



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

**Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment**  

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School Year 2026–2027



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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 are designed to measure students' language abilities across two modalities: receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing).
- The Individual Student Report (ISR) includes several score types. Students receive a proficiency determination of emerging, progressing, or proficient; overall and comprehension scale scores from 0–999; and modality and domain scores that include both scale scores from 0–99 and performance level scores from 1–4. Scale scores support comparisons across grades, grade bands, and test forms. Level scores describe what students typically know and can do at each level.
- Students determined to be proficient on the screener are typically not identified for English language development services; students determined to be proficient on the summative have demonstrated 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 may vary by state but must include a proficient score on the summative.

### What Is Alt ELPA?

The Alt ELPA assessments are designed specifically for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who require an alternate assessment of English language proficiency (ELP). These assessments were developed through the Collaborative for the Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) project in collaboration with state and national partners.

The purpose of the Alt ELPA assessments 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 must be identified and assessed annually for English language proficiency. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are or may be English learners should have equal opportunities to demonstrate their English language skills through accessible, alternate assessments.

All students who participate in an Alt ELPA assessment receive a proficiency determination, which categorizes student performance as emerging, progressing, or proficient. Based on the

proficiency determination, students may be eligible to enter or exit English learner services. For additional details about the Alt ELPA assessments, please visit [www.elpa21.org/assessments](http://www.elpa21.org/assessments).

### **Who Takes the Alt ELPA Screener?**

Potential English learners in Grades K–12 who have or may have a significant cognitive disability may be eligible to take the Alt ELPA Screener, depending on state participation and requirements.

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

English learners in Grades K–12 who have a significant cognitive disability are eligible to take the Alt ELPA Summative, if determined appropriate by an IEP team. For more information on supporting students with disabilities, see the *Alt ELPA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual*, available on each state’s online testing portal.

### **What Information Is on the Alt ELPA Individual Student Report?**

Each Individual Student Report (ISR) 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*

Last, First

Grade 4 Alt ELPA Summative 2025-2026

Student ID: 999999999 | Student DOB: 12/12/2014 | Enrolled Grade: 4

DEMO DISTRICT 1

Date Taken: 3/25/2026

DEMO SCHOOL 1

**Overall Scale Score: 531±77    Comprehension Scale Score: 396±86    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

Modality/Domain	Scale Score	Performance	Performance Level Descriptor
1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	60±6	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	62±8	2	Students in Level 2 with developing control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate simple information, including opinions about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Use language appropriate for a task and audience</li> <li>Use some frequently occurring words and phrases</li> <li>Participate in short conversations about familiar topics and texts</li> <li>Participate in shared research projects</li> <li>Label information from some provided sources</li> <li>Identify a reason a speaker gives to support a main idea</li> </ul>
1b. Domain: Writing	59±6	2	Students in Level 2 with developing control, prompting, and support can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compose simple written text about familiar texts, topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Use language appropriate for a task and audience</li> <li>Use some frequently occurring words and phrases</li> <li>Participate in short written exchanges about familiar topics and texts</li> <li>Participate in shared research projects</li> <li>Label information from some provided sources</li> <li>Identify a reason an author gives to support a main idea</li> </ul>
2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	47±8	2	Receptive Level 2: The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 2 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alternate ELP standards that moderately limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the Alternate Academic standards.
2a. Domain: Listening	48±8	2	Students in Level 2 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the main topic or characters from read-alouds and oral presentations</li> <li>Determining the meaning of frequently occurring words, phrases, and expressions in simple oral discourse about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Participating in short conversations about familiar topics and texts</li> <li>Participating in shared research projects</li> <li>Labeling information from some provided sources</li> </ul>
2b. Domain: Reading	45±10	2	Students in Level 2 typically can show comprehension by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the main topic or characters in simple written texts</li> <li>Determining the meaning of frequently occurring words and expressions in simple written texts about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Participating in short written exchanges about familiar topics and texts</li> <li>Participating in shared research projects</li> <li>Labeling information from some provided sources</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?**

A proficiency determination is the combination of 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 through a statistical analysis that applies an 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 multidimensional item response theory (MIRT), a scoring method that analyzes characteristics of individual items, such as level of difficulty, rather than only whether responses are “right or wrong.” This scoring method 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 subscores, 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 by 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*

<b>Proficiency Determination</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Profile</b>
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 (1–4) as they progress toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities. Reporting PLDs for each domain and grade band are available for educators and guardians/caregivers in each participating state's testing portal (please refer to Figure 2 below). 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
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>Level 1</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;">Score Range: 527 or below</p> <p style="margin: 0;">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.</p> </div>	1. Modality: Productive (Speaking and Writing)	63±5	<b>1</b>	<p>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.</p>
	1a. Domain: Speaking	62±7	<b>1</b>	<p>Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience</li> <li>Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>Indicate appropriate language for the playground and for the classroom</li> <li>Listen with limited participation in short conversations</li> <li>Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>Participate in shared research projects</li> </ul>
	1b. Domain: Writing	63±5	<b>1</b>	<p>Students in Level 1 with limited control, prompting, and support can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate simple information or feelings about a familiar topic or experience</li> <li>Indicate the appropriate audience or task when presented with familiar phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>Indicate appropriate language for the playground and the classroom</li> <li>Respond to simple yes/no questions about familiar topics</li> <li>Participate in shared research projects</li> <li>Label information from a few provided sources showing limited control</li> </ul>
	2. Modality: Receptive (Listening and Reading)	65±7	<b>3</b>	<p>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.</p>
	2a. Domain: Listening	64±8	<b>2</b>	<p>Students in Level 2 typically can show comprehension by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying key words from read-alouds and oral presentations</li> <li>Determining the meaning of frequently occurring words and phrases in simple oral discourse about familiar topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Listening with some participation in short conversations</li> <li>Responding to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions</li> <li>Participating in shared research projects</li> <li>Labeling information from some provided sources showing emerging control</li> </ul>
	2b. Domain: Reading	68±8	<b>3</b>	<p>Students in Level 3 typically can show comprehension by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying key words and the main topic in simple written texts</li> <li>Determining the meaning of general words and phrases in written texts about familiar and novel topics, experiences, or events</li> <li>Respond to simple yes/no questions and wh- questions</li> <li>Following simple rules for discussion about familiar topics</li> <li>Participating in shared research projects</li> <li>Retelling key information from provided sources showing emerging control</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 alongside other sources of 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 for guiding instructional practice and identifying 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 proficiency as students 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 about 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 in school districts each year