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Texas students show dramatic academic growth during TAKS era

AUSTIN - In this last full year of TAKS testing, passing rates on every single Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test at every grade improved dramatically since 2003 when the exams were first given, according to preliminary results released today by the Texas Education Agency.

This substantial improvement occurred even as the passing requirements increased over the life of the testing program and as results on TAKS (Accommodated), a test given to some special education students, were included in the calculations in later years.

This year, passing rates on 23 of the 27 subject area tests given in English were in the 80 to 99 percent range.

“We’re very proud of the academic growth Texas students have shown during the TAKS era. TAKS, along with increasing curriculum standards and a focus on college readiness, pushed our students to new performance levels,” Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said.

The 2010-2011 school year marks the last full year of TAKS testing. Beginning next school year, students in grades 3-9 will take the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™). Following the Texas tradition of continually increasing academic standards, STAAR will be a more rigorous testing program than its predecessor.

Students currently in ninth, 10th and 11th grades will continue to take TAKS to meet their graduation requirements. Subsequent classes must pass STAAR end-of-course exams to fulfill their graduation requirements.

High School

Ninety-two percent of the students in the Class of 2011 have passed all four exit-level exams, meeting one of the major graduation requirements. This compares to an 89 percent passing rate for the Class of 2005, which was the first class required to pass TAKS exit-level tests to graduate.

The cumulative passing rate on the English language arts test is 97 percent for this year's seniors. The math passing rate is 94 percent. The passing rate on the social studies test is 99 percent and 96 percent on the science TAKS.

High school juniors this year earned passing rates of 90 percent or higher on each of the four parts of the exit-level exam. Ninety-nine percent of the students passed the exit-level social studies test, up from 78 percent in 2003. Ninety-five percent of the students passed the exit-level English language arts test, compared to 61 percent when the test was first given.

Math passing rates more than doubled during this time period, rising from 44 percent in 2003 to 90 percent this year. Similar improvement was seen on the exit-level science exam where rates rose from 47 percent to 91 percent. Scores on all four tests held steady or increased when compared to 2010 results with English language arts rates up two percentage points, math and social studies up one percentage point and science passing rates unchanged.

Students must pass all four parts of the exit-level exam, along with their courses, to receive a diploma from a Texas public school. Eighty-four percent of the students in the Class of 2012 have passed all tests taken. Students who failed any of the tests have four more opportunities to take the tests before graduation.

Scores for 10th grade showed strong growth during the TAKS period as well. Passing rates from English language arts rose from 66 percent to 91 percent during the nine-year period. The math passing rate rose from 48 to 74 percent, while science rates climbed from 42 percent to 76 percent. In 2003, social studies passing rates were 71 percent but by 2011 had reached 93 percent. Between 2010 and 2011, the passing rates rose two percentage points on science, one percentage point on the English language arts test and held steady on math and social studies.

Passing rates on the ninth-grade reading test rose from 66 percent in 2003 to 89 percent in 2011. However, that was a three-percent decline from the 2010 passing rate. Math rates rose from 44 percent to 70 percent in 2011, a rate unchanged from 2010.

Grades 6-8

Eighth-grade math passing rates rose to 80 percent this year, up from 51 percent in 2003. Reading rates improved from 77 percent to 89 over the nine years. Social studies rates jumped from 77 percent to 95 percent during this period. Passing rates on the eighth-grade science exam, which has been given since 2006, increased from 52 percent to 79 percent. Compared to 2010 results, scores were up one percentage point for science, down two percentage points for reading, and held steady for math and social studies. Under the state's Student Success Initiative, students must pass the reading and math tests to be promoted to ninth grade.

At seventh grade, reading scores improved from 72 percent to 86 percent from 2003 to 2011. Math scores increased 30 percentage points to 81 percent while writing scores increased from 76 percent to 94 percent during this period. The math and reading passing rates were unchanged from 2010 levels, while writing dropped one point.

Passing rates on the sixth-grade reading TAKS increased from 71 percent to 84 percent between 2003 and 2011. Math rates improved to 83 percent, a 23-percentage-point gain during this era. These rates represented a one-percentage point gain on math and a two-percentage point decline in reading rates over the past year.

Grades 3-5

Students must pass the fifth grade reading and math TAKS in order to be promoted to sixth grade and the vast majority of students did so on the first try. Eighty-six percent passed math, up from 65 percent in 2003. Reading rates rose from 67 percent to 87 percent during this period. Passing rates on the fifth-grade science test showed huge gains rising to 87 percent this year, compared to 39 percent when the test was first given. Compared to 2010 results, reading passing rates were up two percentage points, math was unchanged and science rates fell one percentage point. Students in both fifth and eighth grades who did not pass the math or reading test have two more testing opportunities before the next school year begins to pass the tests.

Fourth-grade students earned passing rates of 85 percent in reading, 88 percent in math and 90 percent in writing. This compares to 2003 passing rates of 76 percent, 70 percent and 78 percent, respectively. Compared to last year, the 2011 scores showed no change in math rates, a decline of one percent for reading and a two percent decline for writing.

At third grade, math passing rates rose from 74 percent in 2003 to 87 percent in 2011, which is one percentage point higher than 2010 rates. Passing rates on the reading test rose from 81 percent in 2003 to 89 percent this year, which is a three-percentage point decline over 2010 results. Students are no longer required to pass the reading test to be promoted to fourth grade.

Grades 3-5, Spanish

The passing rate on the fifth-grade reading test was 76 percent, up from 51 percent in 2003. The math passing rate was 49 percent, up from 37 percent. Passing rates on the fifth-grade science test reached 57 percent, up from six percent. While the math and science results are low, the 2011 results represent the largest one-year gains on any TAKS tests this year. The science passing results are six-percentage points higher than 2010 results, while the math results are five percentage points higher than last year's results.

Eighty-three percent of the fourth-grade students passed the reading test in Spanish, up from 59 percent in 2003. Seventy-four percent passed the Spanish math TAKS, compared to 48 percent nine years ago. Ninety-three percent passed the fourth-grade Spanish writing exam in contrast to 82 percent in 2003. Compared to 2010 rates, the math rates are two percent higher, the writing score is one percentage point lower and the reading rates are unchanged.

At third grade, 86 percent of the students who took the Spanish reading test passed it, compared to 67 percent in 2003. The math scores rose 20 percentage points to 77 percent during this period. This represents a four-percentage-point increase over 2010 results on the math test and a one-percentage point increase on the reading test.

Additional information

Summaries of the [statewide results](#) are available on the TEA website.

TEA does not yet have 2011 TAKS results for individual districts and schools. Those have been sent directly from the testing contractor to local districts and charters.

However, district-level TAKS results for 2003 to 2010 are available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/cgi/sas/htmlSQL/student.assessment/reporting/taksagg/index.hspl>.