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K-16 Education Center

Continuing & Innovative Education

Grade 8 Language Arts

EA/CBE Content Study Guide

This Exam for Acceleration/Credit by Exam Study Guide can help you prepare for the exam by giving you an idea of what you need to study, review, and learn. To succeed, you should be thoroughly familiar with the subject matter before you attempt to take the exam.

Every question that appears on the Exam for Acceleration/Credit by Exam is grounded in the knowledge and skills statements and student expectations within the state-mandated standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). It should be noted that an exam will not test every student expectation. However, it is important that students study and know the entire scope of the TEKS so that they can develop a complete understanding of the content. The EA/CBEs are a global exam grounded in the TEKS and are not designed to be a final exam. **For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.** Since questions are not taken from any one source, you can prepare by reviewing any of the state-adopted textbooks.

General Introduction

The purposes for reading are as varied and diverse as the people who read, but the ability to read effectively is essential for all students in the increasingly complex world in which we live. Reading is one of the most important foundations for learning, not only in English language arts but also in other content areas, such as science, social studies, and mathematics. Students who can understand what they read and who can make connections between what they read and what they already know should more likely be successful—in the classroom, on the test, and in the real world. Strong reading skills are necessary for academic achievement, for the fundamental tasks of daily living, and for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

The reading assessments evaluate a subset of the TEKS. These standards were specifically designed to help students make progress in reading by emphasizing the knowledge and skills most critical for student learning. Because the reading tests are closely aligned with the TEKS, students who effectively learn the TEKS should become proficient readers who are able to perform successfully on the test without unnecessary emphasis on test preparation.

The TEKS student expectations eligible for testing on the kindergarten through eighth grade English Language Arts assessments are grouped under four objectives related to reading. These objectives are consistent from kindergarten grade through eighth grade. The TEKS student expectations assessed under each objective are vertically aligned, meaning that they build logically from one grade level to the next.

Many of the TEKS student expectations are expressed in similar language from grade to grade, but the level of student performance required at each grade increases. Reading selections become longer and more challenging, and the critical thinking required of students becomes more complex and sophisticated.

Reading Selections

Reading selections are designed to be interesting, meaningful, and reflective of the Texas population and our culturally diverse world. Cultural diversity includes regional, economic, social, and ethnic differences and may be represented through subject matter and/or characters. In addition, reading selections are similar to those that students encounter in their classrooms and in their everyday lives.

Four kinds of selections may be found on the EA/CBE:

- Narrative selections are fictional stories presented with a clear progression of events. Letters or diary entries, as well as stories, may represent narrative writing.
- Expository (informative) selections provide information about noteworthy people and/or events or explain topics related to content areas such as science, social studies, art, or music.
- Mixed selections combine two types of writing into a single passage. For example, a mixed selection may be a story about Martin Luther King, Jr., that includes both factual information (expository) and invented dialogue (narrative). Or a selection may mix narrative and functional writing. For example, an advertisement, a recipe, instructions, or the directions for a game (functional) may be presented within the context of a story (narrative).
- Paired selections are two selections designed to be read together. Paired selections provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate an understanding of the connections across texts. Selections may be paired for many different reasons; for example, a paired selection may be based on the same story told from two different points of view or a science article and a science fiction story that address a common theme or idea. It is important to remember that paired selections are linked by more than a superficial connection, such as common subject matter or characters. Paired selections contain a deep link, so that students can recognize the strong connection across the two pieces.

Selections for eighth grade are approximately 700 to 1,000 words.

Revising and Editing Objectives

Writing skills are also critical for academic success. Students who have learned to communicate well on paper have an advantage both in school and in the workplace. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing actually helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas. In addition, students who write well are usually strong readers. A writer must be able to read what he or she has written and recognize whether the words mean what the writer wants them to mean. Therefore, every time a student is writing effectively, that student is also reading carefully and thoughtfully. In this way, writing and reading reinforce each other. The grades four through eight language arts tests are an integrated reading and writing test, reflecting this close connection between the two skills.

For students to be successful readers and writers, reading and writing instruction must occur at every grade level, not merely at the tested grades. The TEKS were organized to ensure that at each grade level students acquire the reading and writing skills they need for success in the next grade. That is, these skills are addressed in a systematic, “building block” manner from grade to grade. Because of this careful alignment, students’ abilities are strengthened as they progress through elementary school, middle school, and high school. Students are continually expected to

read in all their classes, but writing opportunities are sometimes limited in classes other than English. Making writing a routine part of other content areas, such as science and social studies, strengthens students' proficiency by providing many opportunities to practice writing. Without practice, students cannot internalize the skills they need to become confident and competent writers. Students' writing skills can be strengthened in many ways: by keeping a journal or portfolio, by writing in response to reading or in response to a movie or play, by writing the procedures for and results of a science experiment, by writing an essay for history or art class, etc. Valuable writing experiences do not have to be, and should not always be, prompt-driven.

Objective 1

Student demonstrates a basic understanding of culturally diverse written texts.

To develop an initial understanding of what they read, students should:

- use context and other word-identification strategies to help them understand the meaning of the words they read.
- recognize important supporting details.
- understand the main idea of a selection.

Tested vocabulary words will be above grade level. Because a student may use context only or combine strategies (for example, knowing a word's synonym or antonym or the meaning of a prefix, root, or suffix) to determine a word's meaning, items are not constructed to test skills in isolation (e.g., "The prefix in the word disapprove means —").

Items testing multiple-meaning words might require students to identify the correct answer from a sample dictionary entry. The entry includes the tested word, its pronunciation key, its part of speech, and four definitions of the word. Students should:

- use the information given and context clues to choose the correct meaning of the word as it is used in the reading selection.
- identify the context clues in a selection that help them to understand the meaning of a tested word. Answer choices for these items contain context clues taken verbatim from the text rather than definitions of the tested word.

Items that measure students' basic comprehension of a reading selection are of three types:

- items that focus on acquiring information from supporting details,
- items that focus on identifying the main idea and the important events in a selection, and
- items that summarize a selection.

Detail items focus on important information that is directly stated or paraphrased from a text. Main idea items are written so that students clearly understand that they are focusing on broad or central ideas. Narrative selection main idea items focus on either a single paragraph or a series of paragraphs. However, expository and mixed selections may also include items that focus on the main idea of the entire selection. Summary items focus on a reading selection as a whole. A summary is a short paragraph that includes the main idea and the most important details of a text. For this type of item, all answer choices are constructed authentically as short paragraphs.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 2

Student applies knowledge of literary elements to understand culturally diverse written texts.

Developing an understanding of literary elements makes stories both more accessible and more meaningful to young readers.

Students should:

- make connections between events, characters, and other elements of a story so students can relate what they have read to their own lives and experiences.
- know about a story's characters, setting, and problem gives students an opportunity to relate to the story in concrete terms while learning about emotions and events that are beyond their own personal experiences.

Items that test characterization focus on the degree to which students understand the characters in a story: who they are, why they feel and act as they do, how they relate to one another, and how they are changed by the things they experience. Items that require analysis of characters are grade-level appropriate; that is, students are not asked characterization questions that are overly sophisticated or too far beyond their developing understanding of other people and themselves.

Items that focus on setting may measure whether a student can identify the time and place of a story. However, most setting items focus on whether a student understands how time and place contribute to the meaning of a story. Items that focus on story problems or plot require students to identify the main conflict in the story or to recognize important events that occur in the story.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 3

Student uses a variety of strategies to analyze culturally diverse written texts.

Students must develop the ability to comprehend and process material from a wide range of texts.

Students should:

- understand how events relate to one another and how these relationships affect a reader's approach to reading and understanding a particular text.
- recognize how the author has organized the text.
- understand the relationships between ideas.
- recognize similarities and differences across texts test the student's ability to identify how two different selections compare in their approach, their organization, and their development of a common topic or theme.

Items that focus on representing text information in different ways may require students to select the answer choice that best completes a missing portion of a timeline, outline, or graphic organizer. Other items might require a student to interpret information from a graphic source and use that information to make an inference or draw a conclusion.

Students must be able to judge the internal consistency or logic of a story or text to determine whether a character's response, perspective, or belief is logical and consistent with what they know about that character or about the way people typically act or respond in a situation similar to the character's.

Items assessing author's purpose require students to analyze how an author presents his or her ideas. To determine the purpose of a text—whether that purpose is informative, persuasive, expressive, or entertaining—students must recognize that the way authors organize their writing depends on which organizational pattern should best convey what they want the reader to understand.

Students may be required to read two stories presented as paired selections. Story variants are created when the same story is told from two different characters' perspectives or when, despite obvious similarities, the stories are different in some way. This difference can be evident in the plot, setting, characters, or conflict. Like other paired selections, story variants are based on deep thematic links. Students must first be able to recognize how the stories are connected. Once students understand this connection, they must then identify how the two stories are similar and different and determine what impact these similarities and differences have on their understanding of the stories.

To answer questions about how an author's perspective or point of view affects the text, students should examine the author's attitude toward his/her subject or topic. The perspective or point of view the author brings to the selection not only affects the tone of the piece but also the way the author shapes and develops his/her ideas. These items were developed for selections only when the writer's attitude is obvious and clearly has an effect on the text.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 4

Student applies critical-thinking skills to analyze culturally diverse written texts.

Students must have the ability to bring different levels of understanding to the texts they read.

Students:

- ask themselves questions, make initial predictions, and create meanings as they move through a text.
- should likely change their mind about some of their early ideas and assumptions.
- acquire a deeper and growing understanding and a more complete picture of the text.
- can answer their own questions, think critically about what they've read, develop their own interpretations, and use relevant parts of the text to support these interpretations.
- understand that reading is a complex process that requires them not only to read between the lines but also to read beyond the lines, relating what they've read to what they already know. In this way reading becomes an important tool for thinking and learning, both in school and in real life.

Items that assess the ability to read and think inferentially require students to move beyond their basic understanding of a text to demonstrate a deeper, more complete understanding of what they've read. These types of items can take many forms; for example, they may ask students to draw a conclusion, make a reasonable prediction, understand the relationship between two parts of a text, understand how a text relates to their own lives, or understand the deeper meanings implied by a text.

Students should:

- recognize when an author is using opinions or persuasive techniques to influence the thinking or actions of readers or when an author is merely presenting facts.
- support interpretations or conclusions with evidence from the text.
- connect, compare, and contrast ideas, themes, or issues most commonly were developed for paired selections. However, this item type was also developed for a single selection if it includes multiple ideas, themes, or issues that can be clearly linked.
- recognize that authors organize information in specific ways and focus on the organizational patterns authors choose to arrange and link ideas.
- know that authors organize ideas in various ways, depending upon how they want the reader to understand those ideas.
- be familiar with common organizational patterns; for example, sequencing, description, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect.
- develop their ability to comprehend, evaluate, and appreciate a wide variety of texts.
- identify general patterns rather than use specific terminology.

To determine how style, tone, and mood contribute to the effect of a text, students must be able to recognize how an author uses these elements to make a text unique. Students must understand that the way an author uses words, phrases, and sentences to make a text distinctive from others represents his/her style. The author creates a particular tone when his/her attitude toward the content is reflected in the text, affecting the way the student reads and understands it. For example, a text that has an objective tone would be very different from one that has a sentimental tone. Mood is somewhat different from tone: mood is the feeling or atmosphere the writer creates through the details or language he/she uses. Items of this type were developed only when these elements are clearly present in the text. Items that assess style, tone, and mood will not be too sophisticated for sixth through eighth graders or too far beyond their developing understanding of author's craft.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 5

Students recognize appropriate organization of ideas in written text.

Revision is an integral part of the writing process. After the first draft the competent writer often adds, deletes, combines, and/or rearranges words and sentences to better organize and more fully develop his or her thoughts and ideas. Students must be able to recognize and correct errors in organization and development in the context of peer-editing passages.

Students are to recognize that a sentence that is irrelevant to a paragraph or to the passage as a whole should be deleted. An irrelevant sentence may add information, but that information is not closely linked to other ideas in the paragraph or passage. Irrelevant sentences cause a piece of writing to lack focus and coherence. Students will also be required to identify a sentence that could be added to a paragraph to improve its development.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 6

Students recognize correct and effective sentence construction in written text.

Editing and proofreading are an important part of the writing process. During this stage the skillful writer uses correct sentence structure to ensure that his or her meaning is evident. Faulty phrasing, misuse of conjunctions, fragments, and run-on sentences can cause the reader to be confused and misunderstand the intended message.

Students should:

- recognize and correct errors in sentence structure and to improve the effectiveness of sentences in the context of peer-editing passages.
- recognize fragments and run-on sentences and determine the best way to correct them, choose the most effective way to combine ideas, or improve the wording of awkward and/or wordy sentences.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 7

Students recognize standard usage and appropriate word choice in written text.

Students must apply the rules of standard grammar and usage. Students must be able to recognize and correct errors in grammar and usage in the context of peer-editing passages. Students must be able to recognize standard English usage and appropriate word choice. Items may focus on:

- subject-verb agreement
- pronoun referents (pronoun-antecedent agreement)
- verb tense and formation
- parts of speech
- adverbs and adjectives, including the comparative and superlative forms
- use of double negatives
- misuse of homonyms such as their/there
- replacing an indefinite reference, such as they or it, with a specific noun or noun phrase
- replacing a vague word or phrase with more precise wording

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

Objective 8

Students proofread for correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in written text.

Students must be able to recognize and correct errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the context of peer-editing passages. Students are required to recognize and correctly edit errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Capitalization and punctuation items include the range of rules commonly taught at the fifth grade level. Punctuation rules that are not consistently applied across the state-adopted fifth grade language arts textbooks are not tested (for example, the presence or absence of a comma before the and in a series of items). Spelling items include both rule-based and sight words that are within the writing vocabulary of fifth grade students.

For a specific listing of the knowledge and skills for this grade level and subject area, please reference the TEKS online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>.

About the Exam

The EA/CBE consists of 100 objective questions that are equally weighted. The exam may consist of multiple-choice and true-false questions. The exams will include an exam booklet and a separate computer graded answer sheet. Student responses **must** be recorded on the computer graded answer sheet. Students will be allowed **3 hours** to take the exam.

Sample Questions

These sample questions will give you a better idea of the types of questions you can expect on the EA/CBE. These are provided to illustrate the format of the exam. They are not the actual exam. In order to be successful on the exam, you must study the TEKS for this grade level and subject area.

1. Which point of view is demonstrated in this passage?

As I placed the carefully wrapped package on the park bench, I looked up and saw Molly darting across the busy street.

- A 1st person
 - B 2nd person
 - C 3rd person objective/limited
 - D 3rd person omniscient
2. What type of error does the following sentence contain?

I will give a report on the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" on Thursday October 9.

- A Spelling
 - B Capitalization
 - C Punctuation
 - D Word usage
3. The ability of a reader to determine who Charles is may be called
- A inferring.
 - B summarizing.
 - C characterizing.
 - D imagining.

Answer Key

Item Number	Correct Answer
1	A
2	C
3	A