



Texas Puts Future Success to the Test



Everyone wants their child to succeed.

Their success doesn't just benefit the child and parent, but it can also benefit the school and community. We know education provides the skills and knowledge that children need to positively impact their lives and the world.

How do we know if they are learning what they need to know to move forward?

How do we determine if children truly comprehend the skills and ingest the knowledge they are being taught?

Are students ready for the world beyond high school?

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ABOUT US

The Texas Education Agency is the state agency that oversees primary and secondary public education. It is headed by the commissioner of education. The Texas Education Agency improves outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems.

In 2012 Texas ushered in a new era of testing and readiness by launching the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. STAAR is a standardized test taken at course end in Texas public schools. It measures reading, writing, math, science, and social studies skills from grades 3 to 12. STAAR is an imperative checks and balances tool to verify educators are properly preparing students for the next level.

STAAR was rolled-out to better evaluate classroom progress. The previous assessment tested several year's worth of learning, while STAAR tests student knowledge of the current grade courses. This creates better real-time metrics for evaluating the current year.

In turn, essential benchmarks are created to compare many factors that could influence a student's ability. STAAR doesn't just test the student; it measures the teacher, school, and district's success in educating students. Education is a two-way street, and STAAR ensures there are no roadblocks in the system that could hinder a student's success.

Another key difference is that STAAR test questions have a narrower focus and more multi-step questions, which pushes the tester to dive deeper into more complex problem-solving. This helps evaluate critical everyday application skills needed to succeed in the next grade level and beyond.

STAAR standards help teachers focus on lesson plans that prepare students for college and career readiness. While not all colleges look at standardized testing for admission, the test measures whether a student is ready for graduation. College and entering the workplace are a considerable change for a child. While they are considered an adult soon after graduation, they are often not adequately prepared for the challenges these new adventures bring. STARR helps flag improvements that may be needed in the system to help students be successful in these challenges.

Because the STAAR is a more complex test, misconceptions about it lend to a negative perception. One common misconception is that students and educators spend too much time on state testing, but the test is only four hours a year, translating to about 1.4% of the school year.

Another concern is that the stakes for the test are too high, causing anxiety in students and teachers. However, it simply tests students on basic educational standards and confirms that lessons are being properly taught and the student is ready for the next level. Because STAAR evaluates critical problem-solving abilities, educators must learn to incorporate the skills STAAR is testing for into their everyday lesson plans. They may need to change how they teach and find new ways to reach kids.

In order to improve the skills of students, one must measure their current abilities and make adjustments to either curriculum or educators to ensure proper education. This education is vital to the emotional, mental, and even physical health of the student during school and after graduation. If students are failing, we must take a critical look at why. STAAR highlights what the students should know and helps highlight what must be changed.

Whether students end up choosing college, vocational school, the workforce, or another path, it is imperative that they are prepared for what lies ahead in their adult lives. These tests ensure that students have the tools to tackle common issues and prepare them for their new lives.