

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Progress Measure Questions and Answers

Defining the STAAR Progress Measure

1. What is the STAAR progress measure?

The STAAR progress measure provides information about the amount of improvement or growth that a student has made from year to year. For STAAR, progress is measured as a student's gain score, the difference between the score a student achieved in the prior year and the score a student achieved in the current year. Individual student progress is then categorized as *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, or *Exceeded*.

2. For what grades and content areas is progress measured for STAAR?

Student progress will be measured for students in grades 4 through high school in reading, mathematics, and writing. In 2013, progress measures are available for reading in grades 4–8, English I reading, and English II reading; for mathematics in grades 4–8 and Algebra I; and for writing in English II writing. Progress measures will be available for additional grades and courses in writing in future years.

3. How are the STAAR progress-measure classifications (*Did Not Meet*, *Met*, and *Exceeded*) determined?

The STAAR progress-measure classifications are determined by comparing a student's gain score—the difference between the student's current year score and prior year score—to a progress target.

The STAAR progress measures and progress targets are grounded in the STAAR performance standards and the goal of having all students achieve at or above Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance.

The *Met* progress target is defined as the distance between the final recommended performance standards from the prior year grade and the current year grade in the same content area. This definition is based on the goal that students in Level II will at least maintain Level II performance. For example, if a student is currently in Level II for grade 4 reading, the expectation is that the student will at least maintain Level II performance in grade 5 reading. This means that the student scored at least a 1550 in grade 4 reading (based on the final recommended Level II standard). To maintain Level II in grade 5 reading, the student would need to earn a score of 1582 on the grade 5 reading test (based on the final recommended Level II standard) or higher. From grade 4 to grade 5, if the student's score increased by 32 points ($1582 - 1550 = 32$), then the student would have maintained Level II performance. Therefore, a student who was in Level II in grade 4 reading would need to increase his/her score by at least 32 points in grade 5 to have *Met* the progress target. Because the Level II performance standards are not the same across grades and content areas (i.e., they do not have the same numerical value), the *Met* progress target value will differ from grade to grade and across content areas.

The same concept applies to students who were in Level III: Advanced Academic Performance in the prior year. For these students the *Met* progress target is defined as the distance between the Level III standards in the prior year grade and content area and the current year grade and content area (see question 5 for more information about the use of the final recommended standards).

Because the goal is for all students to score at or above Level II, students who were in Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance in the prior year have the same progress targets as students who were in Level II.

The *Exceeded* progress target is a designation reserved for those students who have demonstrated significant growth over the course of the year, beyond that of the *Met* progress target. The *Exceeded* progress target is defined as the distance between the Level II standard in the prior year and the Level III standard in the current year. For example, if a student achieved the Level II standard of 1550 in grade 4 reading and then achieved the Level III standard of 1667 in grade 5 reading, this would represent significant growth. Because this 117-point increase ($1667 - 1550 = 117$) is much larger than the 32 point progress targets for *Met* (for Level II), this progress would be classified as having *Exceeded* the progress target. Because the Level II and Level III standards are not the same across grades and content areas (i.e., they do not have the same numerical value), the *Exceeded* progress target value will differ from grade to grade as well as across content areas.

For more details regarding the progress classifications, including the progress targets for all grades and content areas, see

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769805753&libID=25769805753>.

4. Are there any exceptions to the *Met* and *Exceeded* definitions described above?

Yes. There are some places on the STAAR scale, specifically at the extreme high and low ends of the scale, where the application of the *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, and *Exceeded* definitions would not be appropriate. At the extreme ends of the scale, unlike the rest of the scale, answering one more question correctly results in large differences in scale scores. For this reason, several places on the scale have been identified as exceptions to the *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, and *Exceeded* definitions.

- All students scoring at the three highest raw scores in the current year will be classified as having *Exceeded* the progress target.
- Students who maintained Level III performance from the prior year to the current year will be classified as having *Met* or *Exceeded* the progress target. (The *Did Not Meet* classification will not be applied to these students.)
- Students scoring below chance in the current year will be classified as *Did Not Meet* progress.

Chance represents the score that could be reasonably obtained by guessing alone. For the reading and mathematics tests, chance is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$, or 25%, of the possible multiple-choice raw-score points since these questions have four answer options. The end of course (EOC) reading tests also include short answer questions. Chance on these tests is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$, or 25%, of the possible multiple-choice raw-score points and scores of zero on the short answer questions. Writing tests contain both multiple-choice questions and essays that are then weighted and combined to compute the total-test score. For these tests, chance is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$, or 25%, of the possible

multiple-choice points, plus the weighted value associated with summed scores of 2 on the essays (representing a rubric score of 1 from both readers).

See question 12 for more information about the definition of chance on STAAR Modified tests.

All students, even those that meet the exceptions defined above, must meet several criteria in order to receive a progress measure. See question 16 for these criteria.

5. Why are the final recommended standards, rather than the current phase-in standards, used to determine the progress targets?

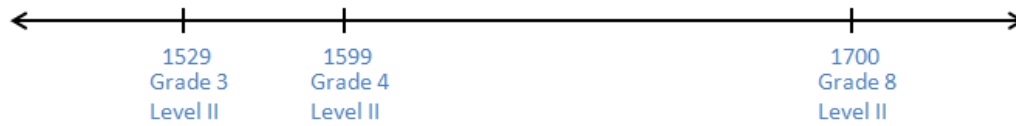
The final recommended standards are the values that resulted from meetings with hundreds of Texas educators. These values were recommended as representative of Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance and Level III: Advanced Academic Performance. During the process of making these recommendations, Texas educators considered empirical data related to STAAR and other tests, as well as the goal of preparing students for success beyond high school. While the phase-in standards change over time (e.g., when moving from phase-in 1 to phase-in 2), the final recommended standards remain constant and represent the standards to which students will be held to in the future. For these reasons, the final recommended standards, rather than the phase-in standards, are used to define the progress targets.

The decision to use the final recommended standards has minimal impact on the progress targets. Specifically, the Level III standards are not being phased in; therefore, the progress targets that use the Level III standards are the same whether the final recommended or phase-in standards are used. In addition, in the places where the progress targets would differ if the phase-in standards were used, the differences are relatively small. For example, based on the final recommended standards, the grade 5 reading *Met* progress target for students who were in Levels I or II in grade 4 is 32. In comparison, this value would be 36 if the phase-in 1 standards were used to define the progress target.

6. Why are some of the progress targets zero or negative?

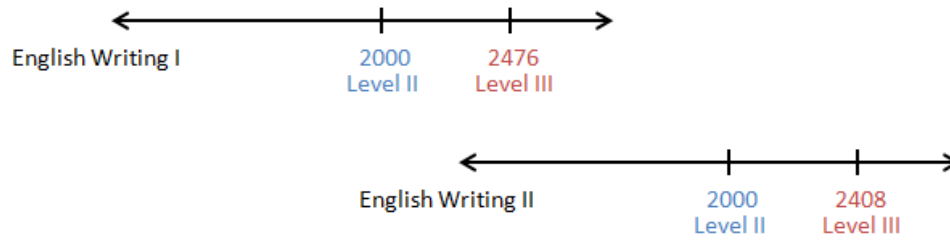
The progress targets are based on the final recommended standards (for both Level II and Level III) on successive tests. For grades 3–8 reading and mathematics, scores are reported on a vertical scale. This means that one continuous scale is used to report scores for all tests within the same content area for grades 3–8. The lower end of this scale includes the scores for the lower-grade tests (grades 3 and 4), while the higher end of the scale includes the scores for the higher-grade tests (grades 7 and 8). As an example, the final recommended Level II standard for grade 3 mathematics is 1529, and the final recommended Level II standard for grade 4 mathematics is 1599. Because of the vertical scale, the higher value in grade 4 reflects increased performance and knowledge expectations as compared to grade 3. The Level II standard for grade 8 mathematics is larger still, 1700, again reflecting increased performance and knowledge expectations within the same vertical scale.

Because scores on a vertical scale increase across grades, progress target values are positive. For example, the *Met* progress target for grade 4 mathematics, for students who achieved Level II performance on grade 3 mathematics, is 70 ($1599 - 1529 = 70$).



In contrast, the writing tests and the EOC tests are on horizontal scales. This means that the same score values are used for tests within the same content area. For example, the final recommended Level II standard for both English I writing and English II writing is 2000.

For the tests that use horizontal scales, the progress targets may be zero or negative. Using the example above, the *Met* progress target for English II writing for students who achieved Level II performance on English I writing is 0 ($2000 - 2000 = 0$). The *Met* progress target for English II writing for students who achieved Level III performance on English I writing is -68 because the English I writing Level III standard is 2476 and the English II writing Level III standard is 2408 ($2408 - 2476 = -68$).



While it may seem odd to have progress targets that are zero or negative, these values are an expected product of a horizontal scale. Even though some progress targets may be small or negative, they still represent increased performance from one year to the next because of the increased difficulty in content.

7. Can a high-achieving student still demonstrate progress?

Yes. Students who consistently earn high scores, even those in Level III: Advanced Academic performance, have the opportunity to earn the *Met* and *Exceeded* progress classifications. Exceptions to the *Met* and *Exceeded* definitions have been developed specifically for high-performing students. These exceptions are as follows.

- All students scoring at the three highest raw scores in the current year will be classified as having *Exceeded* the progress target.
- Students who maintained Level III performance from the prior year to the current year will be classified as either having *Met* or *Exceeded* the progress target. (The *Did Not Meet* classification will not be applied to these students.)

8. How are progress measures different from performance levels?

Performance levels describe and classify students' performance in the current year. The STAAR performance levels are

- Level III: Advanced Academic Performance
- Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance
- Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

In contrast, progress measures provide information about the improvement or growth that students have achieved between the prior year and the current year within the same content area. Individual student growth is compared to progress targets so that progress can be classified as *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, or *Exceeded* the progress target.

9. Can a student have increased performance levels but not have *Met* progress?

Yes, a student can move to a higher performance level without having *Met* progress. Typically this occurs when a student earns the highest score in a performance level in the prior year and then earns the lowest score in the next performance level in the current year. In these cases, while the student crosses the threshold and achieved the higher performance level, the gain score (the difference between the current year score and the prior year score) is not greater than or equal to the *Met* progress target.

10. Does the STAAR progress measure change a student's passing status on STAAR?

No. Passing status, which is determined by performance level, is independent from progress measures.

Applying the STAAR Progress Measures

11. Is progress measured the same way for all students in Texas?

Progress is measured slightly differently for different assessments. Specifically, progress is measured differently for students who take STAAR, STAAR Modified, and STAAR Alternate, as well as for English Language Learners (ELLs) who test in English.

12. How is progress measured for students who take STAAR Modified?

Student progress on STAAR Modified is very similar to student progress on STAAR. Progress targets are set in the same way as those for STAAR but are based on the STAAR Modified performance standards. Progress for STAAR Modified is classified in the same way as for STAAR, using the definitions of *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, and *Exceeded* progress targets as well as the same exceptions. However, because STAAR Modified questions include three answer options rather than four, the chance score is defined as $\frac{1}{3}$, or 33%, of the possible multiple-choice raw-score points. In all other ways, the progress measure for STAAR Modified is just like the progress measure for STAAR.

13. How is progress measured for students who take STAAR Alternate?

Because of the unique characteristics of STAAR Alternate and the students who take it, progress for STAAR Alternate is measured differently from that for STAAR and STAAR Modified. For STAAR Alternate, raw scores are grouped into stages such that each successive stage represents a meaningful score change.

While the method of measuring progress for STAAR Alternate is different, progress is still classified as *Did Not Meet*, *Met*, or *Exceeded*. If the student's current-year stage is greater than the student's prior-year stage, then the student is classified as having *Exceeded* the progress target. If the student's current-year stage is the same as the student's prior-year stage, then the student is classified as having *Met* the progress target. If the student's current-year stage is less than the student's prior-year stage, then the student is classified as *Did Not Meet* the progress target.

More information about the STAAR Alternate progress measure will be available in fall 2013.

14. How is progress measured for ELLs?

A separate ELL progress measure will be used for qualifying ELLs who test in English. This measure will take into account students' years in U.S. schools and their Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) proficiency level in determining appropriate progress targets. Additional details about this measure will be available during the 2013–2014 school year, when progress will be reported for the first time.

ELLs who tested with Spanish language tests will receive the STAAR progress measure rather than the ELL progress measure.

15. How can I calculate my student's STAAR progress measure?

In order to calculate a student's progress measure, the following information is needed:

- Test information from the current year, including
 - Grade level
 - Content area
 - Test language (English or Spanish)
 - Scale score
 - Raw score
 - Performance level (Level I, Level II, or Level III) based on the performance standards in place in the current year (phase-in 1, phase-in 2, or final recommended)
- Test information from the prior year, including
 - Grade level
 - Content area
 - Test language (English or Spanish)
 - Scale score
 - Performance level (Level I, Level II, or Level III) based on the performance standards in place in the prior year (phase-in 1, phase-in 2, or final recommended)
- Gain score = Current-year scale score – Prior-year scale score

For step-by-step instructions for calculating STAAR progress using this information, see <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769805753&libID=25769805753>.

16. Why do some students not receive a progress measure?

While progress measures are available for most students, there are circumstances in which progress measures are not calculated. If a student does not meet ALL of the following criteria within the same content area (reading, mathematics, or writing), the student will not receive a progress measure:

- Have a valid score from the prior year and the current year
- Have tested in successive grade levels or EOC tests in the prior year and the current year. Students who took the same grade-level or EOC test in the prior year and the current year will not receive a progress measure. Students who skipped a grade level between the prior year and the current year, with the exception of grade 7 mathematics to Algebra I, will not receive a progress measure.
- Have taken the same version of the test in the prior year and the current year (i.e., STAAR, STAAR Modified, or STAAR Alternate)
- Have taken tests in the same language in the prior year and the current year (i.e., English or Spanish)

Note that students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) and tested in Spanish language test versions must also meet the criteria above. LEP students tested in English language test versions will not receive a STAAR progress measure.

If a student does not meet one or more of these criteria, the student will not receive a progress measure. Some students may meet the criteria and receive a progress measure for one content area but not another.

17. Do students receive progress measures for retests?

In 2013, progress measures were calculated for students who took the grades 5 and 8 reading and mathematics retests in May and June. For these students, progress measures were calculated using students' prior year scores and the retest scores for the current year.

For EOC, progress was measured from the spring administration in 2012 to the spring administration in 2013 for successive EOC tests (for example, from English I reading in spring 2012 to English II reading in spring 2013). In the future, progress on EOC tests will be measured from the first administration of one test to the first administration of the next test (even if a student takes a test for the first time in the summer or fall).

18. Will students who move from grade 7 mathematics to Algebra I receive a progress measure?

While progress is generally calculated only for consecutive grades, progress measures will be reported for students who move from grade 7 mathematics to Algebra I since it is a common sequence taken by a large number of students in Texas.

Reporting the STAAR Progress Measures

19. When will STAAR progress measures be available?

Districts will receive progress-measure information for STAAR in July 2013 within their district accountability files. Progress measures for STAAR Modified, STAAR Alternate, and ELL students who tested in English will not be included in these files.

In fall 2013, progress measures will also be made available through the student data portal for STAAR, STAAR Modified, and STAAR Alternate.

In 2014, progress measures (including the ELL progress measure) will be provided on Confidential Student Reports (CSRs) for STAAR, STAAR Modified, and STAAR Alternate. This information will also be included in district accountability files and within the student data portal in 2014.

20. Will all progress measures be available in fall 2013?

No. The ELL progress measure will be provided for the first time in 2014 for ELL students testing in English. Progress measures will also be available in additional grades and courses for writing in 2014 and 2015.

Interpreting the STAAR Progress Measures

21. How is the STAAR progress measure useful to parents, teachers, and administrators?

Scale scores and performance levels convey information about how a student performed in the current year. Progress measures provide additional information by communicating how much the student has improved from the prior year to the current year. When used together, this information provides a more complete picture of the student's achievement.

For example, while a student may have achieved the Level II standard and passed the test, the student may not have met the progress target. This information could help parents, teachers, and administrators identify students for early interventions to prevent them from falling behind in the future.

In contrast, a student may not have achieved the Level II standard, but the progress measure may indicate that the student made significant gains from the prior year to the current year. The progress measure allows parents, teachers, and administrators to recognize such gains. Additionally, because progress measures are included within accountability, campuses and districts can also receive credit within Index 2: Student Progress for these student improvements, even if the student has yet to achieve Level II performance and pass the test. (See STAAR Progress Measures and Accountability section for more information.)

22. If state, district, or campus pass rates haven't changed from one year to the next, does that mean that students did not make progress?

STAAR performance levels and progress measures provide different information about student performance. Pass rates indicate the percent of students who achieved Level II or Level III performance on a test in a particular year. In comparison, progress measures indicate the amount of improvement or growth that students have made between the prior year and the current year. Students may make progress but remain in the same performance level. In this case, pass rates may not change even though students have made progress.

STAAR Progress Measures and Accountability

23. When will STAAR progress measures be used for accountability?

STAAR progress measures will be included in accountability beginning in 2013. In 2014, STAAR Modified, STAAR Alternate and ELL progress measures will also be included in accountability.

24. How are STAAR progress measures used for accountability?

Student progress on STAAR will be evaluated in Index 2: Student Progress in the new accountability system. This index is designed to give districts and campuses one point credit for tests that *Met* the progress target and two point credit for tests that *Exceeded* the progress target. Detailed information about Index 2: Student Progress is available online in Chapter 5 – Performance Index Indicators of the 2013 Accountability Manual at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/manual/ch05.pdf>.

Development of STAAR Progress Measures

25. Why did Texas develop and implement a measure of student progress?

Progress measures are legislatively mandated for the STAAR program (Texas Education Code §39.023, §39.034, and §39.053). To meet these requirements, Texas developed the STAAR progress measure. In doing so, the goal was to provide additional information about student performance that is easy to understand and helpful to students, parents, and teachers.

The STAAR progress measure is also used within accountability, allowing campuses and districts to receive credit for students who have made progress even if they have yet to achieve Level II performance and pass the tests. In this way, the STAAR progress measure credits the hard work of teachers, campuses, and districts who have helped students improve from one year to the next.

26. What process was used to develop the STAAR progress measure?

The development of the STAAR progress measure began before the tests were administered. A thorough investigation of progress measures was done to review the various approaches that could be used to measure student progress. As part of the development of the STAAR progress measure, many factors were considered, including the following:

- Different models for measuring student progress to determine the model best suited for STAAR
- Content relationships between STAAR tests to determine where progress measures are appropriate
- Federal and state requirements that determine how progress measures can be used for accountability
- Reporting options that allow information about progress to be communicated most effectively

Throughout the development of the STAAR progress measure, advice was sought from a number of advisory groups, including the Texas Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), a national group of psychometric experts. In addition, progress measures were discussed with the Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) and the Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC), which are groups made up of educators from various Texas campuses and districts as well as parents, higher education representatives, and legislative representatives.

From this research and advice, the STAAR progress measure was developed and refined. The goal of providing additional information about student performance that was both meaningful and easy to understand was at the forefront of all development activities.

27. How is the STAAR progress measure different from the Texas Projection Measure (TPM) that was used with TAKS?

While the TPM used calculations to predict future progress, the STAAR progress measure classifies the progress that students have already achieved. Through statistical techniques, the TPM used student scores from several years to predict if the student was expected to pass the test in the future. The STAAR progress measure is quite different in that it does not attempt to predict future performance. Rather, student scores from the prior year and the current year are compared to calculate the amount of improvement or growth the student has already made. This growth is then classified as *Did Not Meet, Met, or Exceeded*.