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Performance standards for STAAR to be phased in

AUSTIN –The commissioner of education today unveiled the performance standards students must achieve to pass or excel on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) end-of-course tests.

“These standards will be challenging for our students and will push academic performance to a new level in Texas. Students who pass the STAAR end-of-course assessments will be better prepared for success in the next course or in postsecondary pursuits,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

Three performance categories have been set for STAAR EOCs. The definitions for the categories are:

Level III: Advanced Academic Performance*

Performance in this category indicates that students are well prepared for the next grade or course. They demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in varied contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar. Students in this category have a high likelihood of success in the next grade or course with little or no academic intervention.

* For Algebra II and English III, this level of performance also indicates students are well prepared for postsecondary success.

Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance**

Performance in this category indicates that students are sufficiently prepared for the next grade or course. They generally demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in familiar contexts. Students in this category have a reasonable likelihood of success in the next grade or course but may need short-term, targeted academic intervention.

** For Algebra II and English III, this level of performance also indicates students are sufficiently prepared for postsecondary success.

Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

Performance in this category indicates that students are inadequately prepared for the next grade or course. They do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the assessed knowledge and skills. Students in this category are unlikely to succeed in the next grade or course without significant, ongoing academic intervention.

As the state has done for at least the past two testing programs – the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) – the passing standards will be phased in. The Level II passing standards will be a four-year, two-step process. A two-year phase-in will be used for Level III performance on English III reading and writing and Algebra II only.

The phase-in approach was adopted because of the significant increase in the rigor of the STAAR program and because the distance between the initial and final passing standards for Level II are generally larger than the distance between the initial and final passing standards for TAKS.

The phase-in will provide districts with time to adjust instruction, provide additional staff training, and close knowledge gaps.

“We have found that a gradual increase in standards sets realistic but challenging expectations for our students and results in improved academic performance,” Scott said.

The performance standards each student must achieve will be based on the year a student takes his first end-of-course assessment.

- If students take their first STAAR EOC assessment in 2012 or 2013, they will be held to the first set of Level II phase-in performance standards for every assessment in that content area.
- Students who take their first STAAR EOC assessment in 2014 or 2015 will be held to the second set of Level II phase-in performance standards.
- The final Level II performance standards will be in place for any students who take their first STAAR EOC assessment in 2016 or later.
- The final Level III performance standards will be in place for any students who take their first STAAR English III writing and reading and Algebra II EOC tests in 2014 or later.

Level II standards

The scores needed to reach the various performance levels are expressed as scale scores. Once fully phased in, the score needed to achieve Level II performance will be a scale score of 4000 for each of the following assessments: Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, world geography, world history, and United States history. The initial phase-in standard for these tests will be 3500.

The scale score needed to achieve a Level II performance on each of the English I, II, and III reading and writing assessments is 2000. The initial phase-in score is 1875.

Level III standards

The Level III standards will not be phased in for English I and II reading and writing, Algebra I, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, world geography, world history and U.S. history. The final performance standards on these tests for Level III will range from 4333 to 4634, depending on the assessment.

An initial phase-in score of 4080 will be required to earn a Level III performance for the Algebra II assessment with the final Level III score set at 4411.

The English III reading assessment will require an initial phase-in score of 2135, while the English III writing assessment will require an initial score of 2155. The fully-implemented standards will require a score of 2356 on the English III reading test and a score of 2300 on the English III writing test.

State law now requires students graduating in 2015 or later to earn a Level III rating on Algebra II and English III to qualify for the state's Distinguished Achievement Program high school diploma.

The attached table lists the scale scores needed on all the STAAR EOC assessments. The category called minimum refers to a score that is below Level II but is high enough to be included in the cumulative score students must achieve on the three assessments in each core content area.

Texas classroom teachers and administrators, higher education faculty, education policy experts, staff from the Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and psychometricians who are experts in the development of educational tests, worked together for four years to prepare passing standard recommendations. Additionally, TEA and Coordinating Board staff conducted research studies over a three-year period to link performance on a STAAR assessment and performance on other assessments in the same content area.

TEA expects to release the first round of STAAR results in June.

Additional information about the STAAR EOC standards can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>.

Phase-in and Final Recommended Level II and Level III Standards and Minimum Scores

Assessment	2012 & 2013 Phase-in 1 Minimum	2012 & 2013 Phase-in 1 Level II	2014 & 2015 Phase-in 2 Minimum	2014 & 2015 Phase-in 2 Level II	2016 Final Recommended Minimum	2016 Final Recommended Level II	2012 & 2013 *Phase-in Level III	2014 Final Recommended Level III
English I Reading	1813	1875	1887	1950	1936	2000	N/A	2304
English II Reading	1806	1875	1880	1950	1929	2000	N/A	2328
*English III Reading	1808	1875	1882	1950	1932	2000	2135	2356
English I Writing	1798	1875	1872	1950	1921	2000	N/A	2476
English II Writing	1807	1875	1880	1950	1928	2000	N/A	2408
*English III Writing	1808	1875	1881	1950	1929	2000	2155	2300
Algebra I	3371	3500	3626	3750	3872	4000	N/A	4333
*Algebra II	3350	3500	3604	3750	3852	4000	4080	4411
Geometry	3362	3500	3619	3750	3868	4000	N/A	4397
Biology	3367	3500	3621	3750	3868	4000	N/A	4576
Chemistry	3348	3500	3600	3750	3846	4000	N/A	4607
Physics	3346	3500	3600	3750	3848	4000	N/A	4499
World Geography	3383	3500	3632	3750	3874	4000	N/A	4404
World History	3326	3500	3576	3750	3822	4000	N/A	4634
U.S. History	3372	3500	3624	3750	3869	4000	N/A	4440

STAAR Standard-Setting Process

Nine steps for setting STAAR performance standards:

1. Conduct validity and linking studies
2. Develop performance labels and policy definitions
3. Develop grade/course specific performance level descriptors
4. Policy committee
5. Standard-setting committee
6. Reasonableness review
7. Approval of performance standards
8. Implementation of performance standards
9. Review of performance standards