

**Attachment A**  
**Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)**  
**Proficiency Level Setting Summary**

During spring and summer 2008, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Pearson implemented a process for recommending cut points for the second version of the English language reading proficiency assessment for English language learners (ELLs). The first version, called the Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE), was administered to ELLs in grades 3–12 from spring 2000 through spring 2007. The second version, the TELPAS reading assessment, was administered to ELLs in grades 2–12 for the first time in spring 2008.

**TELPAS Reading Overview**

TELPAS measures the English acquisition in listening, speaking, reading, and writing of K–12 students who are identified as limited English proficient. The new TELPAS reading assessments are developed for six grade clusters: 2, 3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, and 10–12. The TELPAS reading tests are similar to RPTE except that they

- include more questions that tap the ability to read and understand English in the context of mathematics and science instruction,
- add a grade 2 test that replaces the former observational assessment,
- include more questions assessing the advanced high proficiency level, and
- are administered in six rather than four grade clusters.

The TELPAS reading tests are designed to assess what ELLs can read and comprehend at four distinct stages of learning English—beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. These stages, which are referred to as proficiency levels, are defined in four sets of proficiency level descriptors. Each test is constructed with items that assess the characteristics and abilities associated with the four proficiency levels. As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, TELPAS results are used in federal Annual Measurable Achievement Objective (AMAO) indicators to hold districts accountable for increasing the rate at which ELLs become proficient in the English language.

In spring 2008 the TELPAS reading assessments were taken by more than two-thirds of the students online and by the remainder on paper. In spring 2009 and beyond, the tests will be administered almost exclusively online. Only in rare instances, such as when a student needs a testing accommodation that is not available in an online administration or when there is an unavoidable technological problem, will districts be authorized to give a student the TELPAS reading test on paper. More information about authorization and procedures for paper-based testing will be provided in the spring 2009 administration materials.

**Process for Establishing the Proficiency Level Cut Points**

The proficiency level cut points are designed to classify each ELL into one of four proficiency levels—beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. The process for recommending cut points involved two sets of committees. The first committee was an internal committee of staff members from TEA and test contractors with expertise in second language acquisition in reading, item development, and psychometrics. The second committee had experience in reviewing RPTE and TELPAS reading field-test items and in using RPTE test results to guide instruction.

The plan for transitioning the proficiency level cut points from the former RPTE tests to the new assessments was reviewed by national experts in second language acquisition and the Texas Technical Advisory Committee, which is composed of national experts in educational testing and psychometrics. The plan set forth a process for locating the cut points that best classify students in accordance with the proficiency level descriptors that underlie the test. The process included two phases:

**Phase 1.** From June to August 2008, an internal work group reviewed student performance on each spring 2008 test question, the pattern of student performance, and impact data associated with identified cut points. The group consisted of approximately 12 staff members from TEA, Questar Assessment, and Pearson. The work group had expertise in second language acquisition in reading and item development. The group also had expertise in RPTE and TAKS reading test development and psychometrics. After a series of eight meetings, the group identified a range, or neighborhood, of potential raw score cut points for each grade cluster assessment.

**Phase 2.** On August 6–7, 2008, TEA convened an external review group of 21 state educators who had experience reviewing RPTE and TELPAS reading field-test items and using RPTE test results to guide instruction. After reviewing the process followed by the internal work group, the external committee reviewed

- the ranges of potential cut points from Phase I,
- the test forms on which the cut points were based,
- the student response patterns on the four mini-tests that make up each assessment, and
- impact data.

The external committee was in agreement with the identified cut-point ranges. Following their analyses of the proficiency level descriptors, the test questions, the student response patterns, and the impact data for the various sets of potential cuts, the committee recommended one set of cut points for each grade/grade cluster assessment.

According to Texas Education Code §39.027, the commissioner of education is responsible for developing an assessment system to evaluate the progress of ELLs in reading proficiency in English and is responsible for the performance standards on this assessment. The cut points, which were approved by Commissioner of Education Robert Scott based on the external advisory group’s recommendations, are shown in the table below:

**Table 1. Raw Score Cut Points and Scale Score Ranges**

TELPAS Reading Assessment	Raw Score Cut Points for Online Tests	Total Number of Questions on Test	Scale Score Ranges			
			Beginning Level	Intermediate Level	Advanced Level	Advanced High Level
Grade 2	19, 30, 39	48	0–550	551–614	615–669	670+
Grade 3	25, 36, 46	58	0–596	597–647	648–698	699+
Grades 4–5	25, 37, 47	61	0–609	610–667	668–717	718+
Grades 6–7	26, 39, 50	63	0–612	613–673	674–730	731+
Grades 8–9	26, 37, 49	63	0–632	633–680	681–737	738+
Grades 10–12	26, 39, 50	64	0–643	644–703	704–756	757+

The raw score cut points show the minimum number of items students needed to answer correctly to reach the intermediate, advanced, and advanced high proficiency levels on the spring 2008 online tests.

A study was conducted in spring 2008 to compare student performance on the paper and online administrations of TELPAS. The study results show that there were slight differences in difficulty between the test modes in some grade clusters. For those grade clusters, an adjustment was made to the raw score cuts for the paper administration so that students were held to the same standard whether they took the test on paper or online. The raw score cut points for the paper tests are available at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/scoring/convtables/index.html>. Keep in mind that with rare exceptions the tests will be administered exclusively online beginning with the spring 2009 administration.

Though the raw score cut points indicating entry into a proficiency level vary slightly across the online and paper test modes in some grade clusters, the scale score ranges do not vary. The scale score is the statistic that provides a comparison of scores with a standard and accommodates for differences in the difficulty of test forms from administration to administration. The scale score ranges will remain constant for the duration of the TELPAS reading assessment program. Raw score cut points may fluctuate slightly from year to year as a normal part of the equating process. Fluctuations in raw score cuts from year to year do not indicate a change in standards of expected performance.

More detailed information about the proficiency level setting process and the TELPAS comparability study will be available in the *Technical Digest for the Academic Year 2007–2008* to be posted to the TEA Student Assessment Division website later this school year.