

# Stressing About STAAR

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Midland, TX -Students are preparing for a test unlike any they've taken before.

"The students haven't seen this type of test before, it's new to the teachers, were all going in blind right now with it," explains Midland Freshman School teacher Michelle Bose.

If your child comes home saying that 'school seems harder than it used to be'...well, school administrators say that's because it is.

The new STAAR End of Course Exams are coming up this spring and teachers are doing everything they can to prepare students, but they need your help.

The word that many are using to describe the STAAR test is "rigorous". Midland ISD administrators and teachers say it will be much more difficult than the previous TAKS test.

Almost a semester has gone by with the new curriculum and teachers say parent support is more important than ever leading up to the exam in March.

"As far as the standards, they have not really changed but our rigor with the standards has changed," Bose explains.

The STAAR test consists of multiple choice and open-ended questions but many teachers say, the change from last year is actually a good one.

"We're not having to review as much and focus on a test as much as we can on the concepts," she claims.

"The biggest thing is not knowing what will be on the test or what the format will look like," says MISD Science Director Robert Pena.

That's why they need parents to help at home too.

"Were looking for students to be able to read questions, analyze, think critically rather than just memorize," explains Bose.

"Me being a parent, I'm scared. This is the first time my daughter will take the STAAR exam and I'm going 'OK is she getting everything?'" Pena says.

So MISD's Robert Pena suggests that parents do everything they can on the home front to help their child. Such as practicing reading skills at home...ask your child questions about the reading and even have them summarize it when they finish.

Also he says to take advantage of tutoring sessions at your child's school.

And keep open communication with your child's teacher so you know what areas to focus on.

You can also visit the TEA website, <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>, to find more information on the STAAR test.

Pena believes in the end, it will be worth it.

"With the increased rigor and relevance it will be prepare our students for college," he says.

"We're not scared, we just want the kids to continue to work hard and to continue to do their best. I think they're scared it's going to be harder...but with the release questions we've seen, it's not. It's just more rigorous," says Bose.

Big spring ISD is holding several 9th grade parent sessions in the coming weeks. Midland ISD says they are also planning on workshops for their 7th, 8th and 9th grade parents in the spring.

Ector County ISD is still finalizing a plan.

<http://www.cbs7kosa.com/news/details.asp?ID=30715>