LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Assessments, Analytics, and Accountability

Alternate English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT Connect) Guidance

This document is designed to assist Louisiana educators in understanding the Alternate English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT Connect) for English Learners (ELs) in grades K-12. The ELPT Connect assesses the English language proficiency for English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. This assessment meets the unique needs of these students and enables the measurement of their progress toward attaining English language proficiency based on the Alternate Louisiana Connectors for English Learners (Alt EL Connectors). The ELPT Connect assessments align with the Louisiana Connectors for English Learners, which correspond to the college- and career-ready K-12 Louisiana Student Standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science. By doing so, the assessments support the English language and academic skills needed for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities to progress through school ready for post-school success, including independent living, social engagement, employment, and postsecondary training.

Participation Criteria

Consistent with federal law, all ELs, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, have an equal opportunity to learn English-language skills and participate in the ELPT or ELPT Connect assessments. All students with significant cognitive disabilities identified as ELs are required to take the ELPT Connect. To determine eligibility, school systems give all enrolling students a home language survey. That survey should contain evidence of **at least one** of the following to begin screening for EL services. The student:

- was not born in the United States, **and** their native language is a language other than English;
- is Native American or Alaska Native or a native resident of the outlying areas **and** comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English-language proficiency;
- is migratory **and** their native language is a language other than English; and/or
- comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant.

The English Learner (EL) Identification Flowchart helps school systems decide which students should be screened for English-language proficiency and what to do if the students are eligible for services. If a student does not score "proficient" on the screener (English Language Proficiency Screener, ELPS), then the student is identified as an EL and evaluated for appropriate content-area accommodations.

To be eligible to participate in the ELPT Connect assessment, an IEP team must verify that the student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive functioning and meets the criteria outlined in Bulletin 1530 §505. Additional information can be found in the Alternate Assessment section of the Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities Library, including the K-2 Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool.
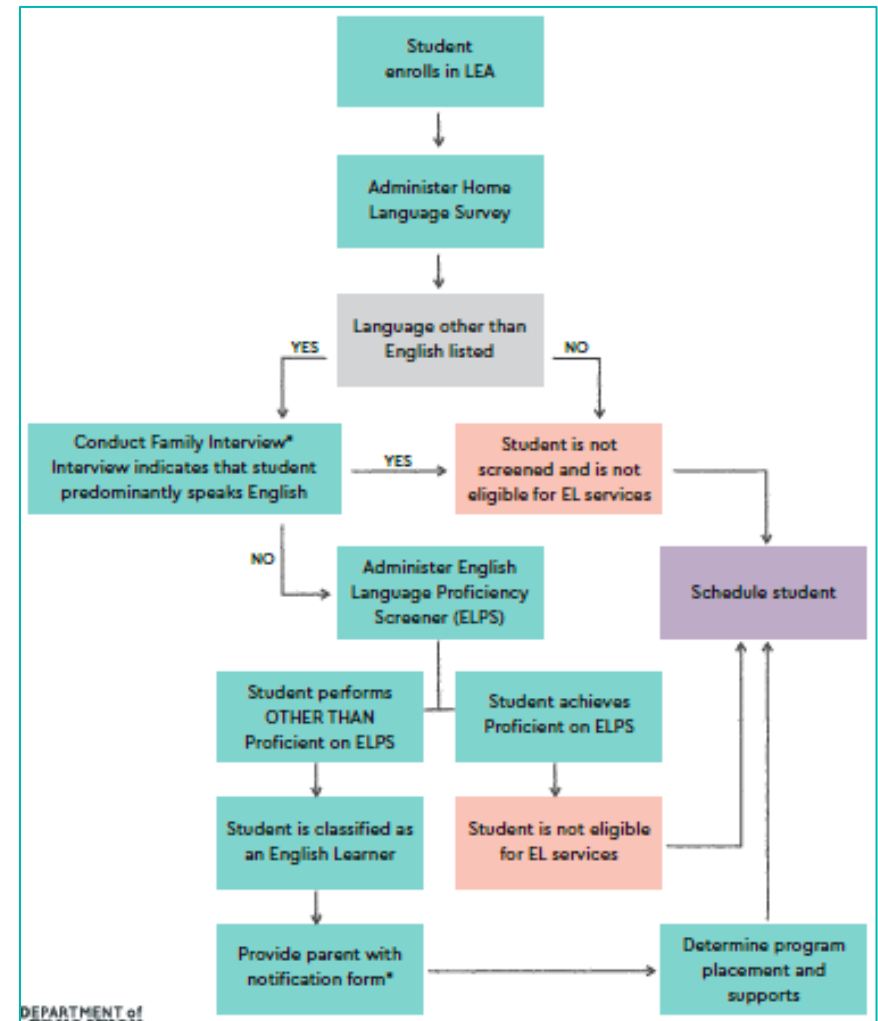
Factors that Should NOT Determine Participation in the ELPT Connect

The need to participate in the ELPT Connect instead of the ELPT (with or without accommodations) is **not** primarily the result of the following:

- time of arrival in U.S. schools
- language and cultural differences
- history of limited or interrupted formal schooling
- low English language proficiency or literacy level without the presence of significant cognitive disability
- student's ability to exit from English learner services

- excessive absenteeism
- poor performance or impact on accountability system
- disability category label
- special education placement or services
- a single person (e.g., principal, teacher) making the decision

ELPT Connect Design

The ELPT Connect design reflects the diversity of English learners with significant cognitive disabilities and holds appropriate expectations for these students to make progress toward English language proficiency based on the Alt EL Connectors.

About the Alt EL Connectors

The Alt EL Connectors were developed for English Learners (ELs) with significant cognitive disabilities and provide a connection between language and academic content acquisition. ELs with significant cognitive disabilities are students who have been identified by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams as having significant disabilities and by the English Language Proficiency Screener (ELPS) as needing English development services. They are a diverse group of students who, for the purpose of the Alt EL Connectors, are defined as students who are progressing toward English language proficiency; whose primary home languages are other than English; and who have one or more disabilities that significantly affect their cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior.[1] The Alt EL Connectors, measured by the ELPT Connect assessments, must be relevant and appropriate for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities, in addition to being rigorous, coherent, measurable, and linked to grade-level expectations.[2] The Alt EL Connectors were developed with explicit consideration of the range of learners who make up the ELs with significant cognitive disabilities student population and are intended to support these students as they learn critical English language knowledge and skills and communicative competence. IEP teams should include EL specialists and use the Alt EL Connectors in the planning, discussion, collaboration, and documentation of the student's IEP.

---

[1] Christensen, Gholson, & Shyyan, 2018; Thurlow, Liu, Goldstone, Albus, & Rogers, 2018
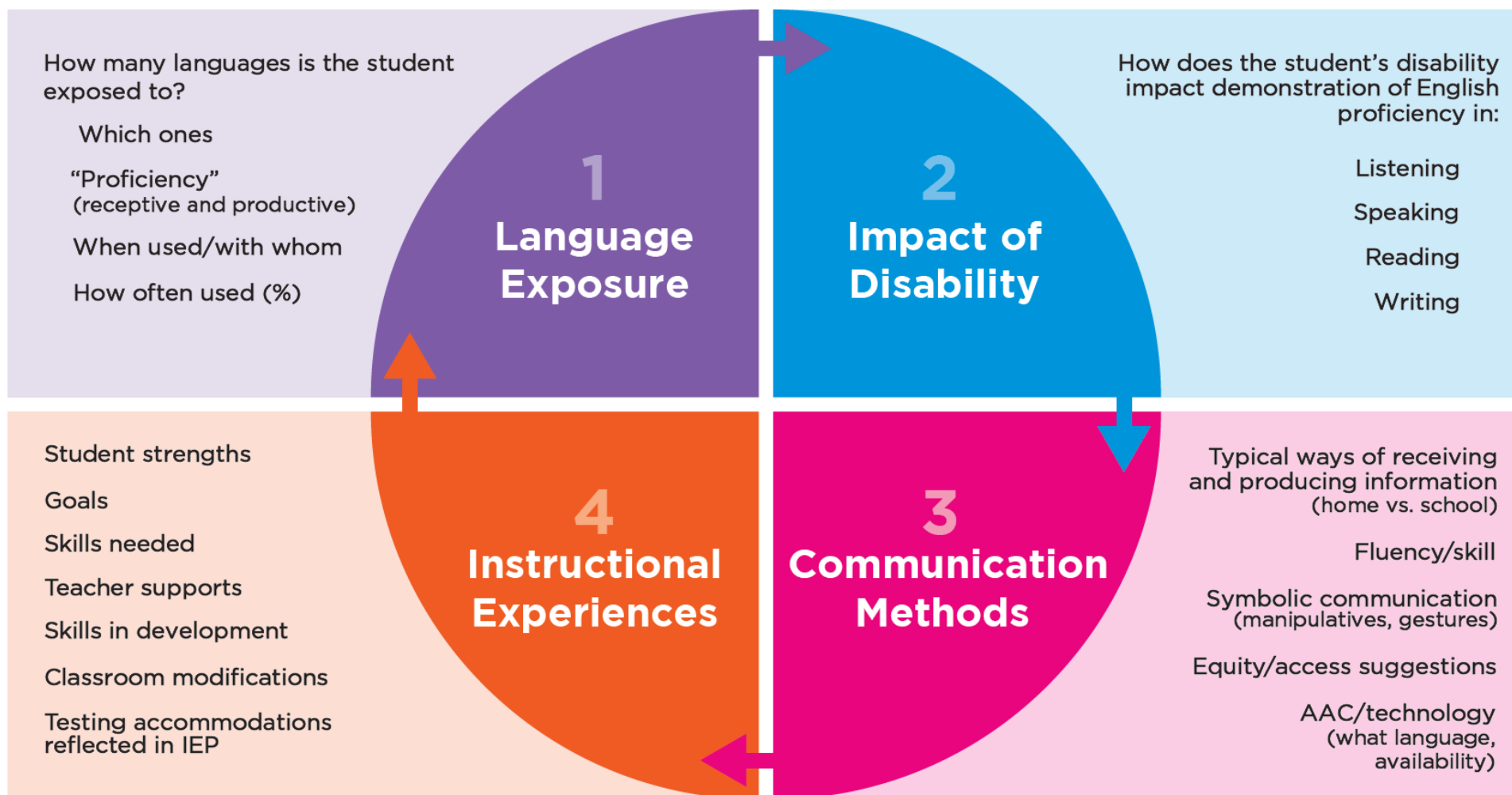[2] ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(G); 34 CFR § 200.6(h)(1), (5)

Test Items

The ELPT Connect consists of four separate domain tests: Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening. Each domain test includes 1 unscored warm-up item (first item) and 10 scored items. Test administrators may administer each domain test in a separate session. If administering multiple domain tests in a day, test administrators may allow the student to take breaks between domain tests to prevent testing fatigue. Students will encounter the following item types on the ELPT Connect.

- **Selected Response (SR)**: Students select the correct answer from 3 or 4 answer choices. SR items appear in all domains (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing). SRs are either machine-scored or hand-scored using a rubric, worth 1 point.
- **Constructed Response (CR)**: Students respond by writing or speaking. CR items appear in the Speaking and Writing domains only. CRs are hand-scored using a rubric and are worth 3 points.
- **Constructed Response-Guided Prompt (CR-GP)**: Students respond by composing a written response. CR-GP items are structured writing prompts appearing in the Writing domain only. CR-GPs are machine-scored or hand-scored using a rubric and are worth 3 points.
- **Technology Enhanced (TE)**: Students use technology to capture their response. TE items appear in the Listening, Reading, and Writing domains. TEs are machine-scored and worth 1 or 2 points.

Accessibility Considerations

The following model serves to guide accessibility decisions. It addresses language and disability in detail. At the same time, it guides teams to identify supports used for instruction and how these may bridge to accessibility features used for the ELPT Connect. Teams may want to start with Section 1, and then work around the cycle. For each student, identify (a) how many languages the student is exposed to and the student's receptive and productive language skills in each, (b) the impact of disability on English language skills (i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), (c) what communication methods the student uses, and (d) the student's instructional experiences.

1 Language Exposure

How many languages is the student exposed to?

- Which ones
- "Proficiency" (receptive and productive)
- When used/with whom
- How often used (%)

2 Impact of Disability

How does the student's disability impact demonstration of English proficiency in:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

4 Instructional Experiences

- Student strengths
- Goals
- Skills needed
- Teacher supports
- Skills in development
- Classroom modifications
- Testing accommodations reflected in IEP

3 Communication Methods

- Typical ways of receiving and producing information (home vs. school)
- Fluency/skill
- Symbolic communication (manipulatives, gestures)
- Equity/access suggestions
- AAC/technology (what language, availability)

Examples of Accessibility Features That Address Disability, Language, or Both

Typically, accessibility features that support a student's developing English proficiency are not allowed on the ELPT. Features that address a student's disability are generally allowed. Still, some features may appear to address both disability and language. This is especially the case for students identified as English learners with significant cognitive disabilities eligible for the ELPT Connect. IEP teams should be aware of whether supports in the overlapping category of disability and language are provided to an individual student because of disability needs, language needs, or both. For example, a student may use word prediction to address a disability, even though it also supports the student's language use. A dictionary typically only supports language. If a student uses an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device, that device would need to use only English settings for assessment items but might use another language during non-assessment portions (e.g., general directions) of the ELPT Connect. The following diagram shows how different accessibility features may address a student's disability, language ability, or both.
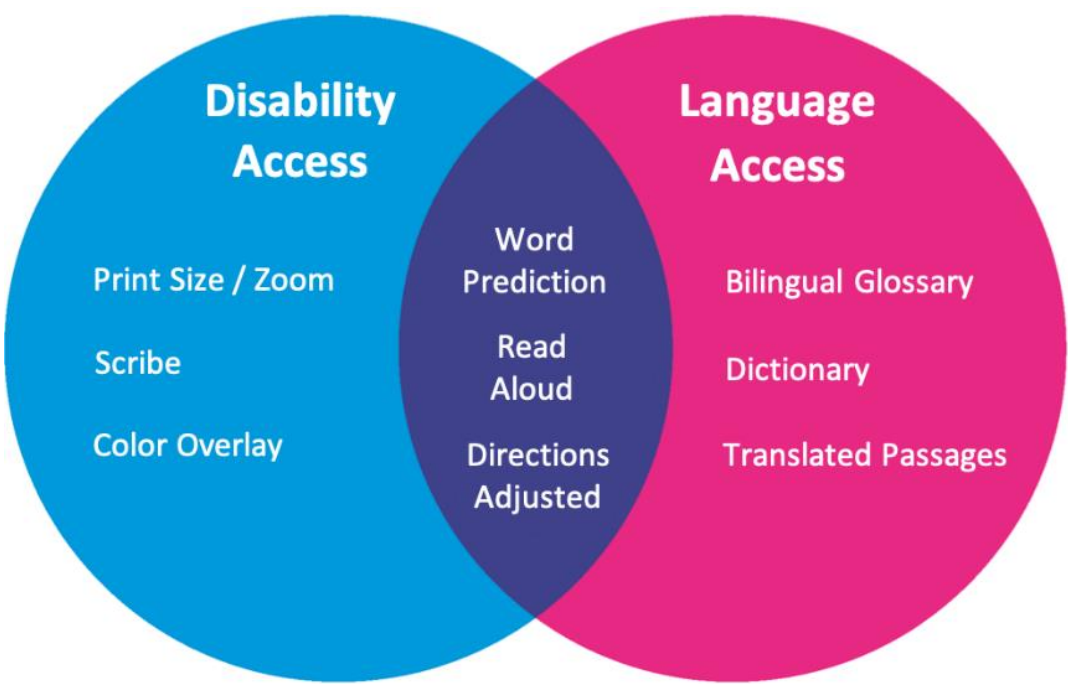
Disability Access
Allowed on the ELPT Connect

Disability & Language Access
Conditionally allowed by domain on the ELPT

Embedded Accessibility Tools

The ELPT Connect accessibility model reflects a tiered approach to accessibility tools that are embedded in the testing platform: universal features available to all English learners with significant cognitive disabilities for the ELPT Connect, designated supports available to all English learners based on need, and accommodations available only to certain students with significant cognitive disabilities based on their individual documented needs. The following table provides definitions of the accessibility tiers and available tools in each tier for ELPT Connect embedded features. Tools in all tiers should be documented on the student's IEP. Designated supports and accommodations must be assigned to individual students in advance.

Tier	Definition	Available Tools
Universal Features	These are provided digitally through the assessment delivery system and are available to any student based on their preference. All appear in the assessment delivery system but can be turned OFF by school staff.	Expandable passages and items, Highlighter, Item level zoom, Keyboard navigation, Line reader, Mark for review, Mouse pointer, Notepad, Strikethrough, Volume control
Designated Supports	These are provided digitally through the assessment delivery system and are available to any student if selected before testing by an adult.	Color choices, Disable universal features, Masking, Print size/zoom
Accommodations	These are provided through the assessment delivery system (embedded) but are available only to certain students based on their individual needs in their IEP.	Domain exemptions, Permissive mode (for AT use), Print on request

Non-Embedded Accessibility Features

Additionally, this model allows accessibility features that are not embedded in the testing platform: optimal testing conditions, designated supports, and accommodations. The following table provides definitions of the accessibility tiers and examples of the features in each tier for ELPT Connect non-embedded features. Features in all tiers should be documented on the student's IEP. Accommodations must be assigned to individual students in advance.

Feature	Definition	Examples
Optimal Testing Conditions	These are testing conditions that may be provided by the test administrator (non-embedded) to support an optimal testing experience for the student based on student needs and preferences.	Breaks, Directions adjusted (e.g., clarified, highlighted, reread, simplified, underlined, or interpreted as often as needed), Flexible scheduling, Focusing prompts and materials (e.g., fidgets, redirect to test by prompting or physical objects), Read aloud (Grades 2-3)
Designated Supports	These are accessibility features that may be provided by the test administrator (non-embedded) and are available to any student if selected before testing by an adult.	Color overlay, Noise buffers, Translated test directions, Verbal description of graphics, Magnification, Sign language presentation of items, Read aloud (Grades 4-5 and above)
Accommodations	These may be provided by the test administrator (non-embedded) but are available only to certain students based on their individual needs in their IEP.	Assistive technology and scribe

Test Administration

Administration Information

The test administration window opens **February 23, 2025 and closes March 27, 2026**. The ELPT Connect is taken through the Cambium Assessment, Inc. (CAI) testing system. Resources, such as the Test Administration Manual (TAM), for providing training to schools and teachers is found in the EL portal. The student is allowed to use their preferred mode of communication, including any necessary assistive technology and augmented communication devices.

Student Response Check

In order for a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities to meaningfully engage in the assessment, the test administrator should be familiar with the student's unique communication modes. The purpose of the Student Response Check is to identify and understand the student's communication modes. Test administrators must use the Student Response Check process to explore whether the student has a means of communicating with the test administrator and engaging in the assessment.

The Student Response Check is intended primarily for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who do not have an observable response mode[3] nor a consistent communication system. If the test administrator knows the student and the student has an observable and consistent response mode, the test administrator should proceed with test administration and follow test administration procedures. In these cases, the Student Response Check is not necessary.

Online Tools Training

Online Tools Trainings (OTTs) are available in the EL Portal. The OTTs allow test administrators and students the opportunity to experience the test procedures, training, technology, item types, and navigation prior to the assessment. Test administrators are encouraged to complete the OTTs with each student and set up the student's online testing accommodations according to their IEPs. Students may take OTTs as many times as needed to gain familiarity with the testing tools and item types.

Reporting

Each performance level descriptor (PLD) outlines how well your child met the expectations for that grade and language area (Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing), also known as "domains". Scores are also reported by how well the student understands English and how well the student communicates using English, referred to as "modalities". How well the student understands English (Receptive modality) is reported with the Listening and Reading domains; how well the student communicates using English (Productive modality) is reported with the Speaking and Writing domains. The following table shows the general performance level definitions by modality for each performance level.

Level	Receptive Modality PLDs	Productive Modality PLDs
Level 1 Beginning	The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities	The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 1 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in Alt EL Connectors that significantly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected

---

[3] The Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) Test Administration Manual defines "observable response mode" as "a predictable and consistent behavior or movement that is able to be understood by a communication partner as intentional communication."

Level	Receptive Modality PLDs	Productive Modality PLDs
	reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.	in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.
Level 2 Intermediate	The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 2 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that moderately limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.	The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 2 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that moderately limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.
Level 3 Early Advanced	The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 3 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that slightly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.	The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 3 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that slightly limits participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.
Level 4 Advanced	The Receptive modality measures English language performance in Listening and Reading. Students in Level 4 demonstrate Receptive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that enables full participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.	The Productive modality measures English language performance in Speaking and Writing. Students in Level 4 demonstrate Productive performance reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that enables full participation in the relevant grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.

Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) indicate what a typical student at each level should be able to demonstrate. Access the PLDs in the [Assessment](#) Resources Webpage for a breakdown of the knowledge, skills, and practices associated with each performance level.

Proficiency Determinations

The proficiency determination – Proficient, Progressing, Emerging – is based on the student's overall scale score and their grade level.

- **Proficient** – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that enables full participation or only slightly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. This is indicated on the ELPT Connect by attaining Level 3 or higher in all modalities. Once Proficient on the ELPT Connect, students may be considered for reclassification.
- **Progressing** – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that moderately limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. This is indicated on the ELPT Connect by attaining above Level 1 and below Level 3 in at least one modality. Students scoring Progressing on the ELPT Connect are eligible for ongoing program support.
- **Emerging** – Students show a level of English language proficiency reflected in the Alt EL Connectors that significantly limits participation in the grade-appropriate classroom activities reflected in the LA Connectors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. This is indicated on the ELPT Connect by attaining a Level 1 in all modalities. Students scoring Emerging on the ELPT Connect are eligible for ongoing program support.

Sample Test Item

Listen as I read about puppies. Then answer the question.

This is a picture of a puppy. Puppies can be fun. You can play outside with them and teach them tricks. Puppies can be a lot of work, too. You need to feed them and keep them safe.

Puppies are a lot of work. Do you agree? Why or why not? Please answer in English.

A) Based on item scoring rubric, student receives 3 points.
B) Based on item scoring rubric, student receives 2 points.
C) Based on item scoring rubric, student receives 1 point.
D) Based on item scoring rubric, student receives 0 points.

Rubric
Score 3 points: The student demonstrates a controlled or full understanding of the English language by accurately communicating information that is related to the question, topic, or text. Exemplar: • Yes, puppies are a lot of work. They eat too much. • No, puppies are not a lot of work. They go outside. (or variations of the above sentences)
Score 2 points: The student demonstrates a limited or developing understanding of the English language by accurately communicating information that is somewhat related to the question, topic, or text. Exemplar: Provides a partial response appropriate to context or a response somewhat related, such as • Yes, puppies are work. • No, puppies are not work. • I like/do not like puppies. (or variations of the above sentences)
Score 1 point: The student demonstrates little to no understanding of the English language by communicating information that is unrelated to the question, topic, or text. Exemplar: Provides responses, such as scribbling, random letters, words unrelated to the topic or text
Score 0 points: The student does not respond or does not communicate in any form. Exemplar: N/A

Resources

Assessments Resources Webpage
- [ELPT Connect Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs):](#) describe what the average student knows and is able to do at each performance level by grade, modality, and domain.

English Learner Library
- [ELs with Disabilities Identification Flowchart](#): provides a visual model to help identify and determine supports for ELs with disabilities
- [Identifying and Supporting ELs with Disabilities Guidance:](#) assists school systems in the provision of equitable access to high-quality instruction for ELs who are suspected of having a disability
- [Supporting Newcomer and Beginner English Learners Curriculum Guidance:](#) provides school systems with a list of publishers who can provide curriculae materials to fulfill the needs that are often required to support English language development (ELD) for newcomer and beginner ELs

Academic Standards Library
- [Alternate Louisiana Connectors for English Learners](#): list of connectors for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities

Contact Us
- [assessment@la.gov](#) for assessment and accountability questions
- [diverselearnersupport@la.gov](#) for curriculum and instruction questions

EL Portal
- ELPT Connect Online Tools Training (OTT): provides students with the opportunity to become familiar with the online testing platform
- ELPT Connect OTT Test Administrator Directions and Scoring Rubrics Booklets: [Kindergarten](#), [Grade 1](#), [Grades 2-3](#), [Grades 4-5](#), [Grades 6-8](#), [Grades 9-12](#)
- [Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) User Guide:](#) helps users navigate the TIDE system
- [ELPT Connect Test Administration Manual (TAM)](#): provides directions for test administrators
- [ELPT Connect Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#): provides information about accessibility features and test accommodations
- [ELPT Connect Technology Skills Checklist](#): provides a list of technology skills students will need to complete the tests
- [ELPT Connect Tool Button Sheet](#): support for students taking the Online Tools Training
- [ELPT Connect Test Delivery System (TDS) Overview:](#) explains how to set up and administer a secure testing session
- [ELPT Connect Assistive Technology Manual](#): provides an overview of the embedded and non-embedded assistive technology tools that can be used to help students with accessibility needs