



News Release
April 1, 2015

Contact:
Kara Schlosser
ELPA21 Communications Director
202-330-8549
communications@elpa21.org

ELPA21 Consortium Collaborates With Educators and Policymakers on New English Language Proficiency Test

Computer-based assessment system measures skills English language learners need for college and career readiness

WASHINGTON — A consortium of states, along with educators, English language learning experts and researchers, is preparing to launch a new assessment system designed to measure English language development in students learning English. The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) is developing an assessment that supports the new English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards from kindergarten through grade 12 and corresponds to states' content standards for college and career readiness. ELPA21 aims to provide actionable information to help teachers continue to advance education equity and academic achievement for English language learners (ELLs).

Developed for ELLs, who comprise a linguistically and culturally diverse group, ELPA21 measures overall English language proficiency as well as proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, listening and comprehension. The assessment system will be computer-based and incorporate technology-enhanced approaches beyond traditional multiple-choice questions. These approaches include interactive items that are designed to be more engaging for students, especially for the speaking and listening portions of the test.

“The ELPA21 assessment will help us gauge how well students retrieve, process and integrate the English language into their classroom work,” said Doug Kosty, assistant superintendent of the Office of Learning’s Instruction, Standards, Assessment and Accountability Unit at the Oregon Department of Education and ELPA21’s program director. “Gone are the days of assessing students on their English language proficiency separately from their content knowledge.”

Educators and experts began developing the interactive test items and piloted them in select ELPA21 states in 2014. ELPA21 just concluded its Field Test on March 31 where the consortium worked with schools on a broader scale to test the items and technology.



“The sustainability of this measurement system is our highest priority,” Kosty said. “We want to ensure that this assessment is valid, cost-effective, secure and easily integrated into the current school, district and state processes.”

Results and feedback from the Field Test will be used to create ELPA21’s two major products: a summative assessment and screener assessment. The summative assessment, which will debut in classrooms in the 2015–16 school year, will be used to gauge students’ knowledge of English at the end of the academic year. The screener assessment, available in fall 2016, will be administered to assess baseline English language proficiency of incoming ELL students, and help guide the placement of each student and make decisions about his or her instruction.

ELPA21 features a number of improvements of previous English language proficiency assessments, which include reducing the administrative burdens of paper and pencil assessment on educators at the school and district levels, and providing assessment results more efficiently so that parents and teachers know more quickly how students are performing. A multilevel system and application security framework will protect test content and student data.

States participating in ELPA21 represent multiple regions of the United States and are diverse politically and demographically. ELPA21 is collaborating with partners from the Understanding Language Initiative of Stanford University; the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) of UCLA; the National Center on Educational Outcomes of the University of Minnesota; and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The Oregon Department of Education is the lead state agency, and CCSSO is the project management partner.

###

About ELPA21

The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century, ELPA21, is a consortium of states committed to supporting educators, member states and members of the public as they adopt and implement the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards and college- and career-ready standards. The consortium is developing an assessment system based on the ELP Standards that will inform instruction so that all English language learners leave high school prepared for college and career success. For more information, visit elpa21.org.