

# Braille Version Assessment Information Sheet



The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) consortium recognizes the diversity of public school students who, because of blindness or other visual impairments, receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and/or have an accommodation plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. That's why we've put a lot of thought and planning into creating an assessment that is fair, accurate, and accessible to all English learners (ELs). This information sheet addresses questions about ELs who have vision impairments including blindness and how ELPA21 is including them in its assessments.

## What is meant by “Braille Version assessment”?

In designing the assessment for this student population, we took into account the entire range of visual impairments, including total blindness, minimal light perception, restricted peripheral vision, and varying degrees of vision, among others.

## How are vision impaired and blind ELs assessed?

The ELPA21 test forms developed for students who are blind present test items by using braille, accompanied by audio and manipulatives as needed. The audio for the ELPA21 braille forms is provided in the same way as in ELPA21's other test formats: as a typical part of their assessment, students hear recordings of students having dialogues or presenting reports and of teachers reading aloud. Test administrators are present during the assessment to provide test directions and to read some items to students.

## What if an assessment task cannot be readily converted to braille or audio?

Unlike the forms that rely solely on braille or audio for converting tasks, the ELPA21 version developed for visually impaired students relies on a number of formats to measure the same constructs as the general test. When it was not possible to retain items that either could be used by these students in their original format or could be easily converted to braille or audio, ELPA21 created an alternative format through a process known as “twinning.”

Twinning adapts test items to be accessible to visually impaired students while still measuring the students' skills. As an example, the twin of a listening task that uses pictures (which are inaccessible to blind students) replaces the pictures with manipulatives — three-dimensional objects.

## What about content sensitivity?

Every ELPA21 question or prompt has been carefully reviewed for content, bias, and accessibility. Items or passages may use certain words that may be considered sensitive (for example, references to “eyes,” “sight,” or “vision”) because they are part of the text that ELs who are blind or vision impaired may experience in their classroom curriculum. Any use of these words in the assessment is for secondary or descriptive purposes only.

For more information about ELPA21 and the steps that states are taking to ensure the assessment is fair, please visit [elpa21.org](http://elpa21.org) and sign up for our monthly newsletter.