

## What is TELPAS?

TELPAS is an assessment program for students in Texas public schools who are learning the English language. The letters in TELPAS stand for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System. The Texas Education Agency developed TELPAS to meet state and federal requirements. Texas annually assesses the English language proficiency of students who have been identified as English learners (ELs) in four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS evaluates the progress that each EL makes in becoming proficient in the use of academic English.

## Who takes TELPAS?



Students in grades K-12 that have been identified as an EL are required to take TELPAS. This includes ELs whose parents have declined bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) program services. They will stop participating in TELPAS when their language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) determines that they are proficient in the English language and have met exit criteria. This applies to all ELs even those who are not in a bilingual or ESL program. Once a student has met the state's exit criteria, they will no longer be identified as an EL and will not have to participate in TELPAS. Information about the state's reclassification (exit)

criteria can be found at <https://tea.texas.gov/bilingual/esl/education/>.

## How are the TELPAS language domains assessed?

In grades K-1, TELPAS includes holistically-rated listening, speaking, reading, and writing assessments based on ongoing classroom observations and student interactions. For each language area assessed, teachers use specific language proficiency guidelines to determine whether your child is at the beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high stage of learning English. The proficiency guidelines take into account that young children do not all learn to read and write at the same rate. Students who are not yet at the stage of reading or writing in any language are evaluated on how well they use English in prereading and prewriting activities.



In grades 2-12, TELPAS includes online reading and listening and speaking tests and holistically-rated student writing collections. The TELPAS reading test and listening and speaking test are designed especially for students who do not speak English as their first language. These tests are made up of test questions that span a full range of English reading, listening, and speaking ability. While the beginning level reading selections and questions include very common English words and many pictures, the advanced and advanced high reading

selections and questions require a near-native understanding of English. Once students reach a proficiency rating of advanced high on the test, they have little difficulty understanding what they read in class and on state assessments of academic skills. The results in listening, speaking, and writing indicate how well students understand and use English during academic instruction.

## What do TELPAS results tell me about my child?

Every student who participates in TELPAS receives a report card with their test results. TELPAS uses four proficiency ratings—Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Advanced High—to show the progress students make in learning English from year to year. For students to reach their full academic potential, it is important for them to make steady progress in learning English. Your child's proficiency ratings in listening, speaking, reading, and writing will give you a good idea about the



progress he or she is making. Students who do not make steady progress may require additional assistance at school.

The following brief descriptions will help you understand the abilities generally demonstrated by students at the four English proficiency levels.

- **Beginning**—Students who receive this rating are in the early stages of learning English. These students have a small vocabulary of very common words and little ability to use English in academic settings. These students often communicate using English they have memorized.
- **Intermediate**—Students who receive this rating are able to use common, basic English in routine academic activities but need considerable English-language support to make learning understandable. Socially, these students are able to communicate simply about familiar topics and are generally able to understand conversations but may not comprehend all the details.
- **Advanced**—Students who receive this rating are able to understand and use academic English in classroom activities when given some English-language support. In social situations, these students can understand most of what they hear but have some difficulty with unfamiliar grammar and vocabulary.
- **Advanced High**—Students who receive this rating are able to use academic English in classroom activities with little English-language support from others, even when learning about unfamiliar material. Students at this level have a large enough vocabulary in English to communicate clearly and fluently in most situations.

### What are the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)?

Approved by the State Board of Education in 2007–2008, the ELPS are second language acquisition curriculum standards that support the ability of ELs to learn the academic English they need for meaningful engagement in subject-area instruction. The ELPS are found in Title 19, Chapter 74.4 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC).

Chapter 74.4 (a)(1) requires the ELPS to be published along with the TEKS for each subject. Every teacher who has an EL in class is responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the subject-area TEKS and the ELPS.

### What are the Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs)?

The ELPS PLDs define how well ELs at the four proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high) are able to understand and use English in grade-level academic settings. The descriptors show the progression of second language acquisition from one proficiency level to the next and serve as a road map to help teachers tailor instruction to the linguistic needs of ELs. See the 2018 TELPAS Educator Guide and the TELPAS Resources page of the Texas Education Agency website for a copy of the PLDs used for TELPAS.

### Are there accommodations for TELPAS?

There are accommodations for TELPAS. In addition, TEA has also developed an alternate English language proficiency assessment, referred to as TELPAS Alternate, for ELs that have significant cognitive disabilities. Please contact your child's teacher for more information on accommodations for TELPAS and on TELPAS Alternate.

### How does academic language proficiency compare to academic achievement?

Academic language proficiency is not the same as academic achievement. English language learners who have academic language proficiency understand the English that makes the learning of academic concepts and skills fully accessible. Academic language proficiency, therefore, provides the foundation for and access to academic achievement. Language proficiency encompasses both social language proficiency and academic language proficiency.