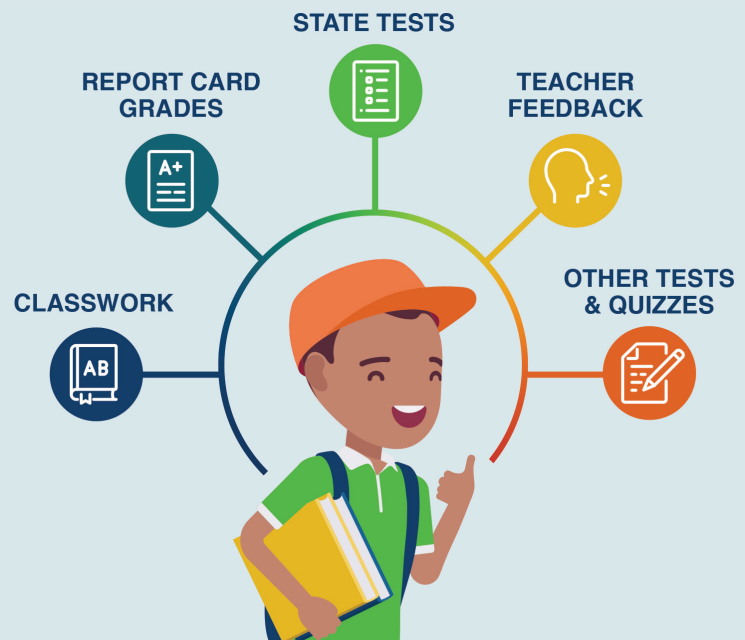




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN TEXAS: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in grades 3-8 and once in high school. In Texas, students take the State of Texas Academic Assessment of Readiness (STAAR) in third through eighth grade in English language arts, math and science and in social studies in fifth and eighth grade.

High school students take STAAR end-of-course exams in Algebra 1 English 1 and 2, Biology and U.S. History. To earn a diploma, students must achieve a score in the "Approaches Grade Level" or higher for each course. Students can retake the test and there are other options for students to demonstrate they have learned the materials that can be decided by teachers and school leaders.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, STAAR is focused on grade level material and is aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom everyday throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The STAAR test can be taken online or with paper and pencil, and by the 2022-2023 school year, it will be completely online. Texas law requires that at least 25% of the test questions are not multiple choice, so the test includes questions that ask students to explain their answers, write a well organized essay and solve real world math problems. Texas teachers have worked closely with the state to provide input into test questions.

Grade 3: Math

Serafina put a total of 42 cupcakes into packages. She put 6 cupcakes into each package.

What is the total number of packages Serafina used for these cupcakes?

Record your answer and fill in the bubbles on your answer document.
Be sure to use the correct place value.

Grade 6: ELA

Read this sentence from paragraph 14.

Zach, normally as active as a fly in a doughnut shop, was on his stomach sleeping quietly.

The author's use of a simile in this sentence conveys to the reader that Zach usually —

- A has trouble falling asleep
- B feels sick from eating sweets
- C has a great amount of energy
- D likes to sleep late in the morning



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The STAAR report gives families information on how well their child performed in different sets of skills in each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home. It can also help lead them to start meaningful conversations with teachers, to set goals for each student's areas of improvement and to identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

In Texas, families can also “log in” to get their child's detailed STAAR information. By entering the code from their child's STAAR report on www.texasassessment.com, families can see how their child has performed over time, and even see the questions they answered correctly and the questions they got wrong.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's STAAR Report :

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What are short term learning goals for my child to measure/ show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students take different types of tests throughout the school year. Some students take benchmark or diagnostic tests, such as MAP Growth, i-Ready or mCLASS. These are taken several times a year and measure important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While STAAR is only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

Teachers use STAAR results to understand student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, but it also helps them improve their instruction. They can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

STAAR results are critical to supporting school and district leaders in making informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level STAAR scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and highlights if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use STAAR scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use STAAR results to identify the schools and districts who need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers, tutors or purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- To see a sample score report, and to log in to see your child's STAAR results visit [texasassessment.com](https://www.texasassessment.com)
- To see a practice test, visit [TEA.Texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/STAAR/STAAR-released-test-questions](https://www.TEA.Texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/STAAR/STAAR-released-test-questions)
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit [PTA.org/FamilyGuides](https://www.PTA.org/FamilyGuides)
- To learn more about Texas PTA, visit [TXPTA.org/](https://www.TXPTA.org/)

