

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS



PN-GISD

Spring
2010

Both federal and state mandates utilize standardized tests as measures of success for individual students, schools, school districts, and even the state. However, there are also laws which govern the treatment of individuals with disabilities, prohibiting unfair practices which would impede learning opportunity. For some students to be fairly assessed, the testing must be modified. Just as the student has modified content, for other students the assessment design must allow for different methods of response and recognize the cognitive abilities of the student.

Two alternate assessments which provide a different academic standard are available in the TAKS system, the TAKS-Modified and the TAKS-Alternate. These assessments are necessary for students who access the appropriate grade-level curriculum through modified content and learning expectations (TAKS-Modified) or through essential knowledge content (TAKS-ALT).

TAKS-Modified (TAKS-M) covers the same grade-level TEKS as TAKS, but has been changed in format and test design. TAKS-M is an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards and is designed for students receiving special education services who meet participation requirements for TAKS-M and for whom TAKS is not appropriate. TAKS-M covers the same grade-level content as TAKS, but the assessment itself has been simplified through modifications in format (larger font, fewer items per page, etc.) and test design (fewer answer choices, simpler vocabulary and sentence structure, etc.). TAKS-M is administered in English for the same grades and subjects as TAKS; however, there is no Spanish-version available.

TAKS-Alt covers the same grade-level TEKS as TAKS, but assesses the mastery of underlying essential skills and knowledge for students who have significant cognitive disabilities and are receiving special education services. Unlike other statewide assessments in Texas, TAKS-Alt is not a traditional paper or multiple-choice test. Instead, the assessment involves teachers observing students as they complete activities that link to the grade-level TEKS curriculum. For each essence statement, three tasks have been provided. The complexity of tasks is selected from varying levels by the teacher who also individualizes the tasks with supports, materials, and response modes. Teachers then score student performance using the TAKS-Alt rubric and submit results and evidence through an online instrument. TAKS-Alt is administered in the same grades and subjects as TAKS.

References: www.tea.state.tx.us

[ARD Committee Decisions-Making Process for the Texas Assessment Program Revised Reference Manual for the 2010-2011 Testing Year](#), published by Texas Education Agency