



## Guide to Understanding CSCOPE UNIT ASSESSMENTS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **What is tested on the unit assessments?**

Each unit has an assessment that covers each student expectation (SE) on the unit IFD (Instructional Focus Document). Writers refer to lessons and specifications on the IFD to find the content, depth, parameters, etc. for the SE's. Teachers should use the performance indicators on the IFD to determine if any SE needs additional support or emphasis.

### **What if we are not teaching all of the lessons?**

If you are using a sampling of the lessons, it is best to look at the IFD and the unit assessment to be sure you are informing your instruction. Likewise, if you are teaching all of the lessons, be sure to leave a little time to flesh out instruction on all of the SE's on the IFD prior to giving the assessment.

### **Are these assessments benchmarks?**

CSCOPE unit assessments are not intended to be benchmarks. They cover only the SE's in a given unit and do not retest former SE's. In some cases, content or skills learned in former units may be called upon to adequately complete an answer, but these assessments are not intended to be predictive of success on TAKS— they are intended to assess the Student Expectations at the level of rigor that they are assessed on state assessments.

A benchmark is a standard or reference by which others can be measured or judged. Related to testing, a benchmark determines where individual students or an aggregate group stand in relation to said standard. A benchmark test will give data on all objectives to be measured and will divulge whether a student has already mastered (and more specifically "retained" a competency) or is still progressing toward the standard.

A unit test, by nature will not include items for all objectives or competencies because not all objectives and competencies were taught in the given unit. It can show mastery of content and skills at a given point in time related to a given unit, but generally does not measure whether prior learning has been retained. Finally, a unit test is intended to be completed within a single class period and does not include enough items per objective to mimic a high stakes assessment. Therefore, a unit test in and of itself is not predictive of success on TAKS.

### **Are these traditional multiple choice tests?**

CSCOPE provides an array of assessment opportunities including projects within the lessons, performance indicators, and the official unit assessment instrument. This assessment will include four types of questions:

- multiple choice
- short answer
- open-ended
- performance tasks

In grades K-1, only open-ended and performance will be used. Beginning in grade 2 students will receive short multiple choice items along with performance. In the case of performance, checklists and rubrics are provided.

### **Is a readability level assigned to the content-area assessments?**

No, not for content assessments. Teachers in grades 2-3 may read the assessments orally to the students. In social studies teachers may want to pace and read the assessments orally to take reading level out of the equation for determining success. For reading passages, the assessment team uses a combined process of the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula and reader review based on previously administered TAKS assessment. Sometimes because of compound or complex sentence structure (like students will encounter on TAKS), the reading level using Flesch-Kincaid readability formulas may come out higher than expected. In those cases we have gone to outside readers to determine the appropriateness of the level of the text. These are designed to provide the rigor for students who are used to when they are reading more complex sentence structure in the common basal readers and the trade books presented at their grade level.

### **Why isn't the literature within the units included on the assessments?**

All passages on the assessments must be copyright free. Passages are chosen based on their alignment with the themes. Questions are not included that assess the content of a particular piece of literature, but rather that assess the reading skills of the students. The option for teachers to select different pieces of literature at the secondary level prevents the asking of specific content questions (e.g. on Beowulf) since only some districts may have selected that resource.

### **How are performance indicators used?**

In grades K-2 for science and social studies one or two of the performance indicators from the IFD may be used as the basis for a performance task in the unit assessment. Tasks are reworded to insure individual student accountability and a checklist or rubric is attached. Then additional items are added. The performance indicators are used because they provide good anecdotal evidence or material for a portfolio, but if teachers are not teaching all lessons, they will not have the products through that venue. Likewise, they are included to insure that teachers know that they do not have to do all new assessments if they are faithfully teaching all lessons because they have quality assessment data from the performance indicators. There are always choices at the primary level.

### **Do we do all of the items or can we pick and choose?**

Unit assessments for grades 3-Exit are designed to be used in their entirety. K-2 assessments may include more performances than a teacher wishes to use, so they may choose the ones for which they have time. This is especially true in early grade reading because SE's will repeat virtually every six weeks. Similarly, teachers may choose to omit the open-ended or performance items on the "tests" for reasons of time, but this is not advised. They will be found at the end of the assessments. Teachers are also encouraged to add pages for any additional items they want.

### **Is there a standard length to the unit assessments?**

No, the length of the assessment is dependant on the number of SE's in the unit, the number of units in the six weeks, and the amount of detail in the specification. Some assessments are short and some include as many as 25 items.

### **In social studies, why isn't there more content?**

The research approach of the social studies units limits the amount of content that may be assessed. For example, in a unit on South America, students may be asked to "choose a country" and research all of its vital statistics including landforms, literacy rates, GNP, climate, government, etc. Since assessment writers do not know which countries the students will select, very specific questions related to countries cannot be included. Another example of this is World War I. In that unit students are asked to research five events and place them on a timeline. Three-four events are listed in the IFD, but the Battle Of Marne is not, so if student research did not produce this final battle, they would be at a disadvantage if a question were asked on this event. A final example comes from grade 3 where students are asked to research their own town. In social studies, content will be tested if a) specifically mentioned in the lessons or b) specifically mentioned in the IFD. Teachers will know content which students have "unearthed" in their research and may feel free to ask additional questions on this content if they would like.

### **In social studies, how are the skills addressed?**

In social studies, skills are included in every unit IFD because, as students research, there are many opportunities for teachers to work on acquiring, using, and communicating information. A separate skill section is included in each assessment for grades 3-Exit. These 2-6 items per assessment come from the IFD and are normally in traditional test format, usually with a prompt such as a map, graph, quote, reading passage, or picture. One or more questions that ask students to inference, summarize, predict, etc. are then attached. These questions may or may NOT use information previously studied in the unit. They are included for the purpose of determining if students can apply skill knowledge to any context. In most cases, the content will relate to the unit but not always. For example, in a unit about the revolutionary period, a quote by John Adams is given in the skill section and two questions are asked 1) about his point of view and 2) requiring students to make an inference and find evidence in the quote to justify it. John Adams was not specifically listed in the lessons, but his quote is appropriate for skills assessment. In another case, students studied early colonial

regions of Texas but a map skill question asks them to analyze a map of modern Texas. If teachers do not wish to assess skills in this fashion, they may delete the skill section; however, this is not advised.

**What is the print size?**

In grades 2-3, the print size is 14 pt font. In grades 4-Exit the print size is 12. There are not items to be directly read by students for grades K-1.

**What if we do not have time or access to all of the equipment or resources suggested in the tasks?**

Occasionally in Grade K-1, a picture book from the library may be cited. These are not necessary for successful completion of the task, but make for a nice focus to the activity. If teachers do not have access, they may choose another task or another resource or use without the book. In math and science, writers made the supposition that equipment listed in the TEKS or allowable on TAKS would be available.

**Some of the tests have instructions and some do not. Why is this?**

If there is something special about the assessment, an instruction is included. Otherwise, the teacher may add any instruction for students desired. The cover page is optional for student use.