

Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) Audit Overview

April 24, 2006

This web document contains an overview of the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) audit process that will be implemented in spring 2006. This information was contained in the April 24, 2006, TEA letter that was sent to the districts chosen for the spring 2006 audit.

The TOP audit process will be one of the mechanisms used to examine the training and rating effectiveness of TOP and monitor the validity and reliability of the TOP assessment system. As part of the audit process, TEA will rescore a statewide representative sample of TOP student writing collections and gather survey input from selected testing coordinators and TOP raters. The fall 2005 TOP training communications and spring 2006 administration manuals notified districts that an audit of this nature would occur.

Districts included in the audit are required to submit the TOP student writing collections that are part of the audit sample. Selected testing coordinators and TOP raters are also required to complete audit surveys.

A TOP audit will be conducted annually. The number of districts, campuses, and TOP student writing collections in the audit will be sufficient to ensure that accurate information can be reported in order to meet accepted standards of evidence of validity and reliability in compliance with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

The following types of analyses will be made using information from the audit:

- the quality of the training delivered to TOP raters
- the extent to which districts implement procedures to ensure the validity and reliability of TOP ratings, as reported on the testing coordinator survey
- the extent to which districts adhere to required procedures for assembling writing collections
- the degree to which the writing ratings assigned by TOP raters in spring 2006 agree with state-assigned ratings
- the relationship between the performance of the selected students on TAKS, RPTE, and TOP

Of the nearly 640,000 limited English proficient (LEP) students assessed in spring 2006, approximately 14,000 student writing collections have been selected for this audit.

The sampling process for the audit is designed to provide feedback to each of the 55 TOP training entities (the 20 regional entities and 35 district entities) over the next three years. This year 25 training entities (a combination of regional and district entities) will receive feedback from the audit. The 25 entities were chosen by classifying the 55 entities into five groups based on the enrolled number of LEP students and then randomly sampling entities from each group. This sampling process ensures that entities of all sizes are represented in the audit. Approximately 550 student writing collections will be sampled from each of the 25 entities selected. Enough students have been selected for each grade cluster to provide each entity with meaningful feedback.

One of the major audit activities to be conducted at the state level will be to rescore the 14,000 writing collections. The state scoring contractor will train and qualify sufficient numbers of raters

such that two ratings of each writing collection will be provided as well as resolution ratings should the first two state ratings disagree. The state raters will rate each collection without knowledge of the ratings assigned by the students' TOP raters.

TEA will establish a threshold of acceptable rater agreement between local TOP raters and state raters. This year's 25 training entities will be informed of whether their rating agreement rates were above or below the threshold, and entities below the threshold will be provided with audit information and recommendations that will help them improve rating efficacy in the future. It is anticipated that this year's 25 entities will receive audit feedback in September 2006.

TEA and contractor staff are in the process of developing more detailed plans related to the audit feedback. TEA will gather field input and work with external advisory groups to finalize these plans. More details will be shared via the TEA Student Assessment Division website and electronic newsletter as information becomes available.