



Understanding Alt ELPA Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment
School Year 2025–2026

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Understanding Alt ELPA Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

Overview of the Alt ELPA Assessment Program

- The Alt ELPA Screener is an alternate testing instrument administered to students with cognitive disabilities to determine whether they qualify for English learner program support as part of state entrance procedures.
- All identified English learners (ELs) with significant cognitive disabilities should take the annual Alt ELPA Summative Assessment in the winter/spring. Scores are usually available in May.
- The assessments use innovative technologies to assess a student's language abilities in the four domains of listening, reading, speaking, and writing.
- Students receive a variety of scores on the Individual Student Report (ISR). The proficiency determination is a profile score (emerging, progressing, proficient). The overall scale score and the comprehension scale score are three-digit scale scores (0–999). Modality and domain scores include both two-digit scale scores (0–99) and performance level scores (1–4). Scale scores allow for comparisons across grades/grade bands and across forms of the test. Level scores provide a description of what is expected of a typical student at that level and in that modality or domain.
- Students determined proficient on the Alt ELPA have demonstrated that they have the level of English necessary to access grade-level academic content and may be exited from the English learner program (reclassified and monitored). Exit criteria vary by state but must include a proficient score on the summative assessment.

What Is the Alt ELPA?

The Alt ELPA is a summative assessment designed specifically for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible to participate in their state's alternate assessments. It was developed through the Collaborative for the Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) project in collaboration with state and national partners.

The Alt ELPA's purpose is to provide fair and valid information on the English language proficiency of this historically underserved group of students. Consistent with federal law, English learners are required to be assessed annually on their English proficiency. English learners with significant cognitive disabilities should have equal opportunities to learn English language skills and participate in ELP testing to demonstrate their progress toward English proficiency. All students with a significant cognitive disability identified as English learners in Kindergarten–Grade 12 are eligible to participate in either the state's designated ELP assessment or the annual Alt ELPA testing. The student's IEP team determines which assessment is most appropriate for the student.

The Alt ELPA consists of four short tests in the four domains of language: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The test is designed specifically for each of six grade bands (Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade Band 2–3, Grade Band 4–5, Grade Band 6–8, and Grade Band 9–12). The Alt ELPA produces a proficiency determination, which categorizes student performance as emerging, progressing, or proficient. Based on the proficiency determination, students may be eligible to be exited from English learner services. For additional details about the Alt ELPA, please visit www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa.

Who Takes the Alt ELPA Screener?

The Alt ELPA Screener is an English language screener designed to identify students who may be eligible for English learner services who have or may have significant cognitive disabilities. State policy will determine whether the Alt ELPA Screener is administered.

Who Takes the Alt ELPA Summative Assessment?

The Alt ELPA Summative should be taken by all identified English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. For more information on supporting students with disabilities, see the *Alt ELPA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual*, which is available on each participating state's online testing portal.

What Information Is on the Alt ELPA Individual Student Report (ISR)?

Each Individual Student Report (see Figure 1 below) contains the following information:

- Overall scale score*
- Comprehension scale score*
- Proficiency determination
 - Proficiency determination descriptions
- Modality scale scores
 - Productive: speaking and writing
 - Receptive: listening and reading
 - Modality performance level descriptions
- Domain scale scores
 - Listening, reading, speaking, and writing
 - Domain performance level descriptions

**Note.* The overall and comprehension scale scores are provided for program evaluation purposes and are intended for use by policy-makers and administrators.

Figure 1

Alt ELPA Summative Individual Student Report Example

Demo Last, Demo First

Grade 1 Alt ELPA Summative 2024-2025

Student ID: 0000000001 | Student DOB: 1/01/2017 | Enrolled Grade: 1

DEMO DISTRICT 1

Date Taken: 2/20/2024

DEMO SCHOOL 1

Overall Scale Score: 634±71 Comprehension Scale Score: 663±89 Proficiency Determination: Progressing

<p>Proficiency Determination</p> <p>Proficient – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that enables full participation or only slightly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining Level 3 or higher in all modalities. Once Proficient on the Alt ELPA, students may be considered for reclassification.</p> <p>Progressing – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that moderately limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining above Level 1 and below Level 3 in at least one modality. Students scoring Progressing on the Alt ELPA are eligible for ongoing program support.</p> <p>Emerging – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that significantly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining Level 1 in all modalities. Students scoring Emerging on the Alt ELPA are eligible for ongoing program support.</p>
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How Did Your Child Perform on Different Areas of the Test?

1 Beginning 2 Intermediate 3 Early Advanced 4 Advanced

Modality/Domain	Scale Score	Performance	Performance Level Descriptor
1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	63±5	1	Productive Level 1: The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
1a. Domain: Speaking	62±7	1	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences Indicate appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom Listen with limited participation in short conversations Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics Participate in shared research projects
1b. Domain: Writing	63±5	1	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences Indicate appropriate language for the playground and the classroom Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics Participate in shared research projects Label information from a few provided sources showing limited control
2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	65±7	3	Receptive Level 3: The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 3 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that slightly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
2a. Domain: Listening	64±8	2	Students in Level 2 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key words from read-alouds and oral presentations Determining the meaning of frequently occurring words and phrases in simple oral discourse about familiar topics, experiences, or events Listening with some participation in short conversations Responding to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions Participating in shared research projects Labeling information from some provided sources showing emerging control
2b. Domain: Reading	68±8	3	Students in Level 3 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key words and the main topic in simple written texts Determining the meaning of general words and phrases in written texts about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events Respond to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions Following simple rules for discussion about familiar topics Participating in shared research projects Retelling key information from provided sources showing emerging control

Additional Resources: For additional information on the Alt ELPA, please visit www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa.

Information on Standard Error of Measurement: A student's score is best interpreted when recognizing that the student's knowledge and skills fall within a score range and not just a precise number. For example, 500 (±10) indicates a score range between 490 and 510.

How Is Proficiency Determined?

A proficiency determination is the combination of the modality scores a student earns for the productive (speaking and writing) and the receptive (listening and reading) modalities. For more information on proficiency determinations, please refer to Table 1 below.

The overall scale score and the comprehension scale score are derived from applying a statistical analysis, item bifactor model, to all scored items. This type of in-depth analysis confirms the student’s overall score. These are presented as three-digit scale scores (0–999).

Students also receive individual domain (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) scores and modality (productive and receptive) scores. These are provided as two-digit scale scores (0–99) and performance level (1–4) scores. Modality and domain scale scores are based on a scoring method using analysis of the individual items, such as level of difficulty, rather than just “right or wrong” to derive a score. The scoring method, multidimensional item response theory (MIRT), allows for a better understanding of how well the student performs in the modality or domain.

For each of the two modality scores and the four domain sub-scores, the student’s performance is classified into one of four performance levels: Beginning (1), Intermediate (2), Early Advanced (3), and Advanced (4). The modality or domain level score is derived from applying cut scores to place the student’s score in one of the four levels (1–4).

Emphasizing students’ modality performance benefits educators in a couple of ways. First, a student’s modality profile distinguishes between students who may have the same overall score but who differ in skills and needs. Second, the modality profile highlights the relationship between the domains in a way that the overall score does not.

Table 1

Alt ELPA Profiles of Proficiency

Proficiency Determination	Definition	Profile
Emerging	Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP Standards that significantly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the alternate academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining Level 1 in all modalities. Students scoring Emerging on the Alt ELPA are eligible for ongoing program support.	Level 1 in both modalities

Proficiency Determination	Definition	Profile
Progressing	Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP Standards that moderately limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the alternate academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining above Level 1 and below Level 3 in at least one modality. Students scoring Progressing on the Alt ELPA are eligible for ongoing program support.	Above Level 1 and below Level 3 in at least one modality
Proficient	Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alternate ELP Standards that enables full participation or only slightly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the alternate academic standards. This is indicated on the Alt ELPA by attaining Level 3 or higher in all modalities. Once Proficient on Alt ELPA, students may be considered for reclassification.	Level 3 or higher in both modalities

What Are the Alt ELPA Reporting Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)?

The reporting performance level descriptors (PLDs) describe what English learners' language usage looks like at each performance level (Levels 1–4) as they progress toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities. Reporting PLDs for each domain and per grade band are available for educators and guardians/caregivers in each participating state's testing portal (please refer to Figure 2 below) and on www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa. The domain performance descriptions on the ISR correspond to the reporting PLD for that particular domain and grade level. A review of a student's domain scores in conjunction with the corresponding reporting PLDs provides information on the student's performance in that domain. Scores by domain also identify student strengths and weaknesses, inform reclassification decisions, discern patterns of performance in classrooms or groups of students, and identify opportunities for instructional collaboration.

Figure 2

Reporting Performance Level Descriptors

How Did Your Child Perform on Different Areas of the Test?

1 Beginning 2 Intermediate 3 Early Advanced 4 Advanced

Modality/Domain	Scale Score	Performance	Performance Level Descriptor
1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	63±5	1	Productive Level 1: The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
1a. Domain: Speaking	62±7	1	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences Indicate appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom Listen with limited participation in short conversations Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics Participate in shared research projects
1b. Domain: Writing	63±5	1	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences Indicate appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics Participate in shared research projects Label information from a few provided sources showing limited control
2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	65±7	3	Receptive Level 3: The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 3 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that slightly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
2a. Domain: Listening	64±8	2	Students in Level 2 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key words from read-alouds and oral presentations Determining the meaning of frequently occurring words and phrases in simple oral discourse about familiar topics, experiences, or events Listening with some participation in short conversations Responding to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions Participating in shared research projects Labeling information from some provided sources showing emerging control
2b. Domain: Reading	68±8	3	Students in Level 3 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key words and the main topic in simple written texts Determining the meaning of general words and phrases in written texts about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events Respond to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions Following simple rules for discussion about familiar topics Participating in shared research projects Retelling key information from provided sources showing emerging control

Level 1
Score Range: 527 or below
When speaking, the student at Level 1 is working on responding to short conversations and questions; describing objects using frequently occurring nouns and verbs; communicating simple information about a topic; expressing an opinion.

Note. The number noted under the “Performance” column represents the student’s performance level in a particular domain. The domain descriptions correspond to the reporting performance level descriptors (PLDs) for each domain and give us information about the student’s academic language abilities.

What Are Some Considerations for Interpreting Results?

The scores are one measure of a student’s progress toward English language proficiency; they provide specific but limited information. Like all measures of student proficiency, Alt ELPA scores should be interpreted along with information like classroom tests, assignments, teacher observations, content area test scores, and grades.

Alt ELPA scores are most useful when used collaboratively by English as a second language (ESL)/English language development (ELD), special education, and content area teachers. Explicit recognition that language acquisition takes place across the content areas benefits ELs’ academic experiences. Ensuring that English language development does not interfere with access to grade-appropriate content and practices requires a shift in perception from “What language skills does the student have?” to “What is the student able to do with language in the content areas?” Knowing what students are able to do with the academic language necessary

to engage in grade-level content instruction is useful to guide instructional practice and to identify necessary supports.

What Are Appropriate Uses of Alt ELPA Summative Scores?

Alt ELPA summative scores represent a snapshot of student proficiency at one point in time. The assessment was designed so that scores may be used to:

- Measure English language proficiency progress year to year, allowing teachers and guardians/caregivers to monitor annual progress toward proficiency
- Inform EL reclassification decisions
- Inform state accountability calculation and reporting
- Inform evaluations of program effectiveness for various subgroups of students and adjust educational programming and resources as needed
- Help school officials identify the types of professional development and/or support that teachers need

What Are Appropriate Uses of Alt ELPA Screener Results?

Alt ELPA screener results represent a brief snapshot of student proficiency across the four language domains as they are considered for EL status when entering school. The Alt ELPA Screener was designed so that score results may be used to:

- Provide entry-level information of a student's English language proficiency
- Inform initial program eligibility decisions
- Help districts meet program entrance requirements regarding the screening of potential English learners arriving to school districts each year



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www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa