

Glossary of Terms Used in TELPAS Holistic Rating Training

Academic Achievement vs. English Language Proficiency

“Academic achievement” refers to the learning of the grade-level content-area knowledge and skills in the TEKS curriculum. Tests such as STAAR measure academic achievement in core content areas.

“English language proficiency” refers to the learning of English as a second language. To use English as an effective means of communicating and learning in U.S. schools, English language learners (ELLs) must develop both social and academic language proficiency in English.

- Acquiring social language proficiency in English means acquiring the English necessary for everyday basic communication.
- Acquiring academic language proficiency in English means acquiring the English necessary for engaging in grade-appropriate subject-matter instruction in English with little need for special language support.

Having an advanced high level of English language proficiency means no longer having a language barrier that is significant enough to obstruct the learning of grade-level knowledge and skills. It does not mean having the English fluency of a native English speaker, nor does it mean that an ELL has a particular level of academic achievement. Academic achievement tests such as STAAR are used to assess academic knowledge and skills.

Gist

ELLs who understand the “gist” of a story or spoken message understand enough to identify the general topic or basic idea but cannot yet understand many of the words, supporting ideas, or details. Understanding the “gist” does not have to do with being able to distinguish between what is a main idea versus a detail.

Grasp

In relation to English grammar and sentence structures, the word “grasp” in the PLDs should be understood as “a general understanding of and ability to use,” **not** as a “full command.” For example, ELLs who have a grasp of basic verbs and basic verb tenses (present, simple past, simple future) make errors but demonstrate a general functional ability to use these basic grammar features when communicating in English.

High-Frequency Vocabulary

In terms of second language acquisition, “high-frequency words” are words that ELLs who know very little English encounter very frequently and can be made to understand through context, gestures, and pictures. Initially, high-frequency words and phrases typically acquired may include, for example, greetings, colors, words for family members, objects referred to every day in the classroom and around the school, names of classmates, and “high need” formulaic instructions (e.g., get out your book, write your name at the top of the paper, etc.).

Internalized Language

“Internalized language” in the context of second language acquisition means language that is part of an ELL’s permanent rather than temporary bank of learned English. Language is internalized through ongoing practice and use in meaningful contexts. Internalized language may be contrasted with recently practiced or memorized language that an ELL may forget later.

Support

The term “support” in the TELPAS PLDs refers to *second language acquisition* support, that is, the special language assistance ELLs need as they learn English. In content-area classes, it refers to the assistance with the English language that ELLs need as they are taught mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. “Support” in the PLDs does **not** refer to the type of assistance that any student (whether an ELL or not) might need when learning academic content. It is specific to the language support that ELLs need.