2019 TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate
Decision-Making Guide for LPACs

Overview

This Texas Education Agency (TEA) publication is designed to guide language proficiency assessment committees (LPACs) in making assessment decisions for English learners (ELs) with regards to the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and TELPAS Alternate programs which consist of the following components:

Assessments	Grades and Language Domains
TELPAS Holistically Rated Assessments	K–1 Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing
	2–12 Writing
TELPAS Online Assessments	2–12 Reading, Listening, and Speaking
TELPAS Alternate Holistic Inventory	2–12 Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing

Additional information about the design of TELPAS may be found in TEA's publication titled *Educator Guide to TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate*. The guide is in the process of being updated to include TELPAS Alternate.

Participation Decisions for TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate

Section 101.1003 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) outlines requirements for an EL's participation in state-identified English language proficiency assessments. The TAC is accessible from the A–Z index of the TEA website.

TELPAS fulfills federal requirements for annually assessing the English language proficiency of ELs enrolled in grades K–12. Accordingly, K–12 ELs are assessed with TELPAS, including ELs classified as limited English proficient (LEP) in PEIMS whose parents have declined bilingual/ESL program services (PEIMS code C). ELs are required to be assessed annually until they meet bilingual/ESL program reclassification criteria and are reclassified as non-LEP.

In addition to the general TELPAS, TEA has developed an alternate English language proficiency assessment, referred to as TELPAS Alternate, for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities. The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, in conjunction with language proficiency LPAC), should determine if an EL receiving special education services is eligible for TELPAS Alternate. The TELPAS Alternate Participation Requirements are posted on the TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate Resources webpage at https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/ell/telpas/.

There are circumstances in which a student may not be required to participate in the general TELPAS or in one or more language domains of the general TELPAS.

- **Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Decision** - In rare cases, it may be necessary for the ARD committee, in conjunction with the LPAC, to determine if an EL receiving special education services should not be assessed in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for reasons associated with the student's particular disability. Participation must be considered on a domain-by-domain basis. The reason for not assessing the student must be well-supported and documented in the student's individualized education program (IEP) by the ARD committee and in the student's permanent record file by the LPAC. This decision is applicable only for an EL receiving special education services and who is not eligible for TELPAS Alternate. Further guidance on making ARD-decisions for TELPAS will soon be posted. It is important to note that special administrations of the TELPAS online test(s) are available, which may allow the student to participate.

- **ELs with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SCD) in Grades 2-12 -** To determine an EL's eligibility to participate in TELPAS Alternate, refer to the TELPAS Alternate Participation Requirements found on the TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate Resources webpage. For ELs in grade 2, the ARD committee, in conjunction with the LPAC, will be required to make an assessment determination for TELPAS Alternate. For ELs in grades 3-12, ELs who are eligible to take STAAR Alternate 2 will take TELPAS Alternate. It is important to note that students that are eligible for TELPAS Alternate must be evaluated in all language domains. For guidance on students that may qualify for "No Authentic Academic Response" or a "Medical Exception," refer to the TELPAS Alternate Participation Requirements.

Special Administration of an Online Assessment

In rare circumstances that prevent a student from testing online, TEA may grant approval for a special administration of a TELPAS online test (reading and/or listening and speaking) for grades 2–12.

- Accommodations cannot be applied - A student may need a testing accommodation that is not possible to provide in an online setting. Prior to requesting a special administration of the assessment, consideration should be given to accessibility features, locally-approved designated supports, and designated supports requiring TEA approval. For information regarding these testing designated supports, refer to the Accommodation Resources page.
- Technology access is precluded - Districts must make every effort to administer TELPAS reading and TELPAS listening and speaking online. In rare situations where computers or technology are absolutely not available, districts may seek permission for a special administration.

If approved for a special administration, instructions will be provided separately. Additional information about special administration of an online assessment can be found in the District and Campus Coordinator Resources.

Participation Considerations for TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate

TELPAS Reading in Grades 2–12

TELPAS reading tests for grades 2–12 are designed to determine where ELs are on the continuum of English language reading proficiency as a measure of annual student progress. The continuum starts with an initial understanding of high-frequency English words and phrases and culminates with the ability to read and understand texts similar to those written for English-proficient students.

Because the span of reading ability is so broad and the purpose is to measure annual growth in English acquisition, these assessments should be appropriate for the vast majority of ELs who receive special education services. An exception would be students who need an assessment in braille. Braille versions are not available due to the critical role of visual images in the assessment of English language proficiency.

TELPAS Listening and Speaking in Grades 2–12

TELPAS listening and speaking tests for grades 2–12 are designed to determine where ELs are on the continuum of English language listening and speaking proficiency as a measure of annual student progress. In listening, the continuum starts with an initial understanding of simple words and phrases and culminates with the ability to understand grade-appropriate English in academic and social settings. In speaking, the continuum starts with the ability to speak using highly familiar words and phrases, and it culminates with the ability to participate in extended social conversations and academic discussions comparable to native English-speaking peers.

Because the span of listening and speaking abilities is broad and the purpose is to measure annual growth in English acquisition, these assessments should be appropriate for the vast majority of ELs who receive special education services.

Exceptions include
- students who need an assessment in braille (Braille versions are not available due to the critical role of visual images in the assessment of English language proficiency.),
- students who need a signed administration of the assessment,

- students unable to communicate verbally because of a significant cognitive disability, and/or

- students who have impaired or no hearing due to a disability.

TELPAS Holistically Rated Components in K-12

TELPAS holistically rated assessments are based on student classwork and ongoing classroom observations of students in daily instruction. For these assessments, trained teachers use proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) from the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) to determine students' English language proficiency levels. The teachers use collections of classroom-based student writing when assessing the English language writing proficiency of students in grades 2–12. Teachers rate ELs in accordance with how well the students understand and use the English required by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) at their grade level. ELs receiving special education services should be evaluated relative to how well they are able to understand and use English to access the general curriculum at their enrolled grade level in accordance with their IEP.

With rare exceptions, students should be able to be observed and rated meaningfully in each holistically rated domain. If the LPAC and ARD committee collaboratively decide that assessment in a domain is inappropriate because of a student's particular disability, the decision is recorded at the time of testing and the student is not holistically rated.

TELPAS Alternate for Grades 2-12

The TELPAS Alternate is a holistic inventory aligned to the ELPS; however, TELPAS Alternate is based on alternate PLDs that were created to address the specific access needs of ELs with significant cognitive disabilities.

For this assessment, trained teachers use the observable behaviors (OBs) created for each domain (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and the alternate PLDs to assess a student's English language proficiency in grades 2-12. Teachers can preview the OBs when they are posted on the TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate webpage.

Designated Supports Decisions for TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate*

For an EL with a disability, the LPAC is responsible for making and documenting TELPAS designated supports decisions in conjunction with the ARD committee or Section 504 placement committee, as applicable to the services provided. In the rare case that an EL with a disabling condition does not receive special education or Section 504 services but meets established eligibility criteria for certain designated supports, the LPAC is responsible for coordinating with the appropriate team of people at the campus level, such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) team or student assistance team, in making accommodation decisions.

For TELPAS, the allowable designated supports are meant to address needs related to the student's disability. Designated supports that address second language acquisition needs are not permitted during TELPAS because student progress in second language acquisition is what is being assessed.

Information detailing the accessibility features and designated supports that are allowable for TELPAS can be found in the District and Coordinator Resources and on the accommodation resources webpage.

*Because TELPAS Alternate is an assessment based on a year of quality English instruction, the student performance described in the observable behaviors occurs while students have access to the instructional accommodations indicated in their IEP, therefore LPAC/ARD committees will not need to make designated supports decisions.

Documenting Decisions for TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate

For each EL, the LPAC must maintain documentation of TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate participation and the decision to provide TELPAS designated supports in the student's permanent record file.

- If the EL receives special education services, documentation of participation and designated supports

decisions must also be maintained by the ARD committee in the IEP.

- If the EL has a Section 504 placement committee, documentation of designated supports decisions must also be maintained by the placement committee in the student's individual accommodation plan (IAP).
- In the rare case that an EL has a disabling condition but is not receiving either special education or Section 504 services, documentation of designated supports decisions should also be maintained by the appropriate team of people at the campus level (e.g., RTI team or student assistance team).

Information about ELs with Identified Special Needs

Committees serving the needs of ELs with identified special needs may wish to refer to the documents below for information about appropriate services and collaborative decision-making processes.

- *Process for Considering Reclassification of English Learners who also have Identified Special Needs* (found at the following link: https://tea.texas.gov/bilingual/esl/education/)

- *Guidance Related to ARD Committee and LPAC Collaboration* (found at the following link: https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Special_Student_Populations/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/State_Guidance/Guidance_Related_to_ARD_Committee_and_LPAC_Collaboration/)