# STAAR A FAQ

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General Questions

1. Where do I find information about STAAR A?
   - Information about STAAR A can be found at two locations:
     - Pearson website: [http://texasassessment.com/staara](http://texasassessment.com/staara)

2. What information is available about STAAR A?
   - Educator Guide for STAAR A and STAAR Alternate;
   - Demonstration video for teachers and test administrators;
   - Sample selections and test questions;
   - Student tutorials with practice selections and test questions;
   - Student Tutorial Administration Directions;
   - STAAR A Accommodation Guidelines;
   - STAAR A Eligibility Requirements (English and Spanish);
   - Introduction to STAAR A: A Guide for Parents (English and Spanish); and

3. In which grade levels and subjects is STAAR A available?
   - The same grade levels and subjects as the general STAAR assessment.

4. Will STAAR A have different passing standards than STAAR?
   - No. STAAR A will have the same blueprint, time limits, progress measures, and assessed curriculum as STAAR.

5. Will the STAAR A assessment be the same length as general STAAR?
   - The only difference in the length of the assessment is STAAR A will NOT have field test questions.

6. Will a student be allowed to have scratch paper if taking the STAAR A?
   - Yes. Under the Allowable Test Administration Procedures and Materials, scratch paper is listed as an assistive tool available to any student who regularly benefits from the use of these materials during instruction. Any medium of writing notes during the test might be allowable, given that it does not provide information to the student, is not disruptive to or viewable by other students, and can be destroyed or erased after testing.
   - The list of Allowable Test Administration Procedures and Materials can be located here: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/manuals/dccm/](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/manuals/dccm/).
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7. Will STAAR A be available in Spanish?
   • No. Spanish versions of STAAR A are not available this year.

8. Will STAAR A be available in Braille?
   • No. Braille versions of STAAR A are not available this year.

9. Is there a paper based version of STAAR A?
   • Technology-based accommodations enable most students to test online. However, when the use of an accommodation is not feasible or appropriate, or if the administration of an online test is inappropriate due to a student's particular disability, a special request may be made to TEA for approval to administer a paper test booklet of the STAAR A assessment.
     o There are very rare, isolated incidents when a paper based version of STAAR A would be appropriate.
     o The paper administration request document will be available January 2015 and can be found on the Coordinator Manual Resources web page at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/manuals/dccm/.

10. Can a student take STAAR A in one subject area, and then take STAAR in another?
    • Yes.

11. What happens when a student selects “I’m Done” and exits the test when they are not actually done?
    • If a student has erroneously submitted a test before it is completed, the Campus Test Administrator or District Testing Coordinator must immediately contact Pearson Technical Support for resolution at 800-627-0225.
    • Do not wait until the Testing Window has closed. No action can be taken at the campus or district level.

12. Who do I contact if I am having technical issues with TestNav, the testing system?
    • For technical questions specific to the testing system, TestNav, contact Pearson directly at 1-800-627-0225 or via email at TxE PearsonAccess@support.pearson.com.
     o Technology resources can be found on Pearson’s website at: http://texasassessment.com/staara and the STAAR A Resources page on TEA’s website at http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/STAARA/.
     o The technology resources include:
       ▪ User’s Guide for the Texas Assessment Management System;
       ▪ Minimum System Requirements; and
       ▪ System Check for TestNav.
13. If a student previously took STAAR M, are they automatically eligible to take STAAR A?
   • No.
   • Students who took STAAR M in the past may or may not be eligible to take STAAR A.
   • Students who previously took the general STAAR with accommodations, may now be eligible to take STAAR A.
   • Assessment decisions for each student need to be considered on an individual basis and the eligibility requirements needs to be met.

14. Is there a limit to how many students can take STAAR A?
   • No. STAAR A is the STAAR assessment and the decision should be made on the eligibility requirements.

15. What will STAAR A testing results include?
   • STAAR A score reports will include the following:
     o individual performance level of students;
     o scale scores; and
     o number of questions answered correctly within each reporting category for each of the assessed grades and content areas.

16. How does SSI apply to students taking STAAR A?
   • For the 2014-2015 school year, SSI retest and promotion requirements will apply for STAAR, STAAR Spanish and STAAR A reading to students in grades 5 and 8.
   • The SSI retest and promotion requirements do not apply for STAAR, STAAR Spanish and STAAR A mathematics in grades 5 or 8 in the 2014–2015 school year.
   • Information about retest requirements for students receiving special education services who do not meet the standard on the first administration will be included in the Student Success Initiative (SSI) manual in the spring.
   • The SSI manual can be found at http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/ssi/.

17. What are the graduation requirements for students taking STAAR A?
   • For students receiving Section 504 services:
     o Students are required by TEC §28.025(c) to meet all curriculum requirements and pass all five EOC assessments in order to receive a Texas high school diploma.
   • For students receiving special education services:
     o The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee makes educational decisions for a student, including whether satisfactory performance on an EOC assessment shall also be required for graduation per Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §89.1070(b).
     o The proposed revisions to this rule (graduation requirements for students receiving special education services graduating on the Foundation High School Program) have not been finalized.
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- For students receiving special education services graduating on the Minimum High School Program (MHSP), Recommended High School Program (RHSP), or Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP):
  - Students must meet all curriculum requirements and pass all 5 EOC general assessments (STAAR or STAAR A) in order to graduate on the RHSP or DAP.
- The MHSP is the only option if:
  - the student did not meet the standard on at least one EOC general assessment, and the ARD committee determined no retesting is necessary.
  - the student took at least one STAAR Modified EOC assessment.
- Questions about curriculum, the Academic Achievement Record (AAR), and graduation requirements should be directed to TEA’s Curriculum Division.

18. If a student fails a STAAR A EOC, is he/she required to continue testing until he/she passes?
- For students receiving Section 504 services:
  - Students are required to pass all five EOC assessments in order to receive a Texas high school diploma.
- For students receiving special education services:
  - The ARD committee makes educational decisions for a student, including whether satisfactory performance on an EOC assessment shall also be required for graduation.

19. What if a campus does not have enough computers to administer STAAR A?
- Campuses should plan for STAAR A online administrations prior to the test dates.
- Contact TEA for questions about flexible testing scheduling due to computer limitations.
- Insufficient computers is not a justification for a paper based version of STAAR A.

20. What if a student is not proficient using a computer?
- TEA recommends that teachers become familiar with STAAR A and help guide students through practice selections and test questions until they are comfortable with the STAAR A online testing interface and accommodations. The training demonstration for administrators and Student Tutorials are located on the Pearson website and STAAR A Resources TEA website.
- Also refer to STAAR Accommodations: Manipulating Test Materials and Basic Transcribing for information about some of the possible allowable accommodations for computer-based assessments.

21. Are schools allowed to administer more than one grade level of STAAR A tests in the same room?
- Yes, as long as security of testing materials is not compromised.

22. Are schools allowed to have students taking STAAR and STAAR A test in the same room?
- Yes, as long as security of testing materials is not compromised.
23. Are schools allowed to have students taking STAAR A and STAAR SOA test in the same room?
   • Yes, as long as security of testing materials is not compromised.

24. Were the STAAR A tests piloted?
   • Yes. TEA held cognitive labs in more than 60 districts throughout 3 regions with students from a range of ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and disabilities.

Eligibility Criteria

25. Who is eligible to take the STAAR A test?
   • Students with identified disabilities who are receiving special education services;
   • Students identified with dyslexia or a related disorder (as defined in Texas Education Code §38.003) and are receiving Section 504 services; and
   • Meet all of the eligibility criteria.

26. Is there required paperwork that must be completed in order for a student to take STAAR A?
   • Yes. An ARD or 504 committee must complete a STAAR A Eligibility Requirement form in order to identify that the student meets eligibility requirements.
   • The form is a state required documentation form and needs to be retained locally.

27. What has to be identified on the STAAR A Eligibility Requirement form?
   • There are 3 steps to the Eligibility Requirements:
     o Step I: Indicate eligible services;
     o Step II: Review the eligibility criteria per subject – two or more accommodations must be checked in each subject tested with STAAR A in order to meet eligibility criteria; and
     o Step III: Summarize assessment decision.

28. Can a change to STAAR A be done through an amendment or must a full ARD meeting be called?
   • If a student’s ARD document already indicates that two or more accommodations per subject area in Step II are routinely provided in the classroom, STAAR A can be added through an amendment.
   • If those accommodations are not reflected in the ARD paperwork, an amendment will not be appropriate. IDEA disallows amendments for the following situations: change in instructional arrangement, changes in eligibility, and MDRs.
   • Districts should refer to their own local policy pertaining to full ARDs vs. amendments. Districts may require full ARD meetings in order to make assessment decisions.
29. Does a student have to have oral administration as an accommodation to be eligible for STAAR A?
   • No.

30. If a student only has a few accommodations, (i.e. individual structured reminders and a hundreds chart) would that student have to take the online test, or would they be able to take the paper and pencil general STAAR with their two accommodations?
   • Yes. The general STAAR should always be the first consideration with or without accommodations.
   • The Accommodations Triangle still exists for the 2015 assessment cycle for general STAAR and STAAR A.

31. Does the eligibility criteria accommodation need to be written verbatim in the student’s ARD paperwork?
   • No. There only needs to be evidence of that “type” of accommodation in the IEP that is effective for the student based on their disability and their PLAAFP statement. The documentation should provide proof that such accommodations are happening on a routine basis.

32. Does the wording in the student’s IEP for instructional accommodations need to exactly match the testing accommodations that are offered on STAAR?
   • Instructional accommodations will vary from what are allowable on state assessment. If a student requires instructional accommodations that are different from testing accommodations, they should receive them regardless of the difference.

33. Should instructional accommodations be limited to those available for the STAAR A assessment?
   • No. Instructional accommodations should be customized for individual learning.

34. Can you still provide modifications even though there is no longer a modified assessment?
   • YES! Modifications have not been eliminated because the STAAR Modified assessment no longer exists. The decision to provide modified instruction is not made based on the state assessment the student takes.
   • The ARD Committee makes the determination based on the student’s PLAAFP and what type of instruction the student needs.
Accommodations Triangle

35. What are the major changes to the Accommodations Triangle for the 2015 testing year?
   - There were additions of new eligibility criteria for oral administration, supplemental aids, math manipulatives, which now includes:
     o Identified with dyslexia or a related disorder per TEC §38.003
   - Standardized Oral Administration (SOA) available in additional grades and subjects;
   - Grade 8 mathematics deleted from calculation devices (calculator required now).

36. Where do I find more information about the allowable accommodations on the Accommodations Triangle for STAAR and STAAR A?
   - Information can be found on the TEA website at: http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/.

37. Will students still be allowed access to other accommodations if they are taking the STAAR A?
   - Yes. Students are still allowed access to any other accommodation from the TEA Allowable Accommodations Triangle as long as the accommodation is routinely, independently, and effectively used in the classroom.
   - Type 2 accommodations will continue to require a campus to submit an Accommodation Request Form (ARF). The window for submitting ARFs will open in January 2015.

38. Can a student have a checklist of appropriate predetermined accessibility features on test day?
   - Yes. Teachers and students may work together to determine the appropriate settings for voice speed, zoom percentage, and color contrast. These settings may be written out for the student to be used during testing administration.
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STAAR A Embedded Accommodations

39. What are the embedded accommodations and accessible features available for STAAR A?

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40. What does a pop-up include?
   - Definitions or clarification of words or phrases using plain language;
   - Visual support for questions and answer choices by adding graphics, photographs, or animations;
   - Specific information isolated in a question, graphic or list that is referenced in the question;
   - Applying a supplemental aid to specific questions or answer choices;
   - Formula support when a question specifies the measure or conversion to be performed; and/or
   - Clarifying information for a graphic organizer, political cartoon or map.

41. What does a rollover include?
   - Condensing text by rewording complex questions, answer choices, or boxed text in a selection;
   - Bulleting or separating steps in a process; and/or
   - Paraphrasing historical excerpts.

42. Where can I find more information about pop-ups, rollovers, and the other embedded accommodations?
   - Refer to the TEA STAAR A Accommodation Guidelines for a full explanation of pop-ups and rollovers as well as the Tutorials found at:
     - Pearson website: [http://texasassessment.com/staara](http://texasassessment.com/staara)

43. If a child is using the zoom feature, does this affect the other accessibility features/tools?
   - No. The accessibility features/tools still zoom to the same magnification.
44. Will the calculator function be available on all STAAR A math and science tests?
   • No. The calculator function on STAAR A will only be available for the grades in which all students have access to a calculator (Grade 8 mathematics, Algebra I, Biology).
   • Other grade levels will need to meet the student eligibility criteria for Calculation Devices on the Accommodations Triangle. If they meet the criteria, then they are able to use a handheld calculator on STAAR A.

45. How is the text-to-speech function handled for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing?
   • For students who are eligible for STAAR A, but are deaf or hard-of-hearing and cannot access the text-to-speech function, a signed administration is allowed for those parts of the test that can be read aloud.
   • The test administrator should also read the specific guidelines for signing test content included in the document titled, “General Instructions for Administering State Assessments to Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing,” located on the Accommodation for Students with Disabilities webpage at http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/.

46. Does the text-to-speech feature read the pop-ups and rollovers?
   • Due to software limitations, the text-to-speech function is not able to read the pop-ups and rollovers. However, a student may request reading assistance from the testing administrator.
   • The testing administrator follows normal oral administration procedures in this situation.

47. What if a student who takes STAAR A really needs the pop ups and rollovers read aloud, but they do not ask for reading assistance?
   • The student must request the reading assistance.
   • In this situation, the ARDC needs to determine if the lack of reading support on that popup/rollover would outweigh the benefits of STAAR A in its entirety. If so, they may need to consider the general STAAR so that all components of the test will be read without the student’s request.

48. If students use a speech to text accommodation for the Writing test, will they still be able to do this through STAAR A online testing?
   • If a student is eligible for “spelling assistance” such as speech to text, they would still be able to use this accommodation while taking STAAR A.
   • However, the TestNav software does not have this feature, nor does it support integrating it at this time, so a student would need to compose their writing outside of TestNav and then have it “inputted” appropriately.
   • Thus, additional accommodations might need to be considered such as basic or complex transcribing in order to input their composition into the TestNav system.
49. Is there an example of a writing checklist on the writing test?

- The writing checklists will be in the Tutorials. There is a personal narrative checklist, expository checklist, and persuasive checklist between all of the tutorials. They are very general and connected solely to the rubric and the “Be sure to...” bullets on the actual prompt page in the test booklets.

50. If students have to be able to use the embedded accommodations routinely and effectively, what would be TEA’s suggestions to prepare students to take an electronic assessment in their typical classroom setting?

- Access the online tutorials that will lead the student through what types of accommodations are available. The tutorials will contain a variety of question types and subject areas that showcase the functionality of the STAAR A assessment.
- An electronic supplemental aid is not substantively different than a paper one. Students simply need to be able to manipulate it electronically. It is important to have students familiarize themselves with a certain format (i.e. the online test) in order to easily access the accommodations or augmentations it offers.
- When students utilized the SOA in a cognitive lab, students adjusted well and did not have an issue working through the materials. The assumption is that students will do the same with the STAAR A assessment.
- There are some software applications that have been helpful in order to get students used to a computerized voice for SOA (i.e. WordTalk), so this could be a strategy to prepare students.
  - ESC-20 Assistive Technology specialists could assist with this, if applicable.
    - Cindy Miller: cindy.miller@esc20.net
    - Emily Morlandt: emily.morlandt@esc20.net
- Classroom accommodations do not have to be provided through an electronic format such as TestNav in order to prepare them, but by ensuring that regular accommodations are provided on a routine basis is the best way to ensure a student is able to utilize them appropriately.