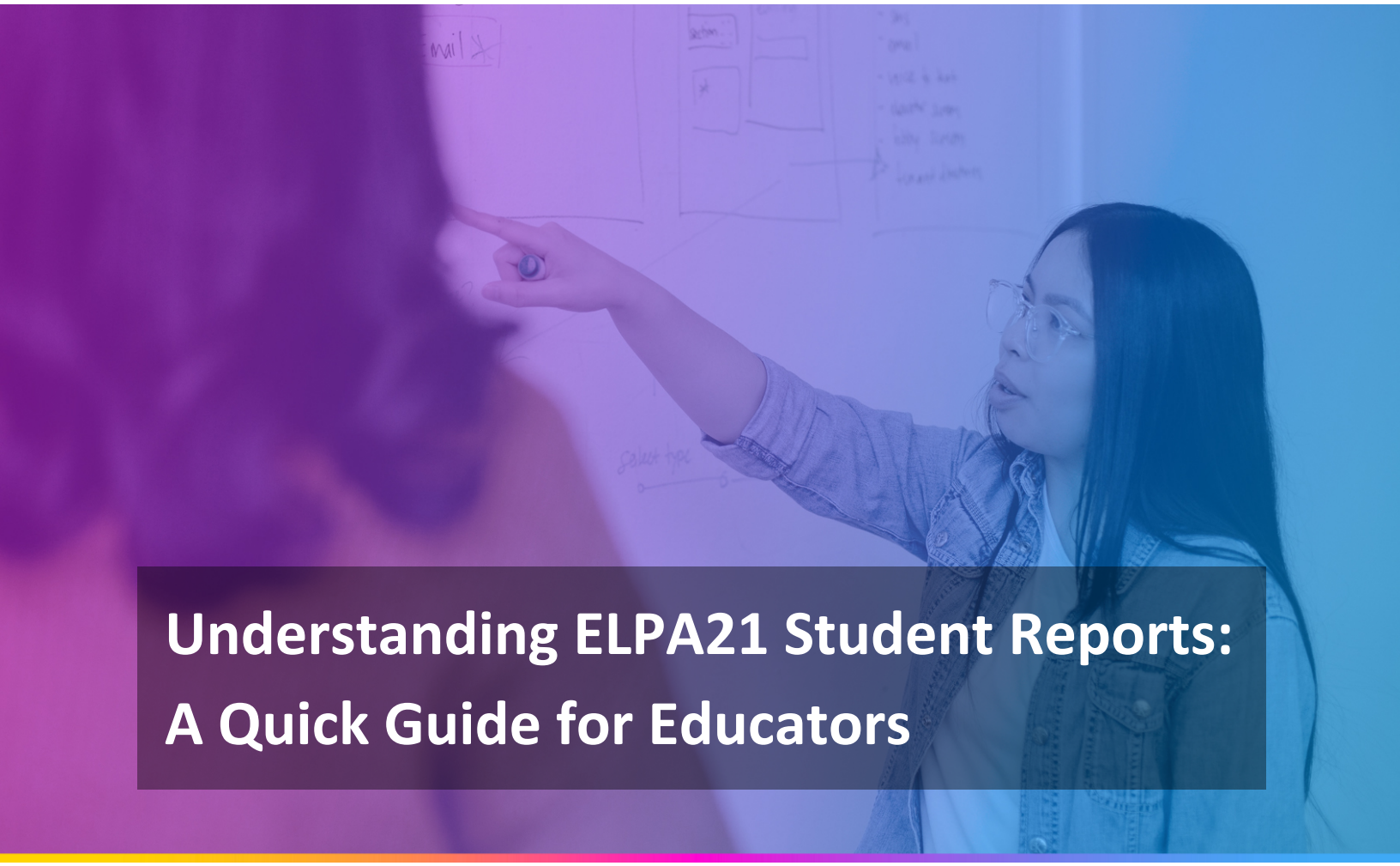
ELPA21

English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century



Understanding ELPA21 Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century

School Year 2023–2024

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To cite from this report, please use the following as your APA reference: English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21). (2024). *Understanding ELPA21 student reports: A quick guide for educators*. University of California, Los Angeles.

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Understanding ELPA21 Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

Overview of the ELPA21 General Assessment Program

- The ELPA21 Dynamic Screener is the testing instrument used to identify those students in need of English learner program support as part of state entrance procedures.
- All identified English learners (ELs) take the annual ELPA21 general summative assessment in the 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.
- In addition to the four domains, students receive an overall proficiency determination of Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient.
- Students determined Proficient on the screener are typically not identified for English language development services; students determined Proficient on the summative have demonstrated that they have the level of English necessary to access classroom content and may be exited from the EL program (reclassified and monitored). Exit criteria may vary by state but must include a proficient score on the summative assessment.

What is ELPA21?

ELPA21 stands for English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century. ELPA21 provides screener and summative assessments. Currently, our state clients administer the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener for identification purposes and the ELPA21 general summative for measuring English learner progress year to year. These are assessments of English language proficiency (ELP) and are designed to measure the specific language skills students need to interact with grade-level academic language courses and become college- and career-ready by 12th grade. ELPA21 assessments are based on English language proficiency standards that correspond to state content standards.

Who takes the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener?

Potential English learners enrolling in Grades K–12 whose Home Language Survey (HLS) indicates a language other than English should take the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener.

Who takes the ELPA21 General Summative Assessment?

All students identified as English learners in Grades K–12 are required to participate in annual ELPA21 testing. Consistent with federal law, English learners with disabilities should have equal opportunities to learn English language skills and participate in ELPA21 testing. For more information on supporting students with disabilities, see the *ELPA21 Accessibility and Accommodations Manual*.

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What are the ELPA21 Domain Profiles?

General ELPA21 Summative and Screener Assessments

For the general ELPA21 assessments, the domain profile is the combination of domain sub-test scores a student earns for each of the four language domain tests. For each of the four language domain sub-tests of listening, reading, writing and speaking, student performance is classified into levels one to five (1–5), based on each domain scale score. The domain profile determines the overall proficiency level. Emphasizing students' domain profiles benefits educators in a couple ways. First, a student's domain profile distinguishes between students who may have the same overall score, but who differ in skills and needs. Second, the domain profile highlights the relationship between the domains in a way that the overall score does not.

Table 1

ELPA21 General Domain Performance Levels

Performance Level	Descriptor	Definitions
Level 1	Beginning	Displays few grade-level English skills and will benefit from EL program support.
Level 2	Early Intermediate	Presents evidence of developing grade-level English language skills and will benefit from EL program support.
Level 3	Intermediate	Applies some grade-level English language skills and will benefit from EL program support.
Level 4	Early Advanced	Demonstrates English language skills required for engagement with grade-level academic content instruction at a level comparable to non-ELs.
Level 5	Advanced	Exhibits superior English language skills as measured by ELPA21.

How is Proficiency Determined for ELPA21 General Assessments?

Profiles are used to obtain an overall proficiency determination, classifying students as Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient. The ELPA21 general summative and screener assessments are developed by grade bands (kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade Band 2–3, Grade Band 4–5, Grade Band 6–8, and Grade Band 9–12), but different cut scores are assigned at each grade-level except in Grade Band 9–12, where the same cuts are used across grades.

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Table 2

ELPA21 General Profiles of Proficiency

Proficiency Determination	Definition	Profiles
Emerging	*ELPA21 General Summative*: Students are Emerging when they have not yet attained a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Levels 1 and 2 in all four domains. Students scoring Emerging are eligible for ongoing program support. *ELPA21 Dynamic Screener*: Students are Emerging when they have not yet reached a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on the ELPA21 screener by scoring Level 1 or Level 2 in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. These students are eligible for English language development services.	1s and 2s
Progressing	*ELPA21 General Summative*: Students are Progressing when, with support, they approach a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile with one or more domain scores above Level 2 that does not meet the requirements to be Proficient. Students scoring Progressing are eligible for ongoing program support. *ELPA21 Dynamic Screener*: Students are Progressing when, with support, they are approaching a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level academic tasks in English. This is indicated on the ELPA21 screener by scoring at least one domain score above Level 2 and at least one domain score below Level 4. These students are eligible for English language development services. *Note.* In the case of the ELPA21 Future Kindergarten screener, beginning with the school year 2021–22, a domain profile consisting of at least one Level 2 domain result and at least one Level 3 domain result will be considered Progressing.	Combinations of domain profiles that are not solely 1s and 2s or 4s and 5s. Examples of Progressing Profiles: 2233, 3333, 3443, 1234, 4224, 2335

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Proficiency Determination	Definition	Profiles
Proficient	*ELPA21 General Summative*: Students have attained a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Level 4 or higher in all domains. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students can be considered for reclassification. *ELPA21 Dynamic Screener*: Students are Proficient when they demonstrate a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level academic tasks in English. This is indicated on the ELPA21 screener by scoring Level 4 or Level 5 in all domains. Proficient students are not identified as English learners and do not receive English language development services. *Note.* In the case of the ELPA21 Future Kindergarten screener, beginning with the school year 2021–22, a domain profile of 3333 or higher will be considered Proficient.	4s and 5s
Proficiency Not Determined	*ELPA21 Dynamic Screener Only*: Used when a test administrator determines that the student is unable or unwilling to participate. State policy determines whether or not a non-participant is eligible for English language development services.	Consult state policy

What Information is on the ELPA21 General Individual Student Report?

Each Individual Student Report (ISR) for the general ELPA21 assessments contains the following information:

- Overall Proficiency Determination
- Proficiency Level Determination Descriptions
- Domain Performance Levels
- Domain Scale Scores*
- Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)
- Overall Scale Score*
- Comprehension Scale Score*

**Note.* Domain and overall scale scores and comprehension scale scores are displayed only on summative ISRs. The overall and comprehension scale scores are provided for program evaluation purposes and are intended for use by policy-makers and administrators.

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Figure 1

ELPA21 General Summative Individual Student Report Example

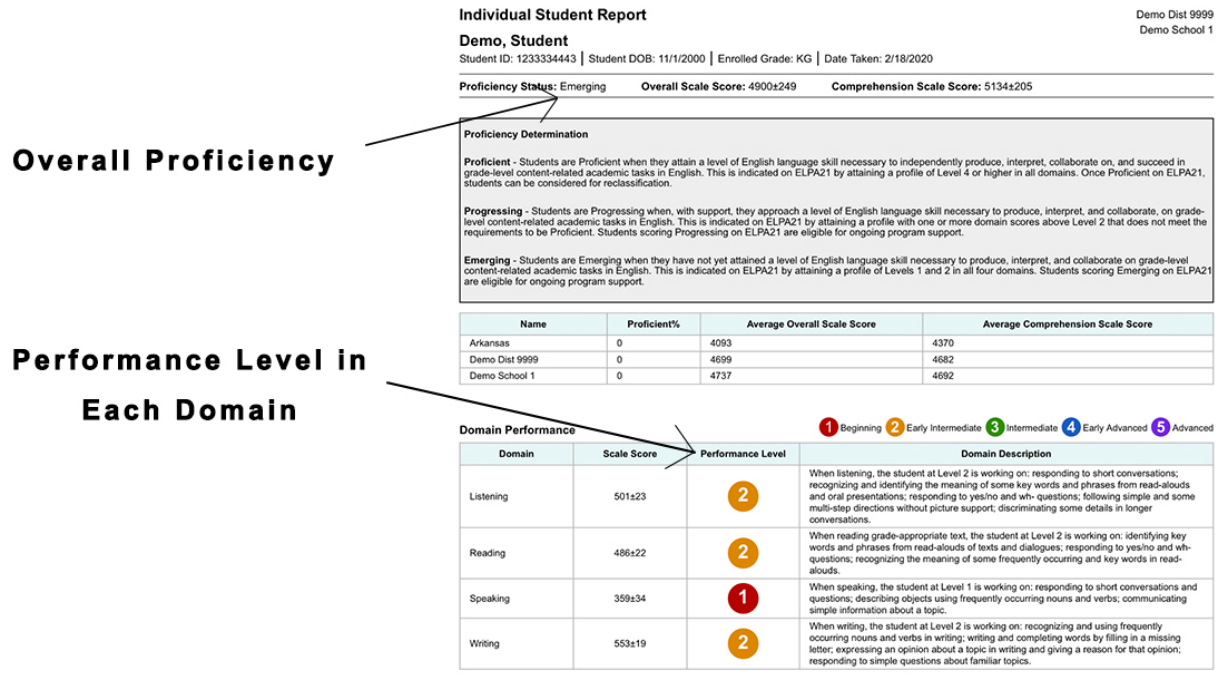
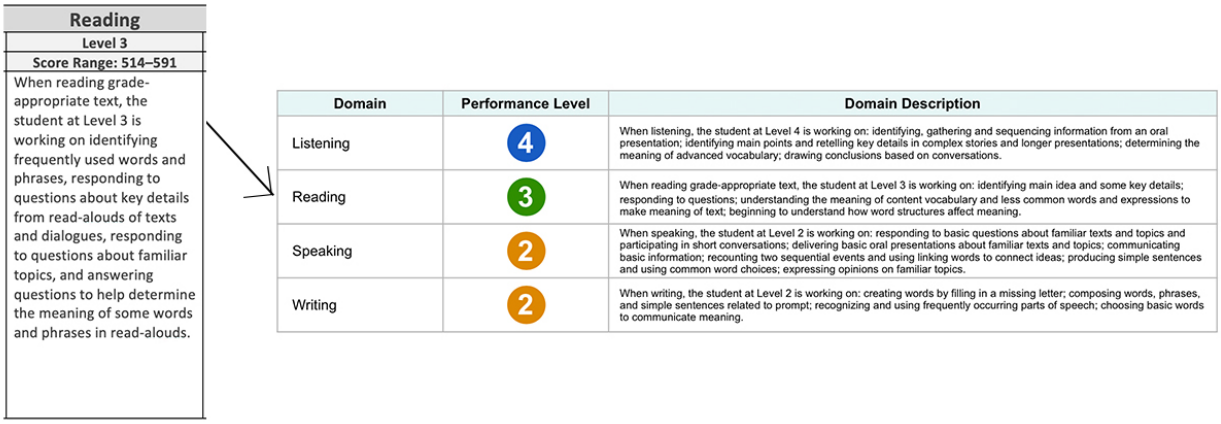


Figure 2

ELPA21 General Domain Performance Level Scores



Note. The number noted in the "Performance Level" column represents the student's performance level in a particular domain. The domain descriptions correspond to the achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for each domain and give us information about the student's academic language abilities.

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What are ELPA21 General Achievement Level Descriptors?

The ELPA21 general *Achievement Level Descriptors* (ALDs), also commonly known as Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), describe what ELs' language usage looks like at each proficiency level as they progress toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities. The domain performance description on the ISR corresponds to the ALD for that particular domain and grade level. For example, an examination of the summative domain scale scores in conjunction with the ALDs provides information on within-domain level performance.

What are Some Considerations for Interpreting Results?

The results are one measure of a student's progress towards English language proficiency and provide specific but limited information. Like all measures of student proficiency, ELPA21 scores should be interpreted along with information like classroom tests, assignments, teacher observations, content area test scores, and grades.

ELPA21 scores are most useful when used collaboratively by English as a second language (ESL)/English language development (ELD) teachers 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. 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.

What are Appropriate Uses of ELPA21 General Summative Scores?

ELPA21 scores represent a snapshot of student proficiency at one point in time. The summative assessment was designed so that scores may be used to:

- measure of English language proficiency progress year to year, allowing teachers and parents to monitor annual progress towards 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; and
- help school officials identify the types of professional development and/or support that teachers need.

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What are Appropriate Uses of ELPA21 Dynamic Screener Results?

ELPA21 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 ELPA21 Dynamic Screener was designed so that score results may be used to:

- provide entry-level information of a student's English language proficiency;
- inform district staff regarding the initial language proficiency of an arriving student; and
- help districts meet program entrance requirements regarding the screening of potential English learners arriving to school districts each year.

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