



Internal Audit

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Audit

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To: Board of Trustees
Stephanie S. Elizalde, Ed.D., Superintendent

From: Robert Rubel, MBA, CPA, CIA, CISA
Chief Internal Audit Officer

Subject: State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness Audit

Executive Summary

The Dallas Independent School District (District) Office of Internal Audit (OIA) has completed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Audit.

The audit focused primarily on the District's processes and controls surrounding STAAR test administration and test security managed at the individual campuses and overseen by the Evaluation and Assessment (E&A) Department.

Overall, the District has processes and procedures in place to properly administer and secure STAAR tests in accordance with Texas Education Agency (TEA) standardized testing requirements. No observations were noted.

Background

Test Administration

The Assessment Department within Evaluation & Assessment (E&A) is responsible for coordinating the administration, distribution, and processing of the following assessments:

- STAAR 3-8
- STAAR End-of-Course (EOC)
- STAAR Alternate 2

STAAR assessments are primarily delivered online through the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) platform. Exceptions are permitted for students who require accommodations that cannot be provided online or for those without adequate access to technology. Auditors observed the Spring 2025 administration of STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC exams.

Each campus that administers a STAAR exam designates a campus testing coordinator (CTC) to oversee all testing logistics and manage the campus testing administrators (CTAs). CTAs are responsible for actively monitoring students during the administration of the exam. On larger campuses, testing operations can be extensive, with up to 50 testing rooms, each assigned a CTA. To ensure consistency and compliance, CTCs receive annual training from the Assessment Department on proper test administration procedures and security protocols. The CTC is then responsible for training all campus staff before each test administration.

To administer the applicable test, the Assessment Department must register all eligible students to TIDE. CTCs create test sessions that enable students to access their STAAR exams. Students use District issued laptops and campuses are instructed to have backup laptops on site. All campuses are required to have a campus testing plan that includes IT considerations. This plan must ensure that all devices and backup systems are fully functional prior to the start of the testing window.

Test Security and Integrity

In addition to overseeing STAAR test administration, the Assessment Department is responsible for implementing and maintaining test security protocols to ensure the integrity of the testing process and the validity of test results. STAAR exams are administered online, which enhances the ability of test administrators to manage and proctor exams securely.

On the day of testing, Campus Testing Administrators (CTAs) provide students with unique login credentials, granting access to the online testing platform only during the designated testing window. This control ensures that students cannot access or begin the test prior to the scheduled date. Additionally, students must complete an exam on the same day the exam is started, preventing multiple completion attempts and maintain the integrity of the testing process.

Validity of test results is closely linked to the proper assignment of STAAR exam participation score codes. Students who submit an exam in TIDE are automatically assigned a score code; however eligible students who do not submit an exam must have a score code manually entered by the CTC. For example, students that are absent, were unable to finish testing within the designated window, or refused to take the test must have separate score codes assigned. Misclassification of these codes can undermine the reliability of STAAR data and negatively impact the effectiveness of analytics used for future planning and improvement.

To monitor compliance and uphold testing standards, the Assessment Department conducts on-site campus visits. During the Spring 2025 STAAR exams, 98.6% of 223 campuses were observed at least once by the Assessment Department monitors. Monitors are required to complete an online survey to document and report any irregularities noted during these visits. Additionally, testing irregularities can be reported directly to the Assessment Department by any campus personnel using the Testing Irregularity and Security Violation (TISV) online form.

There are two categories of irregularities reported to the Assessment Department:

- Procedural Irregularities – typically involve deviations from standard testing protocols.
- Serious Irregularities – involve breaches that may compromise test security or the validity of results.

The Assessment Department reviews and investigates all reported irregularities, and all confirmed irregularities are reported to TEA. Furthermore, the Assessment Department conducts analysis of STAAR testing coding and outcomes to detect and assess any anomalies.

Scope

The audit included STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC testing completed during Spring of school year 2024-2025. Certain other matters, procedures, and transactions outside that period were reviewed to understand and verify information during the audit period.

Objective

The objective of the audit was to determine if STAAR exams were properly administered and secured in accordance with state and District policies, processes, and procedures.

Methodology

Auditors reviewed processes, controls, and supporting documentation related to STAAR testing administration. Detailed audit procedures are noted below:

To determine if campuses adhered to state and District policies, processes, and procedures surrounding test administration and security, auditors conducted site visits at the ten campuses noted below and observed the testing environment, test administration practices, and test security protocols.

Grade Levels PK-5

- Case View Elementary School

Grade Levels 6-8

- Piedmont G.L.O.B.A.L. Academy (MS)
- Seagoville MS

Grade Levels 9-12

- Seagoville High School (HS)
- Skyline HS
- Moisés E. Molina HS
- Booker T. Washington HS for the Performing and Visual Arts
- Hillcrest HS
- Bryan Adams HS Leadership Academy
- Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy

Primary criteria used for this audit were:

- 1) STAAR Test Administrator Manual, 2024-2025
- 2) Dallas Independent School District Test Security Manual 2024-2025
- 3) 2025 STAAR EOC Test Coordinator Training – Spring
- 4) 2025 District Test Monitor Training
- 5) EKB (Legal), Testing Programs: State Assessment, date issued June 5, 2024
- 6) EKB (Local), Testing Programs: State Assessment, date issued June 11, 2009
- 7) EK (Regulation), Testing Programs, date issued September 28, 2023

Audit Observations and Recommendations

No observations and recommendations were identified in our testing.

Conclusion

Overall, the District has processes and procedures in the place to properly administer and secure STAAR tests in accordance with Texas Education Agency (TEA) standardized testing requirements.

We would like to thank E&A and the campuses for their cooperation and assistance with this audit.

The audit was conducted in conformance with the Institute of Internal Auditors' *Global Internal Audit Standards*. Those standards require OIA to plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, reliable, and relevant evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our observations and conclusions based on our audit objectives. OIA believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our observations and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Respectfully submitted,

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