Comparing STAAR and TAKS exams

What are the biggest differences between the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness and the old Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills?

The STAAR is a more rigorous exam that experts say will measure a greater range of student achievement — especially preparedness for moving on to the next grade — and establish stronger links to college readiness.

The STAAR will have more questions for most grades, subjects and courses.

Students will have four hours to take the STAAR. The TAKS was not timed.

The STAAR will count for 15 percent of a student's grade in a subject. TAKS scores did not affect course grades.

The STAAR will cover only the content from a particular course — the Algebra I exam will assess only Algebra I content, for example — rather than content from multiple courses. The ninth-grade mathematics TAKS tested students' knowledge of Algebra I and eighth-grade math.

STAAR reading and writing exams for certain grades will be administered over two days.

The test designs for STAAR fourth- and seventh-grade writing and English I, II and III will require students to write two essays addressing different skills. The TAKS required only one longer personal essay.

Most STAAR math and science questions will be open-ended, requiring students to arrive at answers independently without being influenced by answer choices provided with the questions.

Source: Texas Education Agency