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TAKS passing rates up at most grades; 89 percent of seniors have passed exit-level test

AUSTIN – The percentage of students passing all tests taken on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) increased this spring at grades 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10; remained stable at 8th grade and declined slightly at 11th grade.

Passing rates were up on all subject-area tests at fifth grade, while reading and math scores held steady on the first administration of the English language version of the TAKS at third grade.

The highest performance levels statewide were seen on these tests:

- 94 percent met the passing standard on the 11th grade social studies test;
- 90 percent passed the seventh grade writing exam;
- 91 percent passed the sixth grade reading test; and
- 92 percent passed the 4th grade writing exam given in English and 90 percent passed the Spanish version of this exam.

“Overall, our students are showing steady progress again this year. It is particularly heartwarming to see strong gains this year when thousands of students saw their schooling interrupted for weeks by violent hurricanes. Congratulations to our students and teachers. We know we cannot rest until all students are performing at high levels,” Commissioner of Education Shirley J. Neeley said.

Results released today confirmed earlier trends that showed that Hurricane Katrina evacuees’ performance continued to trail that of Texas students.

Third grade

As reported earlier this spring, the passing rate on the first administration of the English language third-grade reading test held steady at 89 percent, as did performance on the math exam which remained at 82 percent. New results from the second administration of the reading test showed that 52 percent of the students who failed the first time passed on their second try. The students who have yet to pass will have another testing opportunity in June.

On the Spanish language third-grade exam, 76 percent of the students passed on the first administration, up from 74 percent the previous year. Of those who failed the test the first time,

51 percent passed on their second try. Sixty-nine percent of those who took the Spanish language math test passed, a two-point increase over 2005 rates.

Fourth grade

Seventy-three percent of 291,394 fourth-grade students who took the TAKS in English passed all tests taken, up three points over last year. Among student groups, the passing rate was 59 percent for African Americans, 67 percent for Hispanics and 84 percent for whites.

Passing rates rose on each of the individual parts of the TAKS. Eighty-two percent of the students passed the reading test this year, compared to 79 percent in 2005. The passing rate on the mathematics exam rose two points to 83 percent, while the passing rate on the writing exam also improved two points to 92 percent.

Twenty percent of the students reached the prestigious commended performance level on both the reading and writing exams, while 31 percent reached this high performance level on the math test.

The gains were larger on the Spanish language version of the exam. The passing rate on all tests taken for the 18,085 students who took the tests in Spanish rose from 55 percent last year to 62 percent in 2006.

The reading passing rates were 76 percent, up seven points. The math passing rate rose five points to 69 percent and the percent passing writing increased three points to 90 percent.

Fifth grade

Science performance at fifth grade rose dramatically from a 64 percent passing rate in 2005 to 75 percent today. Both Hispanics and African Americans saw 13 percent increases in their science passing rates, while white students' passing rates increased nine percentage points.

Among students who took the test in Spanish, the passing rate rose from 23 percent to 31 percent.

“Science performance has been an area of concern so these strong gains are very encouraging. Clearly, science instruction is receiving more time and attention in elementary school. If we can make science fun and exciting in elementary school, it will help to keep students interested in the subject as they continue their education,” Neeley said.

As reported in April, 81 percent of English-speaking fifth-grade students passed the math TAKS, as did 47 percent of the students who took the exam in Spanish. Those who failed the test retook it Tuesday and those results will be available in June.

Eighty percent of the students passed the English reading exam, with 22 percent achieving the Commended Performance level. Among those who took the Spanish version of the reading test, 65 percent passed and 19 percent earned Commended Performance status.

Sixth grade

Ninety-one percent of sixth-grade students passed the reading TAKS, up from 85 percent the previous year and 39 percent achieved Commended Performance status this year.

A seven-point gain occurred on the math exam with 79 percent of the students passing it this spring.

Overall, 77 percent of the 288,464 students tested in English passed all tests taken. The passing rates were 64 percent for African American, 71 percent for Hispanics and 88 percent for whites.

Among the 1,224 students who took the tests in Spanish, the passing rate was 49 percent for all tests taken, up from 41 percent last year. A passing rate of 66 percent was achieved on the reading exam, a seven-point gain. The percentage of students passing the math test rose eight points to 52 percent. Sixth grade is the highest grade for which a Spanish version of the exam is available.

Seventh grade

Performance gains continued at seventh grade with 64 percent of the 307,514 students passing all tests taken, up from 59 percent last year. The passing rates were 47 percent for African Americans, 54 percent for Hispanics and 79 percent for whites.

The percentage of students passing the test rose for writing and math. Seventy percent of the students passed the math exam, up from 64 percent last year. Writing passing rates increased from 88 percent in 2005 to 90 percent today. Reading declined from a passing rate of 81 percent last year to 79 percent this year.

Eighth grade

The eighth-grade science TAKS debuted this spring. This test was added to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law. The passing standard is being phased in on this test over a three-year period, as it was for the other TAKS exams when they were originally introduced. Seventy-one percent of the students passed the science test statewide during this inaugural year and 12 percent achieved the Commended Performance level, which means they missed no more than six of the 50 questions on the test.

“This score is consistent with science performance at other grade levels during the first year of testing,” Neeley said. In 2003 when the science test was first given at 10th grade and with the initial passing standards in place, 69 percent of the students passed.

In other areas, eighth-grade students improved their math performance by six percentage points with 67 percent passing the exam, while reading remained stable with an 83 percent passing rate. Passing rates on the social studies test fell two points from 85 percent in 2005 to 83 percent in 2006.

Overall, 57 percent of the 303,526 eighth-grade students tested passed all exams taken. However, the all tests taken passing rate for African Americans was 38 percent, with the math exam proving to be the toughest exam for this group. The passing rate for Hispanics was 45 percent, with math being the hardest hurdle for this group. With an overall passing rate of 74 percent for whites, the math test was the most difficult for this group.

If the passing standard for the science test had been fully phased in, students in all three ethnic groups would have earned their lowest passing rates on that test. At that level, only 32 percent of the African Americans, 39 percent of the Hispanics and 71 percent of the whites would have passed the test.

“Clearly, we have a lot of work to do in the area of science and math education,” Neeley said.

That’s why the State of Texas and private donors are dedicating \$71 million to the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) initiative aimed at improving academic performance in these subject areas that are tied to many 21st century jobs. Through this initiative, 35 T-STEM academies for grades 6-12 will be created that focus on instruction in these four areas. Training centers for teachers will be created as will a network to share new successful instructional practices.

“We believe T-STEM will be a powerful tool to improve science and math education in this state,” Neeley said.

To learn more about T-STEM, please go to:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/thsp/tstem/index.html.

Ninth grade

Fifty-six percent of the 345,190 students who took the TAKS passed all tests taken. Only 38 percent of African-American students passed the two-part test. Forty-four percent of Hispanics and 73 percent of whites passed both tests.

Math was clearly the harder test for the ninth-grader students with 56 percent passing the exam. However, 14 percent achieved Commended Performance. Performance was substantially better on the reading exam with 87 percent passing and 20 percent reaching Commended Performance.

Tenth grade

At 10th grade, only 49 percent of the 291,699 students tested passed all tests taken. This test, which covers English language arts, math, science and social studies, is a precursor to the exit-level exam, which covers the same subjects and which students must pass in order to graduate.

“While we are seeing improvement at this grade level, the performance is a long way from what parents and teachers would hope for them,” Neeley said.

Performance on all tests taken increased for all major ethnic groups this year, although the passing rates are low. The 2006 passing rate was 29 percent for African Americans, up seven points; 35 percent for Hispanics, up from 26 percent; and 66 percent for whites, up from 54 percent in 2005.

Performance on the English language arts test, which is a combined reading and writing exam, rose substantially from 67 percent last year to 85 percent this year. The passing rate on math rose from 58 percent to 60 percent, and performance improved on the science test from 54 percent to 60 percent. The passing rate on the social studies exam fell one-point to 83 percent.

Eleventh grade

Statewide, 64 percent of Texas’ 243,450 high school juniors passed all tests taken on the exit-exam, which they must pass, along with their courses, to graduate. The students have five chances to pass the test before the end of their senior year.

The 2006 passing rate was 45 percent for African Americans, a decline of seven-points over last year. Fifty-two percent of Hispanic students passed all tests taken, down from 56 percent in 2005. The passing rate for white students fell from 82 percent in 2005 to 79 percent this year.

While this performance represents a decline compared to last year’s juniors, each is an improved performance when compared to this group of students’ 10th grade scores.

Although the number passing all the tests taken declined, the percentage of students passing each of the subject area tests rose. This indicates that the students who did not pass all their tests tended to fail only one or two tests and not all the tests they took.

Performance on the individual tests show that 88 percent passed English language arts, a one-point increase over last year's 11th grade scores. Math performance rose five points from 72 percent to 77 percent. Social studies passing rates increased from 91 percent in 2005 to 94 percent in 2006. Science passing rates improved from 71 percent to 74 percent.

Twelfth grade

With commencement ceremonies just a few weeks away, 89 percent of the Class of 2006 have passed an important graduation requirement – they have passed all four parts of the exit-level TAKS exams. Last year at this time, the Class of 2005 had an 88 percent passing rate and those students had a lower passing standard to meet.

Ninety-five percent of white students, 81 percent of the African-American students and 82 percent of the Hispanic students passed all four sections of the test.

The test covers four subjects. The highest passing rate occurred on the social studies test, which 98 percent of the senior class has passed. The cumulative passing rate on the English language arts exam was 95 percent for this year's seniors. The passing rate on both the mathematics and science exams was 92 percent.

Texas has required students to pass a state test as part of their graduation requirements beginning with the Class of 1987. This is the second class that has been required to pass TAKS to earn a high school diploma.

Those students who have yet to pass all four tests can continue to take the exams. The next testing opportunity is July 11-14. When these young people pass TAKS and their classes, they will be issued a diploma.

Local school leaders determine whether students who have their courses, but have not passed TAKS can participate in graduation activities.

Hurricane evacuees

Students who were displaced by Hurricanes Rita or Katrina struggled to meet Texas' testing requirements, often passing at rates that were less than half that of students who had been in Texas schools all year or longer.

At 11th grade, only 24 percent of the evacuees passed the exit-level exam, compared to 64 percent of all students. Students from Louisiana have the option of meeting either the Louisiana or Texas testing requirements. If they meet Louisiana requirements, they will be issued a diploma from that state.

At 10th grade, 17 percent of evacuees passed the TAKS, compared to 49 percent of the students statewide.

At ninth grade, 24 percent of evacuees met the testing standards, compared to 56 percent of the students statewide.

Among eighth-grade students, 21 percent of evacuees passed, in contrast to 57 percent of all students in the state.

Among seventh-grade students, the passing rates were 29 percent for evacuees and 64 percent for all students.

Among sixth-grade students, the passing rate was 35 percent for evacuees and 77 percent for all students.

At fifth grade, a passing rate on all tests taken has not been calculated because students at that grade level have multiple testing opportunities. However on the science exam, 39 percent of evacuees passed the test, compared to 75 percent of students overall. On the second

administration of the reading exam which is just given to students that failed it the first time, 26 percent of the evacuees passed, compared to 44 percent of the students statewide. Forty-five percent of the evacuees passed the math test, compared to 81 percent of students statewide.

At fourth grade, 35 percent of evacuees passed all tests taken compared to 73 percent of students overall.

At third grade, because of the multiple testing opportunities, an all tests taken passing rate was not calculated. However, 46 percent of the Katrina and Rita students passed the math exam, as did 82 percent of all students. The passing rate for evacuees was 30 percent on the reading test in contrast to a 52 percent passing rate statewide.

Complete statewide results

For a listing of statewide grade and subject area results, please go to:
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/results/swresults/taks/index.html> .

The Texas Education Agency only has statewide results at this time. Please contact your local school districts or charter schools to obtain results for local schools.

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