



## ELPA21 Score Reporting FAQ

### What is ELPA21?

ELPA21 is a newly-designed test of English language proficiency based on the specific language skills students need to be able to interact with grade-level academic courses and become college and career ready by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Funded by an Enhanced Assessment Grant from the US Department of Education, ELPA21’s stated goal was to be radically different from previous English language proficiency summative assessments. A consortium of states developed ELPA21 to identify and measure the grade-level academic language demands corresponding to states’ rigorous college and career readiness standards. Because ELPA21 is based on a set of ELP standards that correspond to the CCSS and NGSS, scores are not comparable to scores from previous tests of English language proficiency that did not correspond to the CCSS and NGSS.

### How is ELPA21 different than our previous English Language Proficiency Assessment?

The ELP standards, and the ELPA21 assessments that measure them, represent a significant shift in ELL instruction, learning, and assessment. By identifying the language demands of the academic content standards, ELP instruction is no longer secondary to, or even separate from, academic content instruction.

Differences between ELPA21 and Previous ELL Assessments

	<b>Typical Past ELP Assessments</b>	<b>ELPA21</b>
<b>Goal</b>	Knowledge of language: language vocabulary, grammar, and usage	Use of academic language as it contributes to college and career readiness
<b>Purpose</b>	Accountability, program evaluation/improvement, student classification and placement	Grade-level learning, language development, program evaluation/improvement, student classification AND Accountability
<b>Measure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery of ELP standards, independent of content and subject-specific language</li> <li>• Vocabulary, with mostly multiple-choice items</li> <li>• Social language rather than academic language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery of the communication demands of rigorous content standards</li> <li>• Higher order thinking, through innovative technology-enhanced items</li> <li>• Academic language that varies by subject and grade</li> </ul>
<b>Describe</b>	What language skills is the student lacking?	How well is the student able to engage in academic tasks using the English language?

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**Who takes the ELPA21 Summative Assessment?** All students identified as LEP Eligible on Field 95 in NSSRS are required to participate in the ELPA21 assessment. Consistent with Federal Law, all English Learners, including students with disabilities, should have equal opportunity to learn English language skills and participate in the ELPA21 assessments.

**What are ELPA21 Achievement Level Descriptors?** Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) describe what an ELL's language uses look like at each proficiency level as he or she progresses toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities. ELPA21 ALDs can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education's Title III website under *ELPA21 Assessment*.

**What do ELPA21 achievement levels mean?** A student's designated performance level represents a typical current performance level, not a fixed status. An English language performance level does not identify a student (e.g., "Level 1 student"), but rather identifies what a student knows and can do at a particular stage of English language development, for example, "a student at Level 1" or "a student whose listening performance is at Level 1."

**What are the appropriate uses of ELPA21 Summative Scores?**<sup>1</sup> ELPA21 scores represent a snapshot of student proficiency at one point in time. The test was designed so that scores may be used to:

1. Measure English language proficiency progress from year-to-year, allowing teachers and parents to monitor annual progress towards proficiency.
2. Inform ELL reclassification decisions.
3. Inform state accountability calculation and reporting.
4. Inform evaluations of program effectiveness for various subgroups of students and adjust educational programming and resources as needed.
5. Help school officials identify the types of professional development and/or support that teachers need.

ELPA21 scores should not be used to:

- Provide a measure of all components of ELP. The assessments are developed to assess ten standards, in four domains, with items assessing specific skills and abilities in each.
- Evaluate ELP without recognizing that some error in measurement is inherent in all test scores.
- Provide a single data point that alone is sufficient for making decisions. Test scores should be interpreted within the context of the student and teacher, and the academic and social environment.
- Describe why an individual student scored as he/she did.
- Provide a grade-level assessment of student proficiency. Scores cannot be used to suggest an 8<sup>th</sup> grader is literate at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, but do determine if a student is proficient in his or her grade-level.
- Evaluate teacher performance or effectiveness.

**What can educators do to help students improve English language proficiency?** Educators can provide ELLs with communicative tasks that require them to create the sustained output necessary for second language development. When planning classroom instruction and assessment to prepare ELLs for the language demands found in college-and-career-ready standards, it is important for educators to ensure that lessons and activities provide ELLs with opportunities that allow them to develop the skills that enable them to *use language to*:

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<sup>1</sup> ELPA21 Theory of Action.

1. Engage with complex oral presentations and texts to synthesize, construct, and communicate knowledge across the curriculum;
2. Use evidence to argue, inform, and analyze; and
3. Engage in collaborative and interactive activities, developing an awareness of multiple perspectives, and producing language appropriate to a particular content area or community.

### **What is the relationship between ELPA21 and my state's content assessments?**

The ELP Standards, and ELPA21 assessments, assume simultaneous development of language and content-area knowledge, skills, and abilities. Because ELLs have the same potential as their non-ELL peers they do not need to wait until their ELP is sufficiently developed to participate in content area instruction and assessment.<sup>2</sup> ELPA21 scores summarize the extent to which ELLs language skills enable (or hinder) an ELL's participation in grade-level mathematics, English language arts, and science content courses. As language proficiency increases, grade-level content learning is able to increase. Your state's content tests describe student ability in specific content areas like mathematics, science, reading, and writing while ELPA21 scores describe how an ELL is able to use the language necessary for success in content area courses.

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<sup>2</sup> The ELP Standards.

