

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms Used in the Toolkit

Note: The following definitions assume a United States context in which English is the dominant language and other languages, such as Spanish, Chinese or Korean are the "target" language to be learned or maintained. Several of the terms and acronyms listed are unique to California but have corresponding terms and acronyms in other states. Persons outside California who use the Toolkit should identify their states' counterparts.

Terms Used in the Toolkit

Average - see Mean

Authentic assessment - Any of a variety of ways that demonstrate mastery of a given content area, including language proficiency that does not use traditional questions and answers such as multiple-choice tests. "Authentic assessment" is sometimes used interchangeably with "performance assessment." The student performs a task that represents his or ability, and the task is scored according to predetermined criteria.

Bilingualism - The ability to communicate effectively in two languages.

Biliteracy - The ability to read and write effectively in two languages.

Categorical Data - Anything that puts information into groups is a kind of categorical data (e.g., grade level, gender, socioeconomic status, etc). "Levels" are the most common example of categorical data. A level groups together a range of scores into a category, such as beginning, intermediate, advanced, etc.

Compare Means - A statistical analysis that compares the mean (average) scores of different groups on the same score, for example, the average Spanish reading scores of EP v. ELL/FEP students. The analysis also yields other information, such as the number of students in the groups compared, and each group's standard deviation of their scores.

Criterion-referenced - scores provide a number that tells more or less how well someone performs on a task, regardless of how anyone else does. The student is very good at it, the student has some command of it, or the student has a long way to go before being good at it. Most of the state tests are criterion-referenced; that is, there are state standards that define what knowledge a student should have at each grade level; tests are designed to measure whether each student has learned the expected knowledge. The score is usually expressed as a percentage. On criterion-referenced tests, it is possible for ALL students to achieve the achievement expectation.

Crosstabs - A statistical analysis that shows the number of cases (or students) in two or more categories (e.g., the number of males in 3rd and 4th grade, the number of females in 3rd and 4th grade, the number of students per grade level in different language proficiency levels).

Descriptive Statistics - A set of different kinds of analysis that *describe* a set of data - usually, a mean, standard deviation, and sometimes the range or frequency (e.g., the mean score of a group of students on a language proficiency test or the number of students in one or more categories).

Dual language program - An instructional program that uses two languages for instruction in content areas. Dual language programs have the goal of developing bilingualism and biliteracy. Sometimes the term is used interchangeably with "two-way immersion."

English language learner (ELL) - A student whose first or home language is other than English and who enters school unable to participate effectively in instruction conducted exclusively in English.

Exit - An English language learner, or limited English proficient student who attains English proficiency and no longer requires a language acquisition program is said to "exit."

Frequencies, Frequency Counts - The number of cases (or students) in a given group (e.g., the number of females in a program, the number of students in a given grade level, the number of students who scored as "basic" on the California Standards Test).

High-stakes assessment - An assessment is high stakes if it leads to important decisions, especially about the student, for example, passing a test to obtain a high school diploma. Assessments can also be "high stakes" if poor performance can lead to sanctions against a school or district.

Interval Data - Scores that represent equal increments between consecutive values. "Age in years" would be an interval score because the amount of increase from age 8 to age 9 is the same as the increase from age 11 to age 12. Interval data can be averaged and analyzed by more sophisticated statistics than categorical data.

Late-exit transitional bilingual program - A dual language program that primarily serves students who entered school as English language learners. Its goal is to develop English proficiency in oral and written modes while promoting significant growth in the home or first language and providing meaningful access to grade-level academic content.

Limited English proficient student (LEP) - Same as ELL. "LEP" is the term used in federal and most state law.

Maintenance Bilingual Education Program - A dual language program that enrolls speakers of a non-English language with the goal of maintaining and furthering their ability to communicate orally and in writing in their native language. Sometimes used interchangeably with late exit.

Mean - The "arithmetic" average, obtained by taking all the values in a set of the same kind of data (e.g., age in years, scale scores, NCE scores), adding them together to obtain the sum, then dividing the sum by the number of cases that were added. For example, to calculate the mean age of 15 students, add those students' ages, obtain the sum, and divide the sum by 15.

Normal Curve Equivalent (NCEs) - are a conversion of percentiles. Percentiles cannot have statistical analyses such as averaging done with them, but NCEs can. The concept for NCEs is the same as for percentiles; that is, a score of 50 NCEs is statistically average. An NCE of 45 is somewhat lower than that, but certainly higher than 20 or 25. Similarly, an NCE of 75 or 80 is well above the statistical average. An NCE score indicates where a student stands in relation to

grade-mates, but little else. See the Appendix for a conversion table between Percentiles and NCEs.

Norm-referenced - provides a number that tells whether a student is more or less average in relation to most similar students of his or her age or grade, the student is relatively above average, or the student is relatively below average. Norm-referenced scores compare people with each other. Students' scores are reported in percentiles, stanines, or normal curve equivalents. It is impossible for ALL students to score above 50th percentile. Norms are established so that 25% will score in bottom 25th percentile, 50% below 50th percentile, 75% below 75th percentile and so on.

One-way immersion - Dual language programs that primarily serve speakers from a single language group, for example native English speakers who are learning a target language, e.g., Spanish, French, or Chinese, with significant academic content taught through the target language.

Ordinal data - these scores are concerned with order; they are called *ordinal* because they tell who's higher than whom, but not much else. The amount of change for a student moving from level 2 to level 3 isn't necessarily the amount of change for a student moving from level 3 to level 4.

PDF format - Portable Document Format is a proprietary product of Adobe. It allows a form to be viewed in its original intact form independent of a computer's operating software. PDF files can be viewed and printed but not altered by the user who downloads them.

Percentiles - tell what percentage of students at the same grade level got lower scores. For example, if a student has a percentile score of 45, he or she did better than 45% of students at his or her grade level. The 50th percentile is the statistical average, so a student with a score at the 45th percentile is a little below the statistical average but not very far below. See the Appendix for a conversion table between percentiles and NCEs.

Portfolio - A collection of a student's academic work that contains evidence of his or her academic abilities or other abilities and how those have changed over time. A portfolio may contain different kinds of evidence, from writing samples to lists of books read to videos of speeches or artistic performances. The contents of a portfolio may be governed by local policies or determined at the classroom level.

Reclassify - To change the classification of a student who entered school limited in English proficiency and has been assessed as sufficiently proficient in English to no longer need a language assistance program.

Redesignate - Same as reclassify.

Rubrics - Also called scoring guides, rubrics are commonly used to rate authentic or performance assessments. They state the criteria, in observable terms, that lead to awarding a score on a performance scale, such as 1-5.

Scale Scores - are usually three-digit scores that have been converted from raw scores, where high scores indicate the ability to do difficult work as measured by the test, and low scores indicate the ability to do only easier work. Scale scores have become more common as states have developed tests to examine whether students are reaching grade-level expectations defined by state content standards. Scale scores mean different things for different tests, so it's important to consult the technical manuals to understand them. (Different tests use different scales. One might report scores between 180 and 250, for example, another in the 200's, and another in the 300's. It doesn't matter. A score of 200 on one test might mean something totally different from 200 on another test. You just need to familiarize yourself with the meanings of the scores of the test you are using.) You need to be clear on what type of scale score your state test uses:

Scale Scores – Some (e.g., California) use non-vertical scale scores; that is, the score is dependent on the grade level, and scores cannot be used to examine growth over time. For example, in California, the scaled scores for each grade and subject area range between 150 (low) to 600 (high), with a score of 350 considered grade-level attainment. Thus, a student who achieves a score of 350 at each grade level would be keeping up with grade-level expectations.

Vertical Scale Scores – Other states (e.g., Oregon, Washington) use vertical scale scores; that is, the scale scores are independent of grade level, and can be compared for growth over time. Thus, a score of 350 represents the same difficulty, whether the student is a second-grader or an eighth-grader. However, the standards may be different for each grade level. Perhaps the typical second-grader is only expected to do the kind of work represented by a score of 350. The eighth-grader may be expected to do the kind of work represented by a score of 480. Thus, 350 may be a satisfactory score for a younger student but not a satisfactory score for an older student.

Standard Deviation - A statistic that shows the range of a set of scores around its mean. The narrower the range, the smaller the standard deviation; the wider the range, the larger the standard deviation. For example, the standard deviation of the ages of a group of 30 3rd-graders would be smaller than the standard deviation of a group of 10 2nd-graders, 10 3rd-graders and 10 4th-graders. The means might be very similar, but the latter group contains a wider range of ages.

Two-way bilingual immersion program (TWBI) - Same as Two-Way immersion, below.

Two-way immersion program (TWI) - Dual language programs that have the same goal as one-way immersion, i.e., developing bilingualism and biliteracy, but bring together native speakers of the non-English language and native English speakers to serve as mutual language models.

Variables - A variable is a single characteristic in a set of data. For example, a data set of students might contain their ages; their current grade levels; their most recent English proficiency score; etc. Each of those—age, grade, English proficiency—is a variable.

Acronyms Used in the Toolkit

CELDT - California English Language Development Test. California's state-adopted annual assessment of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

CST - California Standards Test, California's statewide assessments of academic achievement in Reading, Math, and Language Arts, to comply with accountability provisions of NCLB.

ELD - English language development, a planned program or approach to helping ELL students become proficient in English.

ELL - English language learner, a student whose first or home language is other than English and who enters school unable to participate effectively in instruction conducted exclusively in English. "ELL" has become preferred in the field because the term LEP, used in law, is often seen as pejorative.

EO - English Only, often used to refer to students whose native language is English and who do not come from a home where another language is spoken.

EP - English Proficient, often used interchangeably with English Only.

ESL - English as a second language, an instructional service in which ELL students are taught English or helped to become proficient in English through any of a variety of instructional approaches.

I-FEP - Fluent English proficient, a student with a first or home language other than English but who entered school proficient in English and not needing a language assistance program.

FLOSEM - Stanford Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix, an observation protocol in which teachers rate students on a six-point rubric in each of five components of oral language: Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency and Grammar.

IPT - The IDEA Proficiency Test. A test of language proficiency in English or Spanish, with separate sections for oral proficiency, reading, and writing. Separate forms are available for different grade bands. Published by Ballard and Tighe.

LAS - The Language Assessment Scales, a test of language proficiency in English or Spanish. It contains an oral assessment (LAS-O) and assessments in reading and writing (LAS R/W). Separate forms are available for primary grades, elementary grades and secondary grades. Published by CTB/McGraw-Hill.

LEP - Limited English proficient, student whose first or home language is other than English and who enters school unable to participate effectively in instruction conducted exclusively in English. "LEP" is the designation used in federal and state laws. (Same meaning as ELL, see above)

NCLB - No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, authorizes federal funding for such programs as Title I and other federal programs.

R-FEP - Reclassified or redesignated fluent English proficient, a student who entered school designated as ELL or LEP but who has been assessed as sufficiently proficient in English to no longer need a language assistance program. Such students have "exited."

SOLOM - Student Oral Language Observation Matrix, an observation protocol in which teachers rate students on a five-point rubric in each of five components of oral language: Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency and Syntax (Grammar).

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a statistical computer program to conduct a wide range of data analyses, published by SPSS, Chicago, Illinois.

STS - Standards Test in Spanish (California).