the necessary scores for graduation may take an EOC assessment multiple times and several years after taking the course.
- Students may wish to retake assessments to raise their final course grades for purposes of college admission, scholarships, or other honors.
- Students who are struggling to earn course credit could retake an EOC assessment multiple times, depending on the district's policy on whether retake scores are calculated into the final course grade.

A decision to include retake scores in the final course grade could require the district to recalculate and change a student's transcript multiple times. Districts considering this approach should consider the staff time required for these activities.

OPTIONS

Based on these factors and the information on district practice that Policy Service has gathered, this worksheet provides text for two policy options in regard to retake scores. If the district develops its own text, insert it at **Option 3**.

Option 1 provides that the district will include retake scores as 15 percent of the final course grade only to allow a student who does not have a passing grade in the course to gain credit for the course. Subsequent retakes will not be included in the final course grade. Districts that choose to include retake scores in the final course grade calculation to give students with failing grades an opportunity to earn credit should address several related issues in their grading guidelines, such as:

1. The number of times a district will accept a student's retake score for the purpose of earning course credit. For example, a district could choose to include only an initial retake in the final course grade.
2. The time frame within which retakes will be accepted for the purpose of earning course credit. For example, a district could choose to include in the final course grade only a retake taken during the summer after completion of the course.
3. The use of scores when a student takes the assessment multiple times. For example, a district could choose to use the highest retake score rather than an average of the retake scores.

Please note: In accordance with law, a district cannot prohibit a student from retaking an EOC assessment. A district can only decide how the district will use the retake score for credit decisions.

In **Option 2**, retake scores will never count in the final course grade calculation. If a district chooses this option, the district will need to consider other methods of recovery for a student who does not have a passing grade in the course to earn course credit.

Other Options: Some districts may wish to reflect retake scores in the final course grade even if a student has credit for the course. Because of the administrative time and possible confusion involved in recalculating final grades and adjusting transcripts, Policy Service has not included this option in the worksheet. A district that wishes to follow this approach should add its locally developed policy text at **Option 3**.

Type an X in the blank to choose the option appropriate for your district.

The district selects option 1.

The district selects option 2.

The district selects option 3. The district has developed its own text. (*Type your text beneath "RETAKES—OPTION 3" at right.*)

RETAKES—OPTION 1

If a student retakes an EOC assessment, the District will include the retake score as 15 percent of the final course grade only if the retake score allows a student to gain credit for the course. After a student earns credit for the course, subsequent retakes will not be included in the calculation of the final course grade.

RETAKES—OPTION 2

If a student retakes an EOC assessment, the District will not include the retake score in the final grade calculation for the course.

RETAKES—OPTION 3

SPECIAL EDUCATION—EIA(LOCAL)

If a student receiving special education services is scheduled to graduate under the Minimum Program or in accordance with the provisions of his or her IEP, the student’s ARD committee will determine whether the general EOC assessment is an accurate measure of the student’s achievement and progress or whether an alternative assessment is more appropriate. STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate are the alternative assessments in the STAAR program. If a student takes a STAAR Modified or Alternate assessment, the student’s ARD committee will determine whether the score on the EOC assessment will count as 15 percent of the student’s final grade, as well as whether successful performance and a cumulative score on the EOC assessments will be required for graduation. TEA recommends that the cumulative score be reported only for students who take one or more general EOC assessments, not for the alternative assessments.

For the reasons above, the adjacent text will be included in the policy draft that will be sent to you for board adoption.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

A student’s ARD committee shall determine the type of assessment to be administered and how the score on an EOC assessment shall be used for final course grades, credit decisions, and graduation requirements.

GRADING—EIA(LOCAL)

A district’s specific rules for calculating the final course grade with the EOC assessment score should be included in the district or campus grading guidelines rather than in local board policy. Districts that choose to include EOC assessment scores in individual semester grades will need to specify how and when semester grades will be calculated to include the EOC assessment score.* Districts have discretion in this area as long as the EOC assessment score totals 15 percent of the final course grade. Whatever the formula, consider whether it will work within the context of your grading software. The district might also consider including the calculation method on student report cards.

* UIL eligibility is only affected if an EOC assessment score directly affects the preceding six-week or nine-week grade. Most methods of calculating EOC assessment scores in course grades do not affect six-week or nine-week grades, only semester or yearly grades. If you have questions concerning UIL eligibility, please contact the UIL.

Type an X in the blank to choose whether or not to use the text shown at right.

Yes, the district will use this text.

The district will use this text, but with the amendments shown at right. (*Type your changes into the text shown at right.*)

GRADING

Calculation of grades with EOC assessment scores shall be in accordance with the District’s grading guidelines.

CLASS RANK—EIC(LOCAL)

The material on class rank has been removed from the *Starting Points* as TASB Policy and Legal Services seek further information from TEA and evaluate the effect of TEA's August 26, 2011, guidance on the practice most districts currently follow of calculating class rank on semester grades. Additional information and recommendations will be issued at a future date. See the December 1, 2011, [Policy Alert](#) addressing this issue.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION—EIE(LOCAL)

Another policy affected by the STAAR program is EIE(LOCAL), addressing retention and promotion. In addition to articulating district standards for mastery and promotion, most districts' EIE(LOCAL) policies restate the grade advancement testing provisions requiring students in grades 5 and 8 to meet the passing standard on applicable state-mandated assessment instruments to be promoted to the next grade.

TEA's Transition Plan and the STAAR Questions and Answers document (August 26, 2011, version) explain that performance standards for grades 3 through 8 will not be established until fall 2012, which is several months after students have taken the first round of assessments in spring 2012. Because of this timeline, the Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion requirements will not include use of the STAAR results in the 2011–12 school year only. The law continues to require the use of other academic information in promotion decisions, such as teacher recommendations and student grades.

To suspend the local policy provision requiring students to pass the grade 5 and 8 assessments, Policy Service suggests that the board consider adopting a resolution to this effect for the 2011–12 school year. Otherwise, a district would need to revise board policy twice—once to remove the provision and a second time to add back the requirement before the 2012–13 school year. A sample resolution has been included with this worksheet for your consideration.

Since districts should provide appropriate notice of all promotion standards to parents and students, the district should be sure to publish any changes to its 2011–12 grade advancement standards in a readily accessible location, such as the district's Web site and the student handbook. Districts should also make information available to students and parents explaining the factors that will trigger formation of a grade placement committee for a student. The TEA Transition Plan explains that more information about SSI procedures in the absence of passing standards will be included in the 2011–12 Grade Placement Committee Manual.

HB 2135 from the 82nd Legislative Session clarifies that an 8th grade student who takes a high school course with an EOC assessment is not required to also take the grade 8 STAAR examination. If a district requires these students to take both assessments, the district should include this choice in its grading guidelines and will need to communicate this information to students and parents. TEA's STAAR Questions and Answers document (August 26, 2011, version) indicates that TEA is still making decisions about how test scores for these students will be used for accountability. Districts may want to wait for TEA guidance before making decisions on this issue.

If the district requires satisfactory performance on a state-mandated assessment for non-SSI grades and/or subjects as a local promotion standard, be sure to adjust the resolution text to identify those grades and subjects for which the state-mandated assessment is considered and also suspend the requirement for those grades and subjects for the 2011–12 school year.

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD TO SUSPEND PORTIONS OF EIE(LOCAL)
FOR THE 2011–12 SCHOOL YEAR ONLY**

WHEREAS, Title 19, Chapter 101 of the Texas Administrative Code and section 28.0211(a) of the Texas Education Code require students in grades 5 and 8 to meet the passing standards on the applicable state-mandated assessment instruments for those grade levels to be promoted to the next grade.

WHEREAS, the _____SD EIE(LOCAL) policy requires students in grades 5 and 8 to satisfy the above stated promotion standards in addition to local standards of promotion to be promoted to the next grade.

WHEREAS, state passing standards for the STAAR grade 5 and 8 examinations will not be established for the 2011–12 school year but only raw score data will be available.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of _____SD shall suspend for the 2011–12 school year only the portions of EIE(LOCAL) that require students in grades 5 and 8 to meet the passing standards on the applicable state-mandated assessment instruments for those grade levels to be promoted to the next grade.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, _____, by the Board of Trustees.

President

Secretary