Work Group A Summary of Issues and Recommendations

In December 2018, TEA provided a survey to educators for feedback regarding the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). Work Group A met in March 2019 to review the approximately 2,500 responses that were submitted. The work group prepared a summary of the issues identified in the survey and suggested recommendations for future work groups. Based on the review, Work Group A categorized specific issues into the following focus areas:

I. Clarification of the ELPS

Issues

From the results of the survey it was determined that there is an issue of clarity within the ELPS. The population surveyed expressed frustration with a lack of clarity in the generic language and vocabulary used. Respondents felt that certain student expectations were not measurable. Additionally, there is outdated technology language in the listening portion of the student expectations. Finally, there is redundancy within the knowledge and skill statements as well as the student expectations across the 5 domains of the ELPS (learning strategies, listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

Recommendations

The recommendation from this work group is to revise and update the ELPS to reflect language that is direct, specific, and user-friendly in a concise manner. Generic phrasing, broad language, and word choice should be revised and replaced with concrete and specific terminology. Outdated technology language should be removed and replaced with updated technological language that mirrors the International Standards for Technology in Education (ISTE) technology standards and verbiage that is not dated. Unclear or unmeasurable student expectations should be removed, revised, or rephrased. The knowledge and skills statements for each domain should be condensed and streamlined. Language that promotes and defines culturally responsive teaching should be incorporated in the ELPS. Student expectations should be written in a manner that all content areas can implement. They should either be categorized by content area or phrased in a way that is defined and applicable to all content areas.

II. Grade Bands

Issues

From the results of the survey, it was determined that because the current ELPS are kindergarten through grade 12, teachers have difficulty with implementing the standards across grade levels. It is difficult to target the ELPS with the grade level expectations and skills. Approximately 73% of survey respondents recommended clustering the ELPS into grade bands for K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and high school. Additionally, multiple survey respondents recommended the inclusion of ELPS for prekindergarten.

Recommendations

The recommendation from Work Group A is to revise and update the ELPS into grade bands that indicate a clear and obvious spiraling of language acquisition and proficiency development that more closely reflect grade-level expectations and skills. The recommended grade bands are Prekindergarten–

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Kindergarten, 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Students in early grade levels are learning how to read for the first time regardless of language. The ELPS should address these students' emerging skills and cognitive development. In the later elementary grades and beyond, students are reading to learn and focused on acquiring academic language. In the middle grades and high school, students are acquiring and applying more demanding academic language. A continuous spiral of complexity through the grade levels and proficiency levels is needed.

Work Group A requested that TEA determine whether it is feasible to incorporate prekindergarten in to the ELPS. Revisions to the work group bands may be needed based on that information.

III. Learning Strategies

Issues
The survey results highlighted the issue that the learning strategies student expectations are not understood and that there is a lack of awareness of the learning strategies as a part of the student expectations of the ELPS. Survey participants would like to know how to apply the learning strategies.

Recommendations
Work Group A recommends that the learning strategies strand of the ELPS student expectations be embedded into the other cross-curricular second language acquisition strands (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

One way this could be accomplished would be to group all the learning strategies student expectations and metacognitive skills based on receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) language skills to emphasize the interrelatedness of all language domains. An example of how the student expectations could be embedded into the other strands is provided below.

Learning Strategies SE/Metacognitive Skills	Domain/ Other Strands
(1)(A)	Reading/Listening
(1)(B)	Speaking/ Writing
(1)(C)	All
(1)(D)	Speaking
(1)(E)	All
(1)(F)	Listening/Reading
(1)(G)	Speaking/Writing
(1)(H)	Listening/Reading

IV. Proficiency Level Descriptors

Issues
Based on responses, survey respondents found it difficult to differentiate between the descriptors in the current student proficiency levels in the ELPS and to determine student growth. Respondents felt that the proficiency level descriptors do not have enough levels or specificity to accurately reflect students' progression. Additionally, it's difficult to apply one set of descriptors consistently across all grade levels. Respondents suggested grouping the proficiency level descriptors into grade-level bands.

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Recommendations

The recommendation from Work Group A is to increase the number of proficiency levels. Work Group A felt that five or six levels would be appropriate and manageable. The work group recommends that a future work group complete additional research to determine the best number of proficiency levels that will clearly show student progression. The proficiency level descriptors should also be clearly written to eliminate confusion when rating students. Language should include descriptors that are observable and truly reflect what students know and their progress. It is also a Work Group A recommendation that a future work group evaluate and determine whether the recommended grade bands should be applied universally to the ELPS or whether one set of descriptors is more appropriate for the proficiency level descriptors.

V. Alignment to the TEKS

Issues

One of the issues that was identified in reviewing the responses to the survey is the need to improve the alignment between the ELPS and the TEKS. According to the survey responses, there is redundancy between the ELPS and TEKS particularly with the English language arts and reading TEKS; however, there were multiple comments about the difficulty of integrating ELPS in to other content areas such as mathematics and science. For example, a biology teacher may have difficulty implementing student expectation (4)(A), which addresses phonological awareness.

Recommendations

The work group identified some potential options for improving the alignment between the ELPS and the TEKS. Some of the options discussed included creating content specific ELPS; integrating specific content and examples within the current ELPS (e.g., such as or including statements); or maintaining the current structure of the ELPS and creating separate supporting documents to address specific content.

ELPS that are specific to the content area would help teachers and address the perception that the ELPS are only for reading and writing but not for science and math. The ELPS are designed for language acquisition and teachers need to see how to utilize the ELPS in all content areas. However, it would be challenging to develop standards for all of the content areas and would significantly increase the size and scope of the ELPS. Integrating examples would require less revision of the existing ELPS; however, there would be limitations on how many examples would be provided. Supporting documents would address content and grade-level bands without changing the current structure of the ELPS. These documents would provide a more user-friendly presentation that is flexible and adaptable. As separate documents; however, teachers may not know where or how to access them. Teachers may also rely solely on the supporting documents and not the ELPS.

Work Group A determined that strengthening the alignment between the ELPS and the TEKS is a critical issue. Because of the different considerations with each option, Work Group A recommended that TEKS alignment should be addressed in greater depth by future work groups.