



April 26, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians of FISD Elementary Students,

By now you are aware that The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) has replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) beginning this school year. Students in grades K-2 are not required to take a state assessment although we use local assessments to measure their academic growth.

Third graders take STAAR assessments in **reading** and **mathematics**.

Fourth graders take STAAR assessments in **reading, mathematics, and writing**.

Fifth graders take STAAR assessments in **mathematics, reading, and science**.

What is Different about STAAR™?

The STAAR test is designed to be more rigorous than TAKS. In all content areas, STAAR will include questions that assess knowledge and skills at a greater depth and higher level of cognitive complexity. Each assessment has increased in length compared to TAKS, and there is now a four-hour time limit for the STAAR grades 3-8 assessments. The new assessments still measure the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills with more emphasis on the rigor level of the eligible TEKS at each grade level.

- For reading, greater emphasis will be placed on critical analysis of passages rather than literal understanding and reading passages will include a variety of genres.
- On the science and mathematics tests, STAAR will include a type of open-ended question known as a griddable item.
- The writing STAAR has expanded to two days. Students write one narrative and one expository composition. Multiple choice items on the fourth grade STAAR include questions in the areas of editing and revising.

Illustrations of the test design for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students along with sample test items are available at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/.

How does STAAR™ affect promotion to the next grade level?

In the past, 5th grade students had to pass the reading and math TAKS test to be promoted to 6th grade. This requirement is called SSI, or the Student Success Initiative. SSI has been suspended for the 2011-2012 school year **only** because performance standards for STAAR at grades 3-8 will not be set by the state and the Texas Education Agency until the *fall of 2012*. **Confidential Student Reports** from the testing this spring will not be available for campuses or parents until **January, 2013**.

For the 2011–2012 school year, campus personnel will use other relevant academic information and attendance requirements to make promotion/retention decisions since we will not have these performance standards for the STAAR assessments. According to FISD policy (EIE Local), a final average of all core content areas of 70 or above **and** a grade of 70 or above in 4 of the 5 core areas (Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies) is required for promotion to the next grade level.

Criteria for an invitation to **Summer School** have been set by the district for students who are at risk of not succeeding in the subsequent grade level as identified by local assessments in reading and math and grades.

As we learn more about how data will be reported to districts and campuses, we will keep you informed. Again, we recommend that you visit the TEA website listed above for more information.

Thank you for your continued support of your child's education in FISD!