

**STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS  
OF ACADEMIC READINESS  
(STAAR)**

**STAAR Reading and Writing  
A New Assessment Design  
for Grades 3–8**

**Victoria Young**

**Director of Reading, Writing, and Social  
Studies Assessments**

**Texas Education Agency**



# STAAR Timeline

2

## Spring 2011

- Grades 3–8 reading field test embedded in TAKS
- Stand-alone writing field test for grades 4 and 7
- English I—first operational assessment

## Spring 2012

- First STAAR assessments—all courses/grades
- No SSI retests for grades 5 and 8
- English I counts toward graduation for first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders

# New Assessment Design

## STAAR Reading and Writing

3

- **Based on ELA/R TEKS implemented in fall 2009**
- **Assessment focuses on TEKS determined to be non-negotiable for success in current grade and readiness for next grade**  **Readiness Standards**
- **Other assessed TEKS**  **Supporting Standards**

# New Assessment Design

## STAAR Reading and Writing

4

### ● Readiness Standards

- Are essential for success in the current grade or course
- Are important for preparedness for the next grade or course
- Support college and career readiness
- Necessitate in-depth instruction
- Address broad and deep concepts, skills, and ideas

# New Assessment Design

## STAAR Reading and Writing

5

- **Readiness Standards**
  - **Encompass 30–40% of the eligible TEKS**
  - **Will make up 60–65% of the assessment**
- **Supporting Standards**
  - **Encompass 60–70% of the eligible TEKS**
  - **Will make up 35–40% of the assessment**

# Reading Test Design

6

- **Fiction always considered a readiness genre**
- **“Large grain size” student expectations – those that can be applied to any story– considered readiness standards**
- **More specific student expectations that can be applied to only some stories considered supporting standards**

# New Assessment Design

## STAAR Reading

7

- **Example of readiness and supporting standards from Literary Text/Fiction**

**Describe the interactions of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo (Grade 4 Readiness Standard)**

**Identify whether the narrator or speaker of a story is first or third person (Grade 4 Supporting Standard)**

# New Assessment Design

## STAAR Writing

8

- **The two types of writing assessed each year are always considered Readiness Standards**
- **Overarching student expectations for revision/conventions considered readiness; specific revision/conventions skills considered supporting**
- **Use correct punctuation marks (Grade 7 Readiness Standard)**
- **Commas after introductory words, phrases, and clauses (Grade 7 Supporting Standard)**

# STAAR Reading Test Design

## Grades 3–8

9

### Genre-based

- **Literary strand: fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama (drama beginning at grade 4)**
- **Informational strand: expository and persuasive (persuasive beginning at grade 5)**
- **Readiness genres: fiction and expository**
- **Supporting genres: literary nonfiction, poetry, drama, and persuasive**
- **Embedded: procedural elements (in informational pieces) and media literacy (in both literary and informational pieces)**

# STAAR Reading Test Design

## Grades 3–8

### Test Length

- **Word count attached to overall test rather than to individual pieces, as in TAKS**
- **Maximum word count increases from grade to grade (approximately 2,700 words at Grade 3 to approximately 4,100 words at Grade 8)**
- **Number of pieces included on a test can vary from year to year, dependent on length (e.g., at grade 5, 3–4 individual selections and one pair)**
- **Different numbers of questions attached to different-length selections**

# STAAR Reading Test Design

## Grades 3–8

11

### **Selections can be published or commissioned**

- **STAAR reading assessments include a combination of published and commissioned selections**

### **Paired selections can mix strands and genres**

- **Paired selections begin at Grade 4**
- **Literary–Literary (e.g., fiction–poetry, literary nonfiction–drama, fiction–literary nonfiction)**
- **Informational–Informational (e.g., expository–expository, expository–persuasive)**
- **Literary–Informational (e.g., fiction–expository, poetry–expository, literary nonfiction–persuasive)**

# STAAR Reading Test Design

## Grades 3–8

12

- **STAAR reading assessments will emphasize students' ability**
  - **to understand how to use text evidence to confirm the validity of their ideas**
  - **to make connections within and across texts (“across texts” begins at grade 4)**
  - **to think critically/inferentially**
  - **to “go beyond” a literal understanding of what they read**

# Student Success in Reading and STAAR

13

- **Students must be provided in-depth instruction in *all* genres represented by the ELA/R TEKS**
- **Equal weight must be given to fiction and expository genres at all grade levels**
- **Instruction must emphasize critical-thinking skills/inferential thinking rather than isolated skills**

# Writing Test Design

## Grade 4

14

- **Assessment split evenly over two days**
  - **Day 1–First half of multiple-choice questions and 1 prompt**
  - **Day 2–Second half of multiple-choice questions and 1 prompt**
- **Multiple-choice questions embedded for grade 4; abbreviated stand-alone field test for grade 4 every three years to try out prompts**

# Writing Test Design

## Grade 7

15

- **Assessment split evenly over two days**
  - **Day 1—All the multiple-choice questions and first composition**
  - **Day 2—Second and third compositions**
- **Field tests for both multiple-choice and compositions embedded for grade 7**

# Revision and Editing

## Grades 4 and 7 and High School

16

- **Revision and editing assessed separately, with increased focus on revision as students become more experienced and skilled writers**
- **For Grade 4, 32% of multiple-choice score from revision (9 items) and 68% of score from editing (19 items)**
- **For Grade 7, 40% of multiple-choice score from revision (16 items) and 60% of score from editing (24 items)**
- **For English I, II, and III, 50% of multiple-choice score from revision (15 items) and 50% of score from editing (15 items)**

# Revision and Editing

## Grades 4 and 7

- **Revision is focused on effectiveness, i.e., strengthening/improving various aspects of a piece of writing: the introduction and conclusion, organization/progression, development, word choice, and sentences**
- **Editing is focused on correctness (conventions): capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence boundaries (fragments and run-ons)**

# Revision and Editing

## Grades 4 and 7

18

### Example of Grade 4 revision stem:

David would like to improve his story by adding a strong concluding sentence after sentence 28. Which of these would be the BEST sentence to add?

### Example of Grade 7 revision stem:

The transition between the third paragraph (sentences 13–19) and the fourth paragraph (sentences 20–25) is abrupt. Which sentence could Veronica add before sentence 20 to help with this transition?

# Composition

## Grade 4

19

- **Students will write two one-page compositions addressing different types of writing.**
  - **Personal Narrative: Write about important personal experiences (TEKS–17A)**
  - **Expository: Create brief compositions that establish a central idea in a topic sentence, contain a concluding statement, and include supporting sentences with simple facts, details, and explanations (TEKS–18 A and i, ii, and iii)**

# Composition

## Grade 7

20

- **Students will write two one-page compositions addressing different types of writing.**
- **Personal Narrative with extension: Write a personal narrative that has a clearly defined focus and communicates the importance of or reasons for actions and/or consequences (TEKS–16A)**
- **Expository: Write a multi-paragraph essay to convey information about a topic (TEKS –17A; additional information is contained in 17A i–v)**

# Writing Prompts

## Grades 4 and 7

21

- **Most personal narrative prompts appear with a photograph**
- **At grade 7, personal narrative prompts clearly incorporate the “extension” aspect (e.g., why the experience was important)**
- **Expository prompts contain a stimulus and are scaffolded: Read, Think, Write, Be Sure to–**

# STAAR Writing Rubrics

22

- **A rubric is being developed for each writing type, but three overarching aspects of writing are addressed in all rubrics:**
  - **Organization/Progression**
  - **Development of Ideas**
  - **Use of Language/Conventions**

# Writing Rubrics Overview: Common Elements

23

- **Organization/Progression**
  - the degree to which form or structure is appropriate to the purpose and demands of the prompt
  - the degree to which the writer establishes and sustains focus (affecting unity and coherence of piece)
  - the degree to which the writer controls progression with transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections and establishes the relationships among ideas

# Writing Rubrics Overview: Common Elements

24

- **Development of Ideas**
  - the degree to which details/examples are specific and well chosen
  - the degree to which (1) the piece is thoughtful and engaging and (2) the writer demonstrates an understanding of the task

# Writing Rubrics Overview: Common Elements

25

- **Use of Language/Conventions**
  - the degree to which word choice is thoughtful and appropriate to form, purpose, and tone
  - the degree to which sentences are purposeful, varied, and controlled
  - the degree to which the writer demonstrates a command of conventions so that the writing is fluent and clear

# TEA STAAR Resources

26

**Currently available at**

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

- **General information about STAAR—e.g., the overall assessment design and attributes**
- **Assessed curriculum (includes reporting categories and readiness/supporting standard designations for each SE)**
- **Test blueprints**
- **Test design schematics**

**On the way in fall 2011:**

- **Educator guides—including sample selections and items**

# CONTACT INFORMATION

27

**Victoria Young**  
**Director of Reading, Writing, and Social  
Studies Assessments**  
**Texas Education Agency**  
**512-463-9536**  
**[victoria.young@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:victoria.young@tea.state.tx.us)**