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2008 TAKS scores show steady progress at most grades

AUSTIN – Consistent with their past performance, the vast majority of Texas’ eighth-grade students met state promotion requirements with 95 percent passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading exam and 75 percent passing the mathematics test.

This is the first year that eighth-grade students must pass the math and reading TAKS to be promoted to ninth grade. But this represents the third time this group of students have been required to meet promotion requirements that are part of the state’s Student Success Initiative. They were required to pass the third-grade reading exam and the fifth-grade reading and mathematics TAKS tests in order to move to the next grade.

Results from the second administration of the eighth-grade math exam are expected soon and should raise the cumulative passing percentage on that test above the current 75 percent before the school year’s end. The reading results reported are cumulative totals for the first and second administration.

“We have set high expectations for this group of students and each year they meet or exceed them. A high percentage of the students have passed the reading test and we expect the math passing rate to rise substantially when results from the second test administration are reported, if past trends are any guide,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

One more testing opportunity exists for those students who are still trying to master the exams. The eighth-grade math test will be given again on July 1 and the reading exam will be given on July 2.

Additionally, 90 percent of the eighth-grade class passed the social studies TAKS while 68 percent passed the science TAKS. These figures includes results from both the standard TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated), which is a form of TAKS for students served by special education who meet the eligibility requirements for certain specific accommodations.

TAKS (Accommodated), as required by federal law, tests students served by special education on material at the grade level in which they are enrolled. Test results reported today include both TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated) results. TAKS results reported in 2003-2007 are for TAKS only because TAKS (Accommodated) was not a testing option until 2008.

Third grade and fifth grade

Ninety-three percent of third-grade students have passed the reading TAKS on their first or second try. This is the exam, available in English or Spanish, that they must pass to meet the state’s promotion requirements.

Results released today show that 83 percent of the 314,376 third graders who took the mathematics test in English passed on the first administration. Seventy-seven percent of the 26,769 students who took the math test in Spanish passed it.

Fifth-grade students must pass both the reading and math exams in order to be promoted. During the first or second test administration, 90 percent passed the reading exam in English or Spanish. During the first administration of the mathematics TAKS given in English, 83 percent of the students passed. Among the 5,233 students who took the math test in Spanish, 48 percent passed.

Any third or fifth-grade student who has not yet passed the reading test may retake it July 2. Any fifth-grade student who has not passed the mathematics test may retake it July 1.

Under Texas law, any student who has not met the promotion requirements in grades 3, 5 and 8 is retained, unless his or her family appeals the retention to a Grade Placement Committee made up of the principal, teacher and parent. Parents should contact their local school to begin the appeal process.

Along with math and reading, fifth-grade students also take a TAKS science exam, which 81 percent mastered. Thirty-seven percent performed so well on the test that they earned a Commended Performance notation.

Among the students tested in Spanish, 35 percent passed the science exam.

Fourth grade

Overall, 83 percent of fourth-grade students passed either the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) reading test. Eighty-four percent of the students passed the math TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated), while 91 percent met the passing standard on the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) writing exam.

When only the scores on the standard TAKS are considered without including scores on TAKS (Accommodated), scores appeared very stable with 84 percent of the students passing the reading test in both 2007 and 2008 and 86 percent passing the mathematics test both years. Passing rates on the writing test rose to 93 percent, compared to 91 percent last year.

The passing rates for students who tested in Spanish were 75 percent for reading, 74 percent for mathematics and 90 percent for writing. When just TAKS scores in Spanish are examined, the passing rates this year were within two points or less of last year's passing rates.

Sixth grade

Sixth-grade students showed strong performance with 91 percent of the 315,668 students passing the reading test in English and 45 percent of the student earning Commended Performance.

Eighty percent of students passed the mathematics test, with 37 percent achieving Commended Performance.

When just TAKS results are compared between this year and last year, passing rates on the math test rose from 79 percent to 83 percent. There was a one percentage point increase on the reading exam on the standard test.

Many students have already graduated from bilingual or English as a Second Language programs by sixth grade so only 1,370 students took the sixth-grade reading test in Spanish. This group had a 50 percent passing rate and a 21 percent Commended Performance rate on the reading test. Of the 1,246 students who took the math test in Spanish, 38 percent passed and 11

percent achieved Commended Performance. Sixth grade is the last year that a state test is offered in Spanish.

Seventh grade

Seventh-grade students were most proficient on the writing exam, with 90 percent passing and 33 percent receiving Commended Performance. Eighty-four percent of the students passed the reading test and 76 percent passed the mathematics exam.

When TAKS (Accommodated) results are excluded, passing rates increased by 2 percentage points on TAKS reading and by 3 percentage points on the math test as compared to last year, while passing rates declined by one percentage point on the writing examination.

Ninth grade

Eighty-four percent of high school freshmen mastered the reading test but just 60 percent passed the math test. When 2007 and 2008 results for TAKS only are compared, results on the reading test increased from 86 percent to 87 percent, while the mathematics passing rates rose from 60 percent to 63 percent.

Tenth grade

Sophomores take TAKS tests in four subject areas. Their passing rates were 86 percent in English language arts, which is a combined reading and writing test; 63 percent in mathematics, 88 percent in social studies and 64 percent in science. A greater percent of students - 32 percent - achieved Commended Performance on the social studies test than on the other three subject-area tests.

When TAKS test results only are compared from year to year, this class showed strong improvement. The passing rates on English language arts rose from 84 percent in 2007 to 89 percent this year. Math passing rates increased from 63 percent to 65 percent. Social studies passing rates improved from 86 percent last year to 90 percent in 2008, while science passing rates went from 58 percent last year to 66 percent this spring.

Eleventh grade

Texas students must pass four exit-level tests, which are first given in 11th grade, along with their classes, to be eligible to earn a state diploma. The Class of 2009 is well on its way to meeting its testing requirements.

Ninety percent of the students passed the English language arts exam, while 95 percent met the standard on the social studies examination. Eighty percent of the students passed the science test and 79 percent passed the mathematics test.

When standard TAKS results are compared excluding the new TAKS (Accommodated) test, this year's 11th grade students had passing rates that were one to five percentage points higher on the four tests than did last year's high school juniors.

Overall, 71 percent of the 11th graders passed all the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) exams they took this year. Those who failed one or more tests will have four more opportunities to take the tests between now and the end of their senior year.

“Our test results show that this has been a year of strong and steady growth for millions of our students. I’m thankful for all the effort the students, their teachers, administrators and parents have put into making this a successful and productive year,” Scott said.

Detailed summaries of state-level results may be found at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/>.

The Texas Education Agency does not yet have results for school districts or campuses.

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