

ATTACHMENT A
**Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) Rater Training and Qualifying System
 2005-2006 School Year**

The 2005-2006 TOP holistic rating training has been moved to the fall of the year, and a qualifying component has been added. As with all state assessments, training in test administration procedures will occur in the spring.

The objectives of this year's fall training, which reflect field input received through TOP rater surveys and meetings with Texas educators, are to:

- train teachers to use the TOP proficiency level descriptors and classroom observational processes throughout the school year to maximize student learning;
- train teachers to assemble writing collections that accurately portray the overall English language writing proficiency of English language learners (ELLs);
- ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to serve as TOP raters; and
- reduce the amount of training required in the spring of the year.

While this fall's TOP rater training is *required* only for rater trainers and TOP raters, the participants in the September 2005 training in Austin should inform other appropriate personnel (testing coordinators, principals, etc.) about the new qualifying requirements and spring online qualifying tests, the new writing collection assembly criteria, and the instructional objectives of moving the TOP rater training to the fall of the year. Relaying this information in a timely manner will help maximize the instructional benefits to students and ensure that necessary planning for the spring TOP administrations begins in the fall of the year.

Overview of the Training and Rating Requirements

A training-of-trainers model is being used to train district and campus rater trainers and TOP raters in the TOP holistic rating process. **The original training completion date of November 30, 2005, has been extended to December 16, 2005.**

The fall training covers all grades (K-12) and language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), but most emphasis is placed on the rating of the Grades 2–12 writing collections. The new qualifying component of the training applies *only* to the rating of the Grades 2–12 writing collections. There are two rounds of qualifying tests, one in the fall and one in the spring. Raters of students enrolled in Grades 2–12 are required to take both qualifying rounds. The qualifying tests require raters to independently rate student writing collections.

In the fall training sessions, raters practice rating writing collections and discuss the ratings with their trainers before taking the fall qualifying test. Whether raters need additional holistic training prior to the spring qualifying round depends on whether they pass the initial fall qualifying test.

- Raters who pass the fall qualifying test do not need to attend an additional holistic rating training session prior to the spring qualifying round.
- Raters who do not pass the initial qualifying test in the fall will need additional holistic rating training prior to the spring qualifying round. Education service centers will work with the districts in their region to determine the most practical and effective way to provide this additional training.

Raters will take the spring qualifying tests online. Raters who pass the spring qualifying round will be *certified* to rate student writing collections independently. A teacher who does not qualify in the spring will be referred to as a noncertified rater of writing. If a noncertified rater is assigned as a rater in the TOP administration, a certified rater will need to provide a second rating of his or her students' writing collections. The second rating, if different from the first, will be the final rating.

The online qualifying tests will be administered during a testing window from **January 30–March 3, 2006**. Raters will log onto a secure website to read and rate student writing collections. Raters will get immediate test results and be able to review the annotated ratings for each writing collection. There will be two spring qualifying tests. Raters who pass the first test will be certified and will not take the second test. Raters who do not pass the first test will take

the second test. They will be certified if they pass the second test. It will be possible for a rater who does not pass the first qualifying test to log on again at a later time to take the second test.

Note: Except as specified below, all raters and rater trainers are required to receive the full fall training, which includes the fall qualifying round. In addition, all raters (including rater trainers who will also serve as raters) are required to take the spring qualifying rounds.

Exception: The qualifying component of TOP rater training does not apply to raters who will rate *only* students enrolled in Kindergarten or Grade 1 since writing collections are not required for these grades.

Identifying and Training Raters of Students in Grades 2–12

It is important to keep in mind that, despite the new qualifying component for Grades 2–12 writing, each assigned TOP rater is still responsible for rating listening, speaking, reading (Grade 2 only), *and* writing. The responsibility each rater has for assessing students in all domains has not changed. An individual who does not pass the spring qualifying round for writing but serves as a rater in the TOP administration will still rate students in all domains. The difference this year is that campuses will need to ensure that the writing collections of noncertified raters are rated a second time by a certified rater. This second rating will be the final writing rating if there is a discrepancy.

Raters of students in Grades 2–12 will be trained and qualified to rate student writing collections according to specified grade clusters. Prior to fall training, raters should be assigned one of the following grade clusters.

Grade 2	Grades 2-5
Grades 3-5	Grades 6-12
Grades 6-8	Grades 2-12
Grades 9-12	

Fall Training Components

Component 1: Required for All K–12 Raters and All Rater Trainers

The first component of the fall training is generic, not cluster-specific. It provides all K–12 raters with training in all language domains and a review of annotated writing collections from a variety of grade levels. The following three training modules are included: TOP Rater Training Overview, Training on the Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs), and Annotated Examples of Student Writing Collections. Depending on the familiarity of raters with the TOP program, the first module may be reviewed briefly. The second and third modules need to be covered in depth to ensure a thorough grounding in the holistic scoring method.

Component 2: Required for All Grades 2–12 Raters and Rater Trainers

This training component is cluster-specific. During this part of the training, raters practice rating writing collections and take their qualifying tests according to their assigned grade cluster. Trainers need to consider these clusters when planning training sessions. The number of writing collections in the practice and qualifying sets are listed below. To pass a qualifying test containing 10 collections, 7/10 collections must be rated correctly. To pass a qualifying test containing 15 collections, 10/15 collections must be rated correctly.

Grade Clusters	Writing Collections in Practice Sets	Writing Collections on Qualifying Tests
Grade 2	10	10
Grades 3-5	10	10
Grades 6-8	10	10
Grades 9-12	10	10
Grades 2-5	10 from Gr. 2 set, 10 from Gr. 3-5 set*	15
Grades 6-12	10 from Gr. 6-8 set, 10 from Gr. 9-12 set*	15
Grades 2-12	15	15

*Alternatively, trainers may select 15 of the 20 collections for these practice clusters.

Note that rater trainers should not give raters the qualifying tests or rating sheets to take home with them at the completion of fall training. The tests and rating sheets should be kept secure.

Component 3: Required for All Grades 2–12 Raters and Rater Trainers

This training component provides participants with information about the new TOP qualifying requirements and how to assemble appropriate writing collections. If necessary, districts may provide this training in informational sessions apart from the holistic rating training sessions.

Training CDs and DVDs

A CD containing the fall training materials was distributed to participants at the September training session in Austin. This CD includes the practice writing collections and qualifying tests for each grade cluster. A DVD containing a review of all practice writing collections was also distributed at the September session.

Following the September session, an additional set of training DVDs was produced. These DVDs were mailed this week to each primary contact at the September training in Austin. The first DVD covers the TOP Rater Training Overview and the second covers Training on the Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs). Trainers may use this optional training tool in a number of ways. For example:

- The DVD may be used in group training sessions.
- The DVD may be copied and made available to trainees so that individuals who rated students last year can view the DVD prior to fall training, which will reduce the time of group training sessions.
- Raters might use the DVD in the spring as a review of key information about each language domain before they begin to rate students.

Fall Training Records

Test coordinators and rater trainers should keep careful records of the training sessions, including the names of fall trainees, their grade cluster of training, and their status on the fall qualifying test. These records will help districts not only keep track of which raters will need additional training but also decide whether to identify and train more raters in the spring. Note that any rater who does not go through training in the fall must receive training on the required components prior to the spring qualifying rounds.

Spring Qualifying

When the spring qualifying rounds begin, district personnel will have ongoing access to information about the status of rater certification. This information will help them ensure that all their district's training and rating needs are met by the time of the spring TOP administration.

More details about the online qualifying system will be provided at the December 2005 test administration training session in Austin.

Spring Training Sessions

- Any rater who did not attend TOP holistic rating training in the fall must receive training on the required fall training components (this includes the fall qualifying test) in the spring prior to taking the online qualifying test.
- Any rater trained in the fall who took but did not pass the fall qualifying test is required to receive additional holistic rating training in the spring. The Texas Education Agency will not provide new training materials for this purpose. The main objective of this training is to review the fall qualifying test and annotations and answer raters' questions before they take the spring qualifying rounds.
- Although it will not be a state requirement, education service centers and districts may wish to provide additional training for raters who do not pass the first spring qualifying test. (As stated previously, raters unsuccessful on the first online test will take a second test online.) At the discretion of the district, this additional training may be required or made available to raters as an option.

- Keep in mind that spring training on TOP (TELPAS) administration procedures is required for all testing personnel. District and campus test coordinators are responsible for conducting test administration training for all state assessments in accordance with the Calendar of Events in the *2006 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Information in the test administration manuals as well as December 2005 ESC training materials should be used to provide this training to raters.

A training documentation form is included in the fall training materials. Individuals who provide 2005-2006 TOP holistic rating training are required to complete this form and keep it on file for two years from the date of the training session.