



# Understanding Alt ELPA Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

**Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment**

School Year 2024–2025



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## Table of Contents

Overview of the Alt ELPA Assessment Program .....	4
What Is the Alt ELPA? .....	4
Who Takes the Alt ELPA Summative Assessment?.....	5
What Information Is on the Alt ELPA Individual Student Report (ISR)? .....	5
How Is Proficiency Determined? .....	6
What Are the Alt ELPA Reporting Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)? .....	8
What Are Some Considerations for Interpreting Results? .....	9
What Are Appropriate Uses of Alt ELPA Summative Scores?.....	10
What are Appropriate Uses of Alt ELPA Screener Results? .....	10

## Understanding Alt ELPA Student Reports: A Quick Guide for Educators

### Overview of the Alt ELPA Assessment Program

- The Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (Alt ELPA) summative assessment is a testing instrument designed to measure students' English language proficiency, which supports students' ability to access, engage with, and learn grade-level academic content taught in English, as well as meaningfully participate in academic contexts.
- 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 overall 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 to be 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 varies by state but must include a proficient score on the Alt ELPA assessment.

### What Is the Alt ELPA?

The Alt ELPA is a new 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 towards 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 an overall proficiency determination score, which categorizes student performance as Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient. Based on these proficiency determinations, students may be eligible to be exited from English learner services. The Alt ELPA scores are described in more detail in this Quick Guide. For additional details about the Alt ELPA, please visit <http://www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa/>.

### **Who Takes the Alt ELPA Summative Assessment?**

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.

### **Who Take 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.

### **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\*
- Overall Proficiency Determination
  - Proficiency level determination descriptions
- Modality Scale Scores
  - Productive: speaking and writing
  - Receptive: listening and reading
  - Modality performance level descriptions
- Domain Scale Scores
  - Speaking, writing, listening, and reading
  - 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**

*Summative Individual Student Report (ISR)*

Last, First

Kindergarten Alt ELPA 2022-2023

Student ID: 000000000 | Student DOB: 1/1/2018 | Enrolled Grade: KG

Demo Dist 9999

Date Taken: 1/31/2023

Demo School 2

Overall Scale Score: 207±52

Comprehension Scale Score: Not Attempted

Proficiency Determination: Progressing

Proficiency Determination
<p><b>Proficient</b> – 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><b>Progressing</b> – 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><b>Emerging</b> – 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>

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

1 Beginning 2 Intermediate 3 Early Advanced 4 Advanced

Domain	Scale Score	Performance	Performance Description
1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	33±5	2	Productive Level 2: The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 2 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that moderately limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
1a. Domain: Speaking	N/A	3	Students in Level 3 with increasingly independent control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate simple information or feelings about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Identify a feeling or opinion about a familiar topic</li> <li>Indicate the appropriate audience or task from a field of options when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>Demonstrate developing awareness of the difference between appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom</li> </ul>
1b. Domain: Writing	N/A	1	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate simple information, including feelings, about a familiar topic or experience</li> <li>Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>Recognize information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>
2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	16±3	1	Receptive Level 1: The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
2a. Domain: Listening	N/A	1	Students in Level 1 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying a few key words from read-alouds and oral presentations</li> <li>Recognizing the meaning of a few frequently occurring words in simple oral presentations and read-alouds about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Listening with limited participation in short conversations</li> <li>Responding to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>Recognizing information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>
2b. Domain: Reading	N/A	1	Students in Level 1 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying a few key words in picture books or simple written text (e.g., labeled pictures)</li> <li>Recognizing the meaning of a few frequently occurring words in simple written texts about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Responding to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>Recognizing information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>

**Additional Resources:** For additional information on the Alt ELPA, please visit [www.elpa21.org/alt-elpa](http://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?**

Overall proficiency (Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient) is determined by combining a student's modality scores. The overall proficiency determinations are 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, speaking, and writing) 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 main 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**

*Overall Proficiency Determination*

Proficiency Determination	Definition	Profiles
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	Profiles
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 this website: <http://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

<b>Speaking</b>
<b>Level 3: Early Advanced</b>
<b>Score Range: 84 to 91</b>
Students in Level 3 with increasingly independent control, prompting, and support can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicate simple information or feelings about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>● Identify a feeling or opinion about a familiar topic</li> <li>● Indicate the appropriate audience or task from a field of options when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>● Demonstrate developing awareness of the difference between appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom</li> </ul>

Domain	Scale Score	Performance	Performance Description
1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	33±5	<b>2</b>	Productive Level 2: The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 2 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that moderately limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
1a. Domain: Speaking	N/A	<b>3</b>	Students in Level 3 with increasingly independent control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicate simple information or feelings about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>● Identify a feeling or opinion about a familiar topic</li> <li>● Indicate the appropriate audience or task from a field of options when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>● Demonstrate developing awareness of the difference between appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom</li> </ul>
1b. Domain: Writing	N/A	<b>1</b>	Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicate simple information, including feelings, about a familiar topic or experience</li> <li>● Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>● Recognize information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>
2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	16±3	<b>1</b>	Receptive Level 1: The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
2a. Domain: Listening	N/A	<b>1</b>	Students in Level 1 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identifying a few key words from read-alouds and oral presentations</li> <li>● Recognizing the meaning of a few frequently occurring words in simple oral presentations and read-alouds about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>● Listening with limited participation in short conversations</li> <li>● Responding to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>● Recognizing information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>
2b. Domain: Reading	N/A	<b>1</b>	Students in Level 1 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identifying a few key words in picture books or simple written text (e.g., labeled pictures)</li> <li>● Recognizing the meaning of a few frequently occurring words in simple written texts about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>● Responding to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>● Recognizing information from experience or from a provided source</li> </ul>

*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 is 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 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

### **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;
- inform classroom instruction for English learners; and
- identify potential resource needs for both students and teachers.



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