



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

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Shirley J. Neeley, Ed.D.
Commissioner

ACTION REQUIRED



September 15, 2005

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Hurricane Katrina Evacuees and Statewide Testing

This letter is intended to clarify a number of issues related to statewide testing of evacuees displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

A Texas Diploma or a Louisiana Diploma?

The Texas Education Agency continues to work with the Louisiana Department of Education on possible solutions to questions such as whether Louisiana will be able to accept Texas course credit and issue Louisiana diplomas to displaced seniors and whether Texas will be able to administer the Louisiana graduation tests to students who still need to pass these tests. I understand that many of the evacuated students will want to receive a Louisiana diploma from their home campus, and I am collaborating with Louisiana Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard to make this possible. As information becomes available, it will be sent to all districts.

TAKS October 2005 Exit Level Retest Administration

Parents of evacuees who moved to Texas because of Hurricane Katrina and who enrolled in grade 12 as of October 2005 may, in writing, opt their child out of taking the October Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exit level retest. In making the decision to defer this test administration, students and their parents should consider whether the student will be seeking to receive a Texas high school diploma. Although future circumstances for many, if not all, of the students displaced by the hurricane may be uncertain at this point, if it seems likely that a student will remain in Texas and work toward a Texas high school diploma, the student and his or her parents should choose for the student to test this October. Performance results from this administration will provide information about academic strengths and weaknesses to be used in guiding the student's instructional program.

Evacuees who were first classified as eleventh graders in the fall of 2005 AND who are expected to graduate before September 1, 2006, may also choose to test at the October 2005 exit level retest administration. A sample form for displaced students and parents is provided in the first attachment to this letter. School districts may wish to use this form, modify it for their own purposes, or develop one of their own. It is recommended that school districts maintain these forms in the records for these students. Technical information for district test coordinators about coding for the October 2005 test administration can be found in the second attachment to this letter.

Spring 2006 Statewide Test Administrations

At this time, it is anticipated that all evacuees who remain enrolled in Texas public schools in spring 2006 will be required to participate in any appropriate statewide test administrations.

If you need additional information regarding the testing of evacuees, you may contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,


Shirley J. Neeley

cc: District Test Coordinator, ESC Executive Directors

Attachments

"Good, Better, Best—never let it rest—until your good is better—and your better is BEST!"

**DEFERRAL FORM FOR THE OCTOBER 2005 EXIT LEVEL TAKS RETEST
ADMINISTRATION - HURRICANE KATRINA EVACUEES ONLY**

This form allows seniors displaced by Hurricane Katrina to be excused from the October 2005 administration of the exit level statewide test.

Passing all four of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests in mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies is required in order for students to be eligible to receive a diploma from any Texas public high school or charter school.

If it seems likely that your child will remain in Texas and seek a Texas high school diploma, you may wish your child to go ahead and test in October 2005. Additional opportunities to test will occur in the school year but deferring testing will eliminate one opportunity to pass some or all of the four required tests and cause academic diagnostic information not to be provided. Not testing in October does not preclude your child from testing at a later administration.

Please consider the options and make the decision that is in the best educational interest of your child.

I, _____ (print full name), wish my child, _____ (print full name of student), to be excused from the October 2005 exit level test administration. I understand that this may mean one less opportunity for my child to take and pass the four tests required in Texas to receive a high school diploma.

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

Please return this form to the school in which your child is enrolled.

ACTION OPTIONAL
DEADLINE: September 26, 2005

Coding Information for the District Test Coordinator

Precoding for the October 2005 Exit Level Retest Administration

If your district selected option 1, the Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM)-supplied precoding option of the Advanced Data Collection Service, you will receive precoded labels and blank answer documents for the October 2005 TAKS exit level retest administration only for students who tested in your district in the previous administrations. Students new to your district will not receive precoded labels.

If your district has numerous displaced students who WILL be taking the October 2005 test, the following option is being offered so that you can avoid handgridding answer documents for these evacuees. You may change your precode option to 2 and then supply a precoding data file to PEM by **September 26, 2005**. If you wish to change the precoding option, please call the Texas precoding coordinator at 800-627-8902, ext. 6475 for assistance. Detailed instructions for preparing the precoding data file can also be found on the PEM Texas assessment website at http://k12testing.tx.ncspearson.com/tx_pre.htm.

If you have only a small number of evacuees testing in October 2005 or students and parents have not had time by September 26 to determine whether the student should test, you may wish to handgrid the answer documents for these students during the test administration period.

Passing Standards for Tested Students

As you know, the TAKS exit level passing standard in place at the time a student begins grade 10 is the standard that is maintained throughout the student's high school career. To ensure that the correct passing standard is applied to these students, districts can indicate in the agency use box on the answer document the year in which the evacuee first entered grade 10.

- To indicate that an evacuee first entered grade 10 during the 2002-2003 school year, a "0" must be gridded in column "D" and a "3" must be gridded in column "E" of the Agency Use field on the October TAKS exit level answer document.
- To indicate that an evacuee first entered grade 10 during the 2003-2004 school year, a "0" must be gridded in column "D" and a "4" must be gridded in column "E" of the Agency Use field on the October TAKS exit level answer document.

If you need additional information, please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.