

## Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) Reading Standards Review Questions and Answers

### 1. What are TELPAS reading proficiency level standards?

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) is designed to assess the progress that English language learners (ELLs) make in acquiring the English language. TELPAS measures this acquisition of English in alignment with the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) that are part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The ELPS are second language acquisition curriculum standards that support the ability of ELLs to acquire academic English while at the same time allowing them to engage meaningfully in regular, all-English academic instruction at their grade level.

Title III, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to conduct annual statewide English language proficiency assessments for ELLs in grades K–12 in the linguistic domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students receive a proficiency rating of beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high in each of those linguistic domains.

Proficiency in the linguistic domain of reading for grades 2 through 12 is measured by a standardized multiple choice reading proficiency test known as TELPAS reading. Proficiency in English reading is determined on this assessment by comparing the particular score achieved by the student with that score's corresponding proficiency level designation. Descriptors for the TELPAS proficiency levels can be found at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147489015&libID=2147489014>

### 2. What is standards review?

When a set of standards has been adopted for an assessment, the standards may apply so long as they are judged to be appropriate for expressing the students' proficiency levels on the assessment. An assessment program may consider reviewing the standards either when change occurs in the assessment program or the assessed curriculum, or as a periodic check to evaluate the continued appropriateness of the standards.

### 3. Why were the TELPAS reading proficiency level standards reviewed?

TELPAS reading is administered as an online multiple-choice assessment for grades 2–12 in six grades/grade clusters: 2, 3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, and 10–12. The original TELPAS reading proficiency level standards were established in 2008 when the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was the academic assessment in Texas. The original TELPAS reading standards were set in such a way as to provide some degree of alignment with TAKS. The move from TAKS to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in 2011–2012 made it necessary to

review the original TELPAS reading proficiency level standards so that performance on TELPAS could be a meaningful indicator of the level of English language proficiency required to be successful on STAAR reading.

**4. Will the TELPAS proficiency level standards in the other language domains (writing, listening, and speaking) be reviewed?**

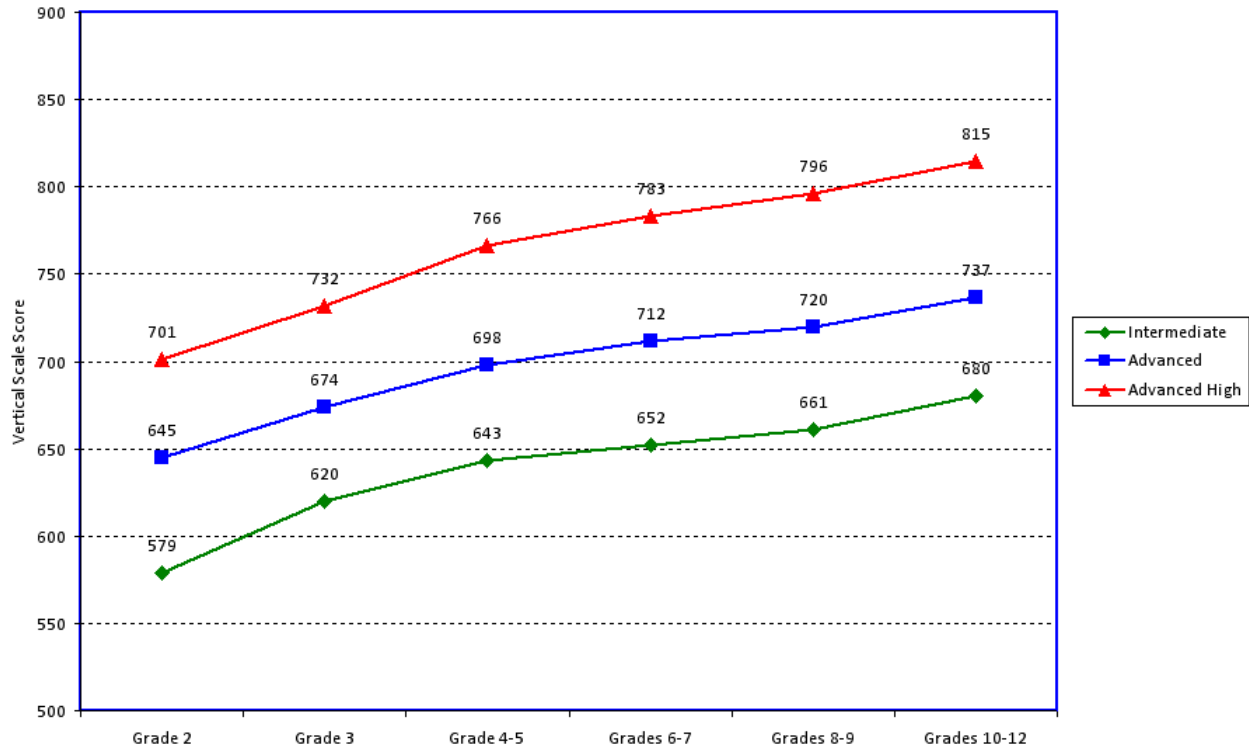
The writing, listening, and speaking TELPAS domains are rated holistically by teachers using the proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) as scoring rubrics. Because the PLDs still provide appropriate descriptions of the four TELPAS proficiency levels in the holistically rated domains, a review of the proficiency level standards for these three holistically rated language domains was not required.

**5. When do the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards go into effect?**

The new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards go into effect beginning with the spring 2014 administration.

**6. How was the vertical scale used as part of the TELPAS reading standards-review process?**

The vertical scale for TELPAS reading empirically links student performance from grade 2 to the 10–12 grade cluster. Because students' vertical scale scores can be compared from grade to grade to gauge progress in acquiring English language proficiency, the vertical scale was used to inform the alignment of the TELPAS proficiency level standards across grade clusters. The vertical scale allowed the standards-review committee to consider the progression of proficiency level standards across grades. TEA also used it as one piece of information to evaluate the reasonableness of the proficiency level standards recommended by the committee. The following chart shows the final standards on the vertical scale.



## 7. What are the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards?

The following table summarizes the new proficiency level standards on the vertical scale score system for TELPAS reading. The vertical scale for TELPAS reading empirically links student performance from grade 2 to the 10–12 grade cluster. Because students’ vertical scale scores can be compared from grade to grade to gauge progress in acquiring English language proficiency, the vertical scale was used to inform the alignment of the TELPAS reading proficiency level standards across grade clusters. Students that score below the intermediate proficiency level standard are classified into the beginning proficiency level.

TELPAS Reading	Intermediate	Advanced	Advanced High
Grade 2	579	645	701
Grade 3	620	674	732
Grades 4–5	643	698	766
Grades 6–7	652	712	783
Grades 8–9	661	720	796
Grades 10–12	680	737	815

## 8. How were the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards determined?

The proficiency level standards for the TELPAS reading assessments are based on recommendations from standards review committees. Convened in early August 2013, these committees were comprised of educators from across the state of Texas with expertise in

English language acquisition and experience working with ELLs. The committees reviewed the TELPAS test items and reading passages, became familiar with the PLDs for the assessments, and followed an established process—similar to the process used to establish performance standards on the STAAR assessments—to recommend cut points for each TELPAS reading assessment. At the conclusion of the standards review meetings, the committees recommended a total of eighteen cut scores, three cut scores for each of the six TELPAS reading assessments.

## **9. What research studies were used as part of the TELPAS reading standards-review process?**

TEA conducted extensive research to support the TELPAS reading standards-review process. The research studies

- evaluated the relationship between TELPAS reading and STAAR reading assessments
- evaluated the relationship between TELPAS reading and TELPAS writing
- evaluated the relationship between TELPAS reading and TAKS reading
- compared the performance of ELLs and non-ELL students on STAAR reading
- compared the text complexity between TELPAS reading and STAAR reading passages

To support reliable and meaningful score interpretations, evaluation of the empirical relationships between two assessments were based on the same students taking the TELPAS reading assessment and the STAAR reading assessments of interest.

## **10. Why are the TELPAS reading proficiency level standards presented as scale scores rather than raw scores?**

As with many standardized assessments, TELPAS reading uses scale scores to communicate information about proficiency levels. A scale score is a more exact way to determine language proficiency than a raw score because a scale score takes into consideration the difficulty level of each individual test question in addition to whether or not a student answers the question correctly.

The basic score on any test is the raw score, which is the number of questions answered correctly regardless of difficulty level. A scale score is a conversion of the raw score onto a scale that takes into account the difficulty level of the specific set of questions used on a test in any given year. A scale-score system allows every test to have exactly the same passing standard, or level of proficiency required, even though the raw score needed to pass the test may vary slightly from year to year.

When building new tests each year, it is not always possible to select questions that have exactly the same difficulty as questions on previous versions of the test. Maintaining the proficiency standard (but not necessarily the raw score needed to reach each proficiency level) from year to year is important to ensure that students classified into a proficiency level in one

year will have the same rigorous testing requirements as students in the same proficiency level in a subsequent year, even though the test questions differ from one year to the next.

It would not be informative to compare raw scores or percent of questions answered correctly across test administrations, school years, or grade clusters for TELPAS reading. When looking at proficiency level standards, lower raw scores (or percentage of questions correct) on one test does not necessarily mean that the test is easier than another test with a higher raw score. For example, on one administration of the grade 6-7 TELPAS reading assessment the proficiency level standard for the advanced level might be at 60% of the questions correct; while in a subsequent administration, the proficiency standard for the same level might be at 63% of the questions correct. In both cases, however, the level of English language proficiency expected from students to be at the advanced level (as indicated by the scale score cut) should be the same.

**11. How do the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards compare to the original standards?**

Because STAAR assesses content and skills at a greater depth and cognitive complexity than in TAKS, the level of English language proficiency required to be successful on STAAR reading is higher than what was needed for TAKS reading. Consequently, the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards are higher in comparison to the original standards. The following table summarizes the old and new proficiency level standards on the vertical TELPAS reading scale score system.

TELPAS Reading	Intermediate		Advanced		Advanced High	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
Grade 2	551	579	615	645	670	701
Grade 3	597	620	648	674	699	732
Grades 4–5	610	643	668	698	718	766
Grades 6–7	613	652	674	712	731	783
Grades 8–9	633	661	681	720	738	796
Grades 10–12	644	680	704	737	757	815

**12. Will the content assessed in TELPAS reading change because of the new proficiency level standards?**

The assessed curriculum, ELPS, and reporting categories for TELPAS reading will not change because of the new proficiency level standards.

**13. How was the TELPAS reading standards-review process different from what was done when the original TELPAS reading standards were set?**

The TELPAS reading standards-review process was informed by a number of additional research studies that were not included as part of the original standard-setting process. The studies were conducted to evaluate the empirical relationship between performance on TELPAS reading and other assessments. Comparisons were also made between the performance of ELLs and non-ELL students and between the text complexity of passages on TELPAS reading and on STAAR reading.

**14. Will there be a phase-in for the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards?**

Unlike the STAAR assessments, which have a phase-in plan for the new performance levels, there is not a phase-in for the new TELPAS reading proficiency level standards. For STAAR, teachers require time to adjust to the new curriculum and/or more rigorous standards. However, for TELPAS, the ELPS that are being assessed have not changed so teachers do not need to adjust the language supports and training they provide to students in order for them to be successful on this assessment.