

<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>
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November 2, 2005

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Texas Observation Protocols (TOP)

Attached are two documents that are being used in Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) rater training sessions this fall to provide district and campus personnel with details about the 2005-2006 TOP training, qualifying, and writing collection procedures. The documents distributed in the training sessions were marked as draft. The attached documents have been updated and are no longer drafts.

A copy of this communication has been mailed to test coordinators and bilingual/English as a second language (ESL) coordinators at the education service center (ESC) and district level. We ask for your assistance in distributing a copy of these documents to campus principals and any additional personnel involved in TOP rater training. Relaying this information will help ensure that appropriate TOP rater training and TOP administration planning occur this fall.

The modifications in this year's TOP procedures have been recommended by the English Language Learner Focus Group that has assisted the agency in determining how Texas can best meet the limited English proficient (LEP) student assessment requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The focus group, which has provided invaluable guidance to the agency and shown an unflagging commitment to the educational needs of the students of our state, is composed of ESC and district bilingual/ESL coordinators and test coordinators as well as campus administrators and teachers. Individuals from both large and small districts are represented. The NCLB English language proficiency assessment requirements are comprehensive, and at all junctures the focus group has strived to recommend assessment procedures that will benefit student learning yet keep the assessment system manageable. The classroom observational assessment processes of TOP avoid logistical drawbacks associated with additional annual field testing and the tape-recorded or one-on-one student interviews required by other types of English language proficiency assessments. The 2005 state audit of the TOP writing collections, which included a questionnaire completed by TOP raters, indicated the need for more thorough and standardized training to ensure that raters are firmly grounded in the holistic rating rubric. As with all of our state assessments, it is important that this assessment provide a valid and reliable measure of student performance. TOP results are used in the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) composite proficiency ratings that determine districts' status on federal Annual Measurable Achievement Objective (AMAO) indicators in the statewide Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS). State-level AMAOs are also provided to the United States Department of Education to meet federal reporting requirements.

The fall TOP rater training activities require 1-2 days of each rater's time. This training, if appropriately delivered, will provide valuable professional development for all teachers who have English language learners in class. The observation protocols are integrally linked to classroom observations, instruction, and daily interactions with students. The TOP classroom observational processes, which should be used

throughout the school year, will help our state's more than 600,000 LEP students make appropriate progress in learning English and reach the high levels of academic achievement required by the state curriculum, assessments, and accountability systems. The TOP training system and ongoing observational processes, if implemented as designed, will have a significant, positive impact on teaching and learning.

Note that the timeline for completing this fall's TOP holistic rating training has been extended from November 30 to December 16, 2005.

Thank you for your cooperation in implementing the TOP assessment requirements and disseminating the enclosed information. This letter and its attachments may be accessed in the Letters to Districts section of the Student Assessment Division website at [www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment). Please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536 if you have any questions about this information.

Sincerely,

Susan Barnes  
Associate Commissioner for Standards and Programs

Attachments: A: Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) Rater Training and Qualifying System  
B: Writing Collection Procedures for Spring 2006 Texas Observation Protocols (TOP)

cc: ESC and district test coordinator; ESC and district bilingual/ESL coordinator