



Vantage Help Desk
800-322-0848

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TEXAS MATH AND SCIENCE DIAGNOSTIC SYSTEM
TMDS & TSDS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
January 2007

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General:

1. What is TMDS & TSDS?

Answer: TMDS & TSDS is the Texas Mathematics and Science Diagnostic System.

The main purposes of this system are to:

1. Provide teachers with mathematics exams aligned to critical TEKS in grades 3 through 12 and science exams aligned to TEKS in grades 4 through 8, IPC and Biology.
2. Allow teachers to easily administer these tests to students either online or via paper and pencil.
3. Provide immediate and informative student and class performance data, enabling teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses by individual or class.
4. Grant access to thousands of math questions aligned to the TEKS in grades 3 to 12 to empower teachers to create customized tests.
5. Display statewide performance data reflecting average scores of all students in grades 3 through 12 and to allow – at the click of a button – administrators to view and compare statewide data to regional, district, and school performance.
6. Display yearly data for comparison to the previous year's data.

2. What is the website for TMDS & TSDS?

Answer: www.accesstmds.com or www.accesstsds.com. [BACK TO TOP](#)

3. Who do I call with questions?

Answer: For technical assistance, call Vantage at 800-322-0848 or email at accesstmds@vantage.com. To contact the TEA regarding more program information, call 512-463-9581 or go to the TMDS & TSDS homepage and select the “Contact the TEA” link in the lower right hand corner. [BACK TO TOP](#)

4. Have science items been added yet to the program?

Answer: Yes! There are currently over 2,000 science items in the program covering grades 4-8, IPC and Biology. Vantage and the TEA will continue to add items each year to expand the item bank. [BACK TO TOP](#)

5. How do students get into the system?

Answer: The district or school administrator sends an Excel spreadsheet to Vantage at accesstmds@vantage.com. The Excel template is available under the button “Sign Up”.



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Vantage loads the data and confirms with the data sender that the students are in the system. [BACK TO TOP](#)

6. How do teacher accounts get into the system?

Answer: The district or school administrator sends an Excel spreadsheet to Vantage at TMDS-import-data@vantage.com. The Excel template is available under the button “Sign Up.” Vantage loads the data and confirms with the data sender that the students are in the system. [BACK TO TOP](#)

7. What are the minimum technical requirements?

Answer: You can check your requirements by clicking on the system requirements check link found immediately after selecting a log in option (student or administrator) in the lower right hand corner. Clicking the link runs a diagnostic on your machine and will return results letting you know whether your computer meets or does not meet the technical requirements. [BACK TO TOP](#)

8. How does my district sign up for TMDS & TSDS?

Answer:

- Designate a point contact person.
- Complete and submit the Enrollment Form found under “Sign Up.”
- Send student and administrator data to Vantage, following the Excel template guidelines posted under “Sign Up.” [BACK TO TOP](#)



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9. Is training available?

Answer: Yes. Training on TMDS & TSDS can be obtained at your local Education Service Center. For help in setting up training, please contact your regional representative at the following:

Texas Regional Collaboratives TMDS & TSDS Trainers			
First Name	Last Name	Email	Collaborative
Laura	Saenz	lsaenz@esc3.net	Region 3
Omah	Williams	owilliams@esc4.net	Region 4
Rebecca	Collier	beckycollier@gt.rr.com	Region 5
Judy	Grubbs	jgrubbs@esc7.net	Region 7
Dale	Loughmiller	dloughmiller@reg8.net	Region 8
Dale	McCurdy	dmccurdy@reg8.net	Region 8
Holly	Duncan	holly.duncan@esc9.net	Region 9
Leslie	Patrick	leslie.patrick@esc9.net	Region 9
Rick	Meyer	Rick.Meyer@Region10.org	Region 10
Becky	Yarbrough	byarbrough@esc11.net	Region 11
Judy	York	jyork@esc12.net	Region 12
Jennifer	Jordan	jordan@esc13.txed.net	Region 13
John	Lineweaver	jlineweaver@esc14.net	Region 14
Amy	Rutherford	amy.rutherford@netxv.net	Region 15
Cayla	Cielencki	cayla.cielencki@amaisd.org	Region 16
Susan	Smith	susan.smith@esc16.net	Region 16
Martha	Alexander	malexanderesc18.net	Region 18
Cindy	Fouts	cfouts@esc18.net	Region 18
Gina	Christenson	gina.christenson@esc20.net	Region 20
Annette	Venegas	annette.venegas@esc20.net	Region 20
Patty	McLelland	Patty_McLelland	ACC
Alicia	Simmons	acsimmon@utmb.edu	Galveston County
Sharon	Fontaine-Brown	sfontain@houstonisd.org	Houston ISD
Adrienne	Shanklin-Miles	amiles@houstonisd.org	Houston ISD
Yolanda	Smith-Evans	yevans1@houstonisd.org	Houston ISD
Donna	Price	donna.price@humble.k12.tx.us	Lake Houston
Tom	Gadsden		OLLU
Peggy	Carnahan	carnp@lake.ollusa.edu	Our Lady of the Lake
Kenn	Heydrick		Pflugerville ISD
Carolyn	Schroeder	cschroeder@science.tamu.edu	TAMU-College Station
Linda	Smpson	lsimpson@esc2.net	TAMU-Corpus Christi/ESC 2
Staci	Thomas	staci.thomas@tamut.edu	TAMU-Texarkana
Carol	Fletcher	carol.fletcher@mail.utexas.edu	TRC
Marsha	Willis	marshawillis@mail.utexas.edu	TRC
Veronica	Garcia	verogarcia@stx.rr.com	United ISD
Christine	Romanelli	comic_caper@yahoo.com	United ISD

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10. What is the TMDS & TSDS movie?

Answer: Click on the TMDS & TSDS movie icon located on the homepage to see a 10-minute overview of the TMDS & TSDS application. While you sit back and relax, the movie shows you how to log in, how to create a class and assign a test, how to view reports, and how students take tests. It's great for any newcomer or folks needing a quick refresher. [BACK TO TOP](#)

11. What do I do if I get a "Server Error"?

Answer: A 504 or server error can arise if your Internet bandwidth is slow to access your request. This is most likely a temporary error; please refresh your screen or try your request at a later time. If this problem persists, you may contact the Vantage Helpdesk at accesstmds@vantage.com or 1-800-322-0848. [BACK TO TOP](#)

About the Tests, the Items, and the Item Bank:

1. What pre-configured exams are available?

Answer: There are several types of math exams available in both English and Spanish for grades 3 through 12. In addition to long and short form versions of the pre-configured test forms, there are pre-adaptive tests and computer adaptive tests (CAT) as well. There are now Key Concept Test Forms available for TSDS and Literacy Test Forms will be added this Spring!

2. What is a pre-adaptive test?

Answer: A pre-adaptive test contains a range of items at multiple grade levels and is psychometrically designed in a way to collect data needed to introduce adaptive testing into TMDS & TSDS. For example, the pre-adaptive 5th grade tests may contain test items from 4th, 5th and 6th grade. Now that sufficient data has been collected for math items, adaptive testing will be another test option. [BACK TO TOP](#)



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3. What is adaptive testing?

Answer: An adaptive test has no pre-set or pre-fixed group of items. Instead, the entire item bank is used to deliver questions to the student. In essence, depending on the student's correct or incorrect response, the engine searches the bank of thousands of items and delivers the next best individual 'fit' for that student. With adaptive testing, students' strengths and weaknesses can be identified across several grade levels.

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4. When will adaptive testing be available?

Answer: Computer adaptive testing (CAT) is already available in TMDS & TSDS! There are Math CAT tests available at grades 4 – 8. These tests can be found in the general Math folder and are assigned just as any other online pre-configured exam is assigned.

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5. How many items are in the bank?

Answer: Currently there are approximately 4,000 test items in the math bank and 2,000 test items in the science bank, all aligned to the TEKS. [BACK TO TOP](#)

6. Can I create my own items for a test?

Answer: No. The items included in the TMDS & TSDS item bank are written by professional item writers and sent through many comprehensive review processes before being imported into the application. Although you cannot create your own items, you can certainly create your own tests by using the Create Assessment button available on the main menu. [BACK TO TOP](#)

7. What if I disagree with the way an item is aligned?

Answer: Click on the comment button. Check off alignment and include a comment on where you think the item should be aligned. Vantage experts will review the comment and make the revision and/or confer with TEA for a final decision. [BACK TO TOP](#)



8. Can I search for specific types of items by language, TEKS or difficulty level?

Answer: Yes. After naming, assigning point values and a subject to a test, a new window will appear in which you may click on the “Search Items” button. After clicking on this, another window will appear in which you may search for test questions in a number of different categories. [BACK TO TOP](#)

9. Can I edit a test that I already created?

Answer: Once you create a test and lock it, you should not edit the test items unless you have not yet assigned this test to student groups. If there are any students currently taking this test, you will be unable to modify any of the test contents. You will need to wait for all students to complete their assignments until you can unlock the test and then make adjustments to any of the items. Once you have completed your edits, you will need to re-lock the test before assigning it to groups. [BACK TO TOP](#)

10. Can I award different point values for items on a test?

Answer: Yes. From the main menu, click the “Create Assessment” button. From the test management screen, you may select the test for which you wish to adjust the point values. Using the drop down menu, choose how many points you want each item to be worth, or choose the option toward the bottom of the drop down menu that says “No Default. Apply Values Manually”. [BACK TO TOP](#)

11. Are there tools available for tests?

Answer: Yes. From the main menu, click the “Create Assessment” button. From the test management screen, you may select the test that you wish to apply tools to. Click on the “Edit” tab to view the available tools to assign to your test. [BACK TO TOP](#)

12. What does it mean when I lock my test?

Answer: Once a teacher has finished selecting items for a test and applying any necessary tools, the test must be “locked” in order to assign it to groups. You may lock a test by clicking on the lock icon. An unlocked test is one that is still in the progress of being created and is not considered finalized and ready for assignment. [BACK TO TOP](#)

13. Is it possible to have paper and pencil test results included in a student’s portfolio?

Answer: Yes. Students can bubble in their responses using the electronic bubble sheet. Alternatively, students can record answers on an approved scanner sheet and the teacher or administrator can scan in results. [BACK TO TOP](#)



Creating a Group and Assigning a Test:

1. How do I create a group?

Answer: From the main menu, select “Student Groups and Assignments.” Follow three simple steps: (1) name the group; (2) add students; (3) assign a test. Be sure to click save after selecting the test to assign to your group. [BACK TO TOP](#)

2. Is it easy to assign more than one test to the same group?

Answer: Yes. Once the students are in your group, simply select the assignment tab and the test to assign. Save it. Then simply select Add Assignment to add another test, and so on. [BACK TO TOP](#)

3. How does a teacher create a test?

Answer: From the main menu, select Create a Test; name the test; search and select the items for the test. [BACK TO TOP](#)

4. Can a campus/district administrator create a test for all students enrolled in that campus/district?

Answer: Yes. Campus and district administrators can create a test by selecting “Create a Test”. Tests created by the campus or district are available for use by all students and teachers belonging to that particular school or district. [BACK TO TOP](#)



5. When making a test assignment, what does it mean to turn ON the accessibility wizard?

Answer: If you turn ON the accessibility wizard, the student takes will have access to a tool that allows the student to increase or decrease the font size, and change the colors of the font and background. It's a great tool for early learners, color blind students, and students with visual impairments. [BACK TO TOP](#)

6. Can I delete a student from an entire district?

Answer: Yes. Log in as a district administrator and click on "Search/Manage Users". Choose the appropriate campus, group, and user type to locate the student. When the student has been located, click "Delete" to the right of the students name. You will be prompted one more time to be sure that you have selected the correct student. If you have selected the correct student, click "Delete". [BACK TO TOP](#)

7. Can I create new students without having to send an import template?

Answer: Yes. Click on the "Search/Manage Users" button from the main menu. Select the group the student will be in, as well as the user type (student). Leave the other fields blank, and click "Search". From the new window, click on "Create New User", enter the appropriate information, and click "Save". [BACK TO TOP](#)

About Reports:

1. What is the student portfolio?

Answer: The student portfolio section provides a status of tests assigned to all students in your classes (or 'groups'). In the portfolio section, you can see group and individual test results for completed exams. [BACK TO TOP](#)

2. What is the student individual report?

Answer: This report provides graphical and numerical performance data. Graphically, the report shows how the student performed within each strand. It is easy to see high and low performing strands. In addition, the report shows, for each item, the correct response, the student's response, the TEK alignment, the TEK text, and the item. This data allows the teacher to craft individual lesson plans and instruction geared toward helping students improve in key areas. [BACK TO TOP](#)

3. What is the roster report?

Answer: For the class selected, the roster report displays group summary data for the total score and individual strands. The roster also lists all students that took the test and specific results for each student. [BACK TO TOP](#)

4. What is the customized roster report?

Answer: The customized roster lets you filter a group to view student subgroups. The filters available include gender, ethnicity, at-risk status, and date range. Thus, if instead of creating a roster on all students in the group, a teacher can create a roster report for Hispanic males that are at-risk. [BACK TO TOP](#)

5. What is the item analysis report?

Answer: The item analysis report provides a grid showing how each student answered each item. It allows a teacher to easily find questions that all students answered incorrectly or had difficulty with. Since the report is dynamic, teachers can click on the item and view the actual question online. [BACK TO TOP](#)

6. What are the state aggregate reports?

Answer: These reports display data for all students taking pre-configured tests in TMDS & TSDS. This drill down report allows any administrator (teacher, campus, district, region, state) to view aggregate performance for all students in the state, for any region, for any district, and for any state. The system also retains last year's data for easy year-to-year comparison. [BACK TO TOP](#)



7. What is the CAT Report?

Answer: A CAT Report will allow you to select a group and view their students' performance on CAT tests. An overall scaled score is reported along with individual strand scores. A clickable link provides access to individual student reports for each test session. [BACK TO TOP](#)

8. Can I see my student results from tests taken last year?

Answer: Yes. The Student History Report will allow teachers to view last year's TMDS & TSDS performance data for students in their class this year. [BACK TO TOP](#)

9. Is the information contained in the report historical?

Answer: Yes. All report data collected in any of the TMDS & TSDS reports contain the current data for students, assignments and groups at the time of the test submission. [BACK TO TOP](#)

10. Can I modify a students report if I disagree with something on it?

Answer: No. Since reports are based on historical information gathered at the time of the test submission, the reports are final and cannot be modified. If you do think there is a larger issue with a test that needs to be addressed in order to prevent further discrepancies or issues appearing in reports, then please provide a detailed report to the Vantage Helpdesk by calling 1-800-322-0848 or emailing accesstmds@vantage.com [BACK TO TOP](#)

11. Can I view school wide and/or statewide reports?

Answer: Yes. To view statewide reports, simply click on the "Portfolios/Reports" button from the main menu, and select "State Reports". To view school wide reports, select the "Customized Roster/Item Analysis" button and select "All" in the drop down menu for school. [BACK TO TOP](#)

12. If I have a transfer or new student in my class who previously used TMDS & TSDS, can I view reports from their previous teacher?

Answer: Yes, you may view last year's results through the Student History Report. [BACK TO TOP](#)



Paper and Pencil Testing Options:

1. How do I assign a test to be given by paper and pencil?

Answer: When making a test assignment, indicate that the test can be delivered (1) only offline or (2) both online and offline. Either option will allow the test to be delivered in paper and pencil format. [BACK TO TOP](#)

2. How do I print a test?

Answer: There are 2 ways to print a pre-configured diagnostic test. (1) From the main menu select print diagnostic test, scroll to the test desired, and print. (2) After assigning the test to your class, go to the edit fields and select print test. Walk through the print wizard. Tests created by the teacher must be printed using option 2. [BACK TO TOP](#)

3. How can I purchase answer sheets for use in TMDS & TSDS?

Answer: Answer sheets may be ordered by calling Vantage Technical support at 800-322-0848 or by contacting the support team at accesstmds@vantage.com
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4. Can I use my school's answer sheets?

Answer: No. The scanning, data error checking, and data load software requires the specific use of TMDS & TSDS answer sheets. Any other answer sheet will not scan and load the data. [BACK TO TOP](#)

5. What is the special code field on the answer sheet?

Answer: The special code is the number that associates your students to the specific class you created in TMDS & TSDS. Obtain the special code by clicking "Student Groups and Assignments", then, under options, select "Assignments." From here, find the paper and pencil test you are about to deliver and the corresponding special code.
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6. How do I scan answer sheets and load paper responses into the application?

Answer:

- Download VanScan. This software is available at no charge and is located under the button “Offline Testing.” The download process takes between 2-4 minutes.
- Connect a scanner, either a NCS Opscan or Scantron scanner.
- Scan answer sheets.
- Edit error answer sheets. You may edit online – without having to re-scan answer sheets.
- Load results by clicking on submit data. [BACK TO TOP](#)

7. What materials do I need to give a paper and pencil test?

Answer: You will need a printed version of the test, if you intend to have students use the electronic bubble sheet. Or, you may use a printed version of the test and scan in answers on an answer sheet. Click on the Offline Testing button for more information.

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Students:

1. What information does a student need to access the system?

Answer: First Name, Last Name, and Date of Birth in the format sent from the district.

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2. What if a student cannot log in?

Answer: First, check to see if the student is in the system, but under a different spelling. For example, Pam might be in the system as Pamela. To do this, either create a group and search the students available in your school, or use the Search and Manage Users feature to obtain a list of students. If the student is not in the school, you can add him or her by clicking on the Create New Student tab (in Manage Groups section).

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3. How does a student start a test?

Answer: Simple. To start an online test, in the ‘bottom’ section of the test center, the student clicks on the name of the test. The first screen contains the directions for taking the exam. Click the green GO button to start the test. [BACK TO TOP](#)



4. Can a student stop in the middle of the test?

Answer: Yes. To pause for completing later, hit the stop button on the bottom navigation bar. The student must confirm that he or she has finished testing for now and will return later. [BACK TO TOP](#)

5. How does a student continue a test that has been paused/suspended?

Answer: Tests in progress are listed on the “top” half of the test center. To begin where the student left off, simply click on the test name. The test will go immediately to the last question viewed by the student. [BACK TO TOP](#)

6. What is the bubble sheet version?

Answer: This is a great tool for students who have taken the exam on paper. By clicking the name of the test under the bubble version, an electronic bubble sheet appears. The student must ‘click’ in all answers to the test and press Finish. The exam will be scored immediately and available for the student and teacher to view. [BACK TO TOP](#)

7. How does a student view his or her results?

Answer: Students can view results by clicking on the Portfolio tab. [BACK TO TOP](#)

8. Why can't students move backwards through a test to check answers?

Answer: This is because adaptive testing does not permit a student to review previous items and previous answers given to items. In the adaptive environment, once you answer a question -- right or wrong -- that answer is used to find the next best question to deliver. So, you can never go back and change your answer. The preconfigured (linear) tests were purposefully designed to 'mimic' the test taking experience of adaptive testing so when adaptive testing rolls out the student does not feel as if they were once given a feature (moving back) and now it's been taken away. [BACK TO TOP](#)