



At *Progress Testing*, we produce one of the only TEKS-specific Social Studies and Science formative assessment item banks available in Texas. We build each item to discretely match the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with the rigor of the STAAR. Here's how we build a Social Studies item for Texas.

Preparation

Reviewing the Standards

For each project we work on, we build a spreadsheet of all standards using documents provided on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website, which enables us to view standards throughout all grades from a central database and search throughout grades to determine when certain topics are introduced or expanded upon.

When preparing to write for a standard, we carefully consider the scope of the standard we are covering while also considering if certain elements of the topic have been previously covered in lower grades.

Consulting Available Resources

TEKS and STAAR resources provided by TEA refresh our understanding of expectations for Texas Social Studies and provide invaluable information regarding accepted item types and Texas-specific style. Additionally, these resources provide sample items that help us understand the types of items preferred by Texas educators as well as overviews of DOK-level expectations and examples of items for each level.

Item Construction

Research

We use all of the resources we can find to better assess the TEKS. In addition to TEA resources, we utilize teacher lesson plans, textbooks, district pacing guides, and additional available resources to dig deeper into topics and gain a more complete view of the material being tested. We also solicit input from Texas educators.

Execution

We first determine the scope of the item we wish to write. We then develop a clear, direct stem that enables students to utilize their knowledge and skills to come to a conclusion. Next, we create a strong, unambiguous correct answer that students well versed in the material will be able to recognize as the best response to the question given.

NOTE: We construct reasonable distractors that pull from material associated with the standard being tested as well as material covered in previous standards and grades — the goal being that each potential response is able to be fully evaluated by a student, with its feasibility as a correct response determined by using skills and knowledge acquired up to that point in their Social Studies education.

We ensure that all items adhere to the principles of our in-house editorial style guide, guaranteeing that all items are properly formatted and structured, avoiding outliers (length/style/etc.) to ensure that all answer choices are considered and evaluated equally by students.

We incorporate stimuli into items whenever possible so as to engage students and hone their ability to recognize and analyze primary and secondary resources, as well as their ability to evaluate information and draw conclusions rooted in Social Studies skills.

Expectation: 8.11(A)
DOK: 3

Rigorous, discrete assessment of the TEKS

The map below shows exports in colonial America.

Exports in Colonial America

High-quality graphic

Clear, direct stem

Based on the map, which conclusion can be drawn about exports in colonial America?

- (A) Southern colonies were successful in agriculture and farming because of their climate.
- (B) New England colonies were successful in manufacturing because of their climate.
- (C) Southern and New England colonies both struggled in the fur trade because of topography.
- (D) Southern and New England colonies were both successful in ship building because of topography.

Strong, unambiguous correct answer

Plausible distractors

Graphics Creation

As part of our effort to incorporate stimuli whenever possible, we rely on our graphics team to help us utilize existing photographs, posters, political cartoons, and other types of images to enhance our items and provide different avenues through which to test students' knowledge and abilities.

Additionally, our graphics team is able to create for us any type of image we need or can dream up. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, maps and diagrams related to the specific TEKS being covered or enhancements to poor-quality historical images.

Adding Process Skills

We consult the TEKS and STAAR documentation in order to add process skills related to the ways in which a student is expected to evaluate the information provided and arrive at the correct answer.

Determining DOK Level

In addition to the aforementioned resources provided by TEA that outline expectations for each DOK level, we also utilize Hess/Bloom's Cognitive Rigor Matrix to determine the appropriate DOK level for each item we create. We also add Bloom's tags to each item that correspond with the particular level and the skills involved in answering the question presented.

Review and Revision

Editing

All resources mentioned above (including TEA guides and our in-house editorial style guide) are utilized as each item is carefully reviewed and revised by multiple editors in the Social Studies department beyond the item's writer.

Considering Bias and Sensitivity

We consider all issues related to bias and sensitivity as they pertain to our items to ensure that no aspect of any item is prejudicial toward any student and that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed when attempting to answer the item with which they are presented.

In compliance with the American Educational Research Association's 2014 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, all passages and items undergo a bias and sensitivity review.

Consulting EDL Core Vocabulary Resources

Also utilized during the writing phase, these vocabulary resources allow us to ensure that all language used in an item is grade-level appropriate, which is essential to constructing a question that is both challenging and fair for students.

These three steps are repeated multiple times, with open and honest discussion between editors throughout the process to ensure that any item we release is of the highest possible quality.

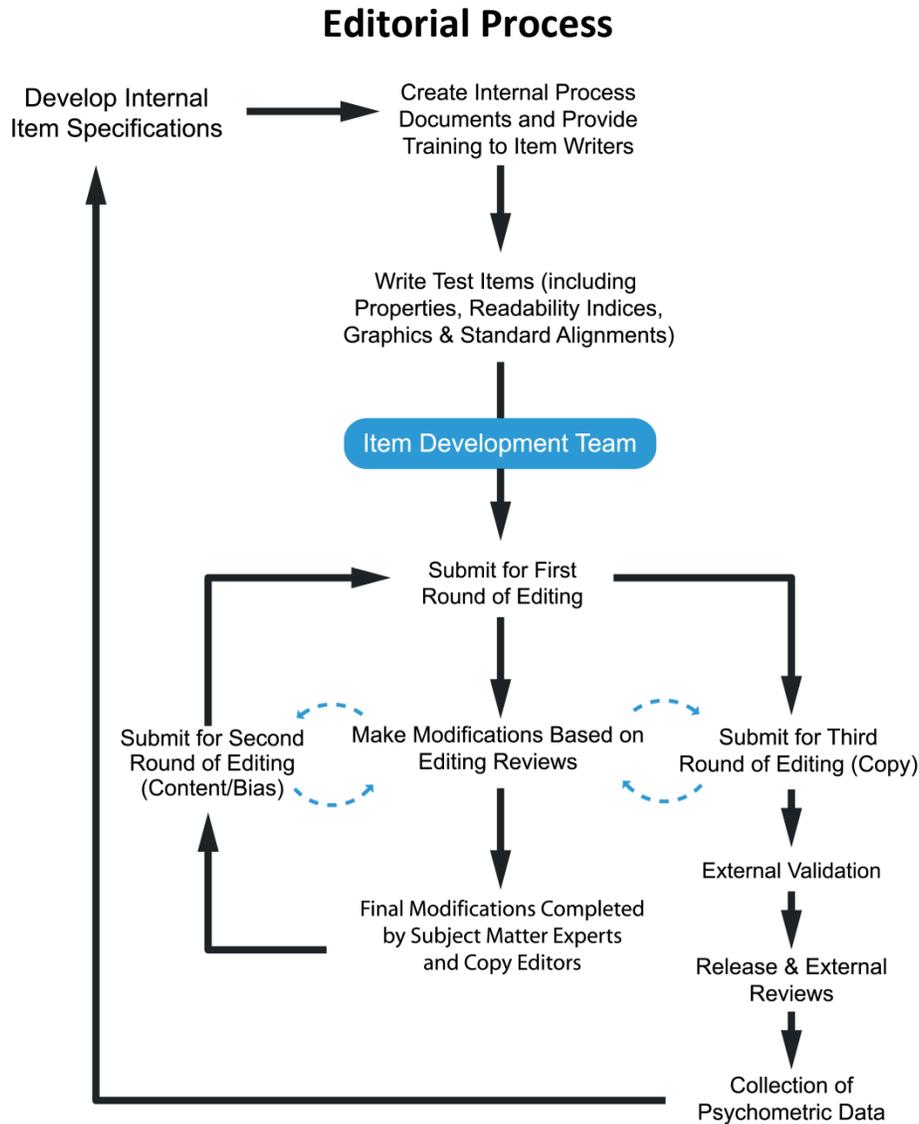
Peer Review and Completion

Editors from outside the Social Studies department examine the item with fresh eyes, making any necessary grammatical edits, raising any concerns regarding the item, and providing suggestions for further improvement.

The Social Studies department addresses all changes, concerns, and suggestions, then reviews, approves, and completes all final edits.

Editorial Process Flowchart

For more detail about how we work, check out our full editorial process illustrated in the flowchart below.



This Item Development flowchart outlines the process followed by our team of assessment specialists. Progress Testing has developed this process to consistently yield reliable and valid formative items that are highly rigorous.