

# An Analysis of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics Performance of 2005-06 (Cohort I) and 2006-07 (Cohort II) State-Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II) Participants

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## At-A-Glance

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, signed by the President on January 8, 2002, requires schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) by meeting established standards in reading and mathematics (performance and participation), plus one additional measure: student attendance (for elementary and middle schools) or graduation (high schools). Baseline performance standards identify the minimum percentage of students who must meet or exceed the Met Standard level of academic achievement in reading and mathematics. By design, the system will increase in rigor as districts and campuses are held to higher standards over time, with performance standards reaching 100 percent by 2013-14.

Starting with the 2004 AYP process, NCLB regulations limit the number of proficient assessment results from alternate assessments that may be included in evaluating AYP. The limit on proficient alternate assessment results is referred to as the *AYP federal cap*. The federal cap applies to two types of assessment results: alternate assessment results based on modified academic achievement standards, and alternate assessment results based on alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Beginning with 2008 AYP in Texas, the alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards is the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills-Modified (TAKS-M)*. The *TAKS-Alternate (TAKS-Alt)*, based on alternate achievement standards, is for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The federal cap is calculated for each school district and applied to proficient results on *TAKS-M* and *TAKS-Alt* only. The number of students counted as proficient on *TAKS-M* and *TAKS-Alt* may not exceed two and one percent, respectively, of the district's test participation denominator. District proficient results over the federal cap limit are reclassified as non-proficient and reported as such in AYP performance results at the campus, district, and state levels.

The increase over time in the reading and mathematics performance standards coupled with the federal cap placed on the number of proficient scores from assessments based on alternate and modified

achievement standards provide a strong incentive for instruction to focus on maintaining grade-level student proficiency or accelerating instruction in order to attain enrolled grade-level proficiency and testing on *TAKS* or *TAKS-Accommodated (TAKS-A)*. Figure 1 displays the longitudinal participation and performance rates of district special education students taking the *TAKS* from 2005-06 through 2007-08. Although participation and performance rates were stable from 2005-06 to 2006-07, both participation and performance rates changed from 2006-07 to 2007-08. The district's special education participation rate on the *TAKS* increased from 2006-07 to 2007-08; however, the passing rate of special education students on both *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics decreased during this same period.

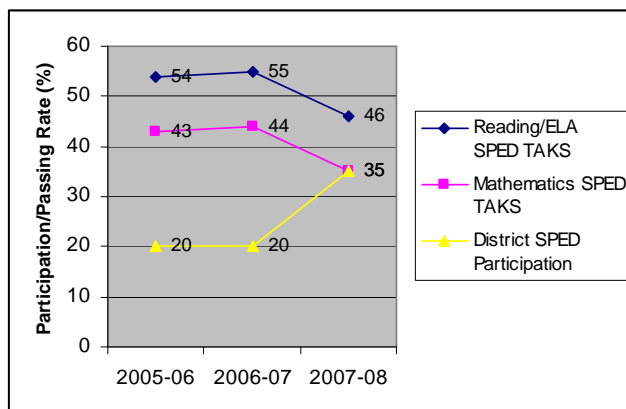


Figure 1. District *TAKS* participation and passing rates.

## Cohort Description

In an attempt to further explore the observed decline in passing rates but increase in participation rates in 2007-08, an analysis of *TAKS* passing rates of two cohorts that initially took an alternative assessment based on modified achievement standards (*State-Developed Alternative Assessment II, SDAA II*) but were tested on the *TAKS* in subsequent years was conducted. Cohort I took the *SDAA II* in 2005-06, either *TAKS* or *TAKS-Inclusive (TAKS-I)* in 2006-07, and *TAKS* or *TAKS-Accommodated (TAKS-A)* in 2007-08. Cohort II took the *SDAA II* in 2006-07 and either the *TAKS* or *TAKS-A* in 2007-08.

### TAKS Reading/English Language Arts Results

Of the 2005-06 *SDAA II* Reading/ELA participants, 324 took either the *TAKS* or *TAKS-I* in 2006-07 and either the *TAKS* or *TAKS-A* in 2007-08 (Cohort I). Of the 2006-07 *SDAA II* Reading/ELA participants, 1,567 took either the *TAKS* or *TAKS-A* in 2007-08 (Cohort II). Cohort II is almost five times as large as Cohort I, helping to explain the increase in special education participation on *TAKS* in 2007-08 shown in Figure 1 above.

Figure 2 analyzes the longitudinal performance of district special education students and Cohorts I and II on *SDAA II* and/or *TAKS* from 2005-06 through 2007-08. From 2005-06 through 2007-08, the passing rate of Cohort I on Reading/ELA increased. In comparison to Cohort II, Cohort I had a higher passing rate on *SDAA II*. This is to be expected given that a smaller percentage of special education students in Cohort II were tested on grade level and obtained Achievement Level III, the only combination yielding a *TAKS* equivalency standard of "Met Standard." Like Cohort I, however, Cohort II's passing rate increased from 2006-07 to 2007-08.

Although the district SPED Reading/ELA passing rate remained stable from 2005-06 to 2006-07, there was a sharp decline in the passing rate from 2006-07 to 2007-08. This is in contrast to the passing rates of both Cohorts I and II, with both cohorts' passing rates increasing from year to year. If passing rates of Cohorts I and II on the *TAKS* Reading/ELA continue to increase, however, the district special education *TAKS* Reading/ELA passing rate should rebound within the next few years.

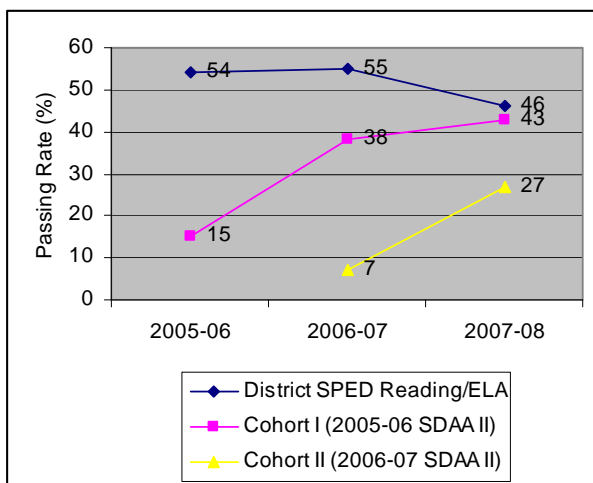


Figure 2. *TAKS* Reading/ELA passing rates.

### TAKS Mathematics Results

Figure 3 presents the longitudinal performance of district special education students and Cohorts I and II on *SDAA II* and/or *TAKS* Mathematics from 2005-06 through 2007-08. Similar findings as those obtained

for *TAKS* Reading/ELA were found for *TAKS* Mathematics:

- Cohort II (N=1,324) was over five times as large as Cohort I (N=260).
- In comparison to Cohort II, Cohort I had a higher passing rate on *SDAA II* Mathematics.
- While the district special education *TAKS* Mathematics passing rate decreased from 2006-07 to 2007-08, the passing rates of Cohorts I and II increased.

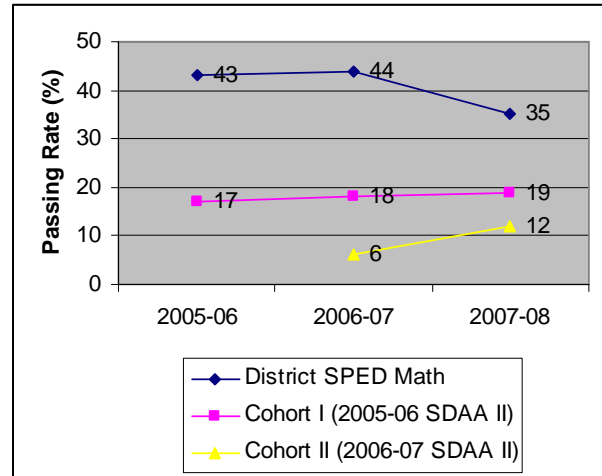


Figure 3. *TAKS* Mathematics passing rates.

### Conclusion

With the performance standards reaching 100 percent by 2013-14 and the federal cap placed on the number of proficient scores from alternate assessments, strong motivation exists to encourage more special education students to take the *TAKS* or *TAKS-A* as opposed to alternate assessments. Indeed, special education participation on *TAKS* increased between 2006-07 and 2007-08. On the other hand, the *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics passing rates of district special education students decreased during this same time period.

An analysis of longitudinal *TAKS* data of former *SDAA II* test participants seems to suggest that this downward progression in *TAKS* passing rates of district special education students may be short-lived. *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics passing rates of former *SDAA II* participants were lower than the district special education passing rates, thereby explaining the drop in overall district passing rates. On the other hand, *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics passing rates of former *SDAA II* participants increased from year to year. If the *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics passing rates of former *SDAA II* participants continue to increase, the district special education *TAKS* Reading/ELA and Mathematics passing rates are expected to rebound within the next few years.

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