

Chapter 7 TELPAS Alternate

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the testing window for Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) Alternate was extended to allow a local education agency (LEA) to complete testing. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) created the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Support and Guidance](#) webpage to help coordinate the flow of information from the state to districts, help districts solve problems, and provide guidance to aid in districts' decision-making.

The TELPAS Alternate assessment measures the progress that English learners (ELs) with the most significant cognitive disabilities make in acquiring the English language, a





The TELPAS Alternate holistic inventory contains descriptions of **Observable Behaviors** aligned to the alternate PLDs that teachers use to document a student’s progress in English language acquisition. The intent of this observational design is to increase student access to TELPAS Alternate and account for a student’s communication mode, thereby resulting in a more accurate measurement of a student’s English proficiency level.

TEA piloted the TELPAS Alternate assessment during a 10-day window from April 23 to May 4, 2018. The pilot test was designed to evaluate the feasibility of the alternate English language proficiency assessment. TEA used test results and a post-administration survey from the pilot test to improve the test administrator instructions and training prior to the first operational implementation in the 2018–2019 school year.

TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate are used to show the extent to which districts and the state meet the ESSA requirements for development of English language proficiency. Composite performance, rather than performances on individual domains, is used to determine an EL’s progress in achieving English language proficiency in TELPAS

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“Yes.” If the answer to any question is “No,” the student is not eligible to participate in TELPAS Alternate and must be assessed with TELPAS. Each “Yes” answer must be justified by evidence that the student meets the criterion and sign the assurances in Step II of the participation requirements. For students in grades 3–12, the LPAC will answer question 1 and initial the assurances in Step II.

1.

2.

A determination of significant cognitive disability is made by the ARD committee and must be based on the student’s most recent full and individual evaluation (FIE) conducted by the multidisciplinary team that includes a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified or licensed practitioner with experience and training in the area of the disability. AND

Results from the FIE must indicate a deficit in the student’s ability to plan, comprehend, and reason. FIE results must also indicate adaptive behavior deficits that limit a student’s ability to apply social and practical skills such as personal care, social problem-solving skills, dressing and eating, using money, and other functional skills across life domains. These types of results are unlikely to be seen in an FIE of a student with a high-incidence disability only, such as a specific learning disability or speech impairment.

3.

Federal regulations mandate that all students have access to grade-level curriculum. A student with a significant cognitive disability requires extensive, repeated, specialized supports and materials beyond the support typical peers require. The student uses substantially modified materials to access information in alternate ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate and transfer skills across all settings. AND

A student with a significant cognitive disability demonstrates adaptive behaviors that are significantly impaired. This most likely will impact the student’s ability to live independently and will require specialized supports for the student to function safely in daily life across all life domains, not just the school environment.

4.

A student with a significant cognitive disability requires a highly specialized, individualized curriculum linked to functional and academic individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives. AND



A student with a significant cognitive disability requires classroom assessments administered in alternate or non-traditional methods to demonstrate acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of discrete skills across academic settings. AND

A student with a significant cognitive disability requires individualized instruction that is neither temporary nor limited to specific content areas.

5.

A student with a significant cognitive disability requires a highly specialized educational program with intensive supports and modifications to the curriculum to access the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) through prerequisite skills that are significantly below grade-level instruction. For instance, an elementary student may be 3–4 levels below grade-level instruction while a student in high school may be 7–9 levels below.

6.

The decision to administer TELPAS Alternate is NOT based on a student's racial or economic background, excessive or extended absences, location of service delivery, anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, or any other such factors.

Students that are eligible for TELPAS Alternate must be evaluated in all four language domains. Unlike TELPAS, there are no domain specific exemptions. Students that may qualify for No Authentic Academic Response (NAAR) or a Medical Exception (ME). More information on NAAR and ME designations can be found on the applicable form on the [TELPAS Alternate Resources](#) webpage.

TELPAS Alternate assesses the ELPS, which districts are required to implement as an integral part of each foundation and enrichment subject of the TEKS. The ELPS are second-language acquisition standards that include three instructional components: cross-curricular second language acquisition essential knowledge and skills, PLDs, and linguistic accommodations.

To achieve the state's educational goals for meeting the language and content needs of ELs who have one or more significant cognitive disabilities, TEA developed alternate PLDs to describe how well ELs with significant cognitive disabilities can understand and use English. There are [alternate PLDs](#) for each ()i(h.)4.3 h sior7s.rit

TELPAS Alternate uses the same language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as TELPAS; however, the definitions of the language domains are broader in TELPAS Alternate to allow for alternate forms of expressive and receptive language, as shown below in Table 7.1. The italicized language in the TELPAS Alternate Refinement column indicates the broader definitions.



	The ability to understand spoken language, comprehend and extract information, and	



These educators, assessment experts, and administrators provided feedback on many components of this alternate assessment. These included:

- observable behaviors for the holistic inventory
- alternate PLDs
- eligibility requirements
- classroom examples for each observable behavior

More information about TELPAS Alternate is available in the [TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate Educator Guide](#) on the TELPAS Alternate Resources webpage. This guide is provided to familiarize educators with TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate. It shows the integral relationship between TELPAS Alternate and the ELPS, and includes explanatory information on the TELPAS Alternate language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as a sample of Observable Behaviors for reading.

TELPAS Alternate is a holistic inventory aligned to the ELPS and based on alternate PLDs that describe the English language acquisition progress of a student with significant cognitive disabilities. The inventory includes 40 Observable Behaviors for test administration. The inventory includes 40 Observable Behaviors for test administration. The inventory includes 40 Observable Behaviors for test administration.

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rating that combines the domain ratings into one overall English language proficiency rating. While the [TELPAS Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) are domain-specific, they derive from the TELPAS Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors for English Language Learners (ELLs) in the state of Texas.



A student’s scale score on a TELPAS Alternate domain determines that student’s proficiency level for that domain. To facilitate the monitoring of a student’s progress from one year to the next, TELPAS Alternate results for individual students include the student’s proficiency level rating and scale score for both the previous and current year. Proficiency level cut scores are discussed in the [Performance Standards](#) section of this chapter.

In addition to receiving a rating of Awareness, Imitation, Early Independence, Developing Independence, or Basic Fluency for each domain, students also receive a composite score and composite rating.

The TELPAS Alternate composite score and rating indicate a student’s overall level of English language proficiency and are determined from the student’s listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiency ratings. Each domain is weighted, as shown in Table 7.4.

25%	25%	25%	25%

After a TELPAS Alternate composite score is calculated, a composite rating is determined according to the rules below. All the criteria listed for a rating must be met for a student to receive that rating:

Awareness

A student whose composite score fails to meet the Imitation requirements will receive an Awareness rating.

Imitation

A TELPAS Alternate composite score greater than or equal to 1.5

At least two domains with a proficiency level of Imitation or higher

Early Independence

A TELPAS Alternate composite score greater than or equal to 2.25

At least two domains with a proficiency level of Early Independence or higher

At least three domains with a proficiency level of Imitation or higher



Developing Independence

A TELPAS Alternate composite score greater than or equal to 3.25

At least two domains with a proficiency level of Developing Independence or higher

All domains with a proficiency level of Imitation or higher

Basic Fluency

A TELPAS Alternate composite score greater than or equal to 4

At least two domains with a proficiency level of Basic Fluency

All domains with a proficiency level of Early Independence or higher

Figure 7

Standard reports for TELPAS Alternate





The TELPAS Alternate student performance reports are used in the following ways:


- helping parents monitor the progress their child is making in acquiring English

- informing instructional planning for individual students

- reporting results to local school boards, school professionals, and the community

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The sections that follow describe how these types of validity evidence are collected annually for TELPAS Alternate.

Validity evidence based on test content refers to evidence of the relationship between tested content and the construct the test is intended to measure. TELPAS Alternate measures student performance in direct alignment with the English language acquisition skills and [alternate PLDs](#), defined by the Texas ELPS that are part of the TEKS curriculum. The ELPS outline the instruction that ELs must receive to support their ability to develop academic English language proficiency. TELPAS Alternate assesses the ELPS for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

TELPAS Alternate is designed to assess English language proficiency in a manner that provides information about how well grades 2–12 ELs with significant cognitive disabilities understand and produce the English they need for academic success in Texas schools, as well as the types of language supports they require to independently comprehend written or spoken English.

The tests are built using five levels, or degrees, of linguistic support, addressing the gradually reduced degree of linguistic accommodation that ELs need as they progress from knowing little or no English to approaching the level of Basic Fluency. The levels of linguistic support are integrally related to the proficiency levels assessed.

The test blueprints require ten Observable Behaviors per domain, for a total of 40. Score reports inform administrators about how successfully students demonstrate the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the ELPS at the five proficiency levels.

The test development process for TELPAS Alternate adheres to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA/APA/NCME, 2014), is grounded in the state's standards, and is guided by assessment experts, as well as by bilingual and special education educators, who have first-hand knowledge of the standards and the students.

An additional source of validity evidence is whether the way students are evaluated on the Observable Behaviors on the holistic inventory supports the accurate measurement of the construct.

Theoretical and empirical evidence was gathered to find that the way administrators respond to Observable Behaviors does not add construct-irrelevant variance. Additionally, evidence was gathered confirming that response processes do not result in an advantage or disadvantage for any student group. When the Observable Behaviors were first considered for TELPAS Alternate, cognitive labs were used to gather this type of evidence and to study the way test administrators engage with the Observable Behaviors and classroom examples.



and focuses on assessing the degree to which students can apply literary and analytical reading skills as required by the language arts TEKS. Because of the differences in the designs and purposes of these two assessments, one would not expect ELs to perform at the same level of proficiency on the two assessments. One would, however, expect ELs who have comparatively little difficulty understanding and reading English to score higher on the STAAR Alternate 2 reading tests when compared with ELs who are in earlier stages of English fluency.

To examine the relationship between performance on the two tests, average





TELPAS Alternate writing performance is also compared to STAAR Alternate 2 writing performance by looking at average STAAR Alternate 2 grades 4 and 7 writing and STAAR Alternate 2 English I and English II scale scores and passing rates for each of the five TELPAS Alternate writing proficiency levels. 0.005 Tw (wr)-9 (it)-9.6 (in)-3.3 (g)-3.4 ()TJ0.002 32.0

improvements in students' academic language acquisition resulting from what educators learn during the test administration training process and through direct application of the assessment process for both formative and summative purposes. Logical consequences of administering TELPAS Alternate are that educators

learn how developing academic language proficiency in English relates to and supports academic achievement in English;

learn how to adjust content instruction for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities to make it more comprehensible and how to target steady progress in English acquisition; and

practice observing student behaviors in the instructional environment for making better instructional decisions about students.

Furthermore,



