

Alt ELPA Accessibility Considerations

This document provides background information on the Alt ELPA and considerations regarding Alt ELPA participation and accessibility provision. It also includes example student profiles with an accompanying template, which may be helpful in structuring discussions or planning around Alt ELPA participation or accessibility provision.

The information and resources in this document were developed by CAAELP. Slight changes have been made to customize content for the Oregon context.

Introduction

The Alt ELPA was developed by the Collaborative for the Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP). CAAELP is a federally funded project that was awarded to the Iowa Department of Education; Iowa is working in collaboration with nine other states (Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Louisiana, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and West Virginia) and the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA.

CAAELP developed the Alt ELPA to provide an assessment of English language proficiency for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.¹ This assessment meets the unique needs of these students and enables the measurement of their progress toward attaining English language proficiency based on alternate performance standards.² The Alt ELPA was developed to align with English language proficiency standards that correspond to college- and career-ready content standards in mathematics, English language arts, and science. By doing so, it supports 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.

Decisions about appropriate accessibility and accommodations help to produce valid assessment results and support appropriate interpretations and uses of assessment results. CAAELP recognizes that validity, reliability, and fairness of the Alt ELPA depend on each English learner with significant cognitive disabilities having appropriate access to the assessment to show their English language proficiency. CAAELP also recognizes the important role of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team in making decisions for English learners with significant cognitive disabilities.

¹ “English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities” is a term used in federal law. In this document, both that term and the term “English learners with significant cognitive disabilities” are used to mean “English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.”

² The term “alternate performance standards” corresponds to the term “alternate achievement standards” used in federal law. The term indicates that the performance to which students are held may be different from those for other students, even though the targeted English language proficiency standards for the student’s grade are the same.

Purposes of the Alt ELPA

The Alt ELPA measures English language proficiency in the domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. It supports individual English learners with significant cognitive disabilities and their schools and districts by:

- monitoring the annual progress of English learners with significant cognitive disabilities in the attainment of English proficiency for academic purposes;
- measuring school district success in meeting accountability benchmarks established for Title I and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); and
- informing decisions about exiting students with significant cognitive disabilities from English learner services.

CAAELP designed the Alt ELPA to reflect the diversity of English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. It also designed the test to hold high expectations for these students to make progress toward English language proficiency based on alternate performance standards and to acquire discipline-relevant language for grade-appropriate academic content tasks.

For more information on the Alt ELPA, visit altelpa.org.

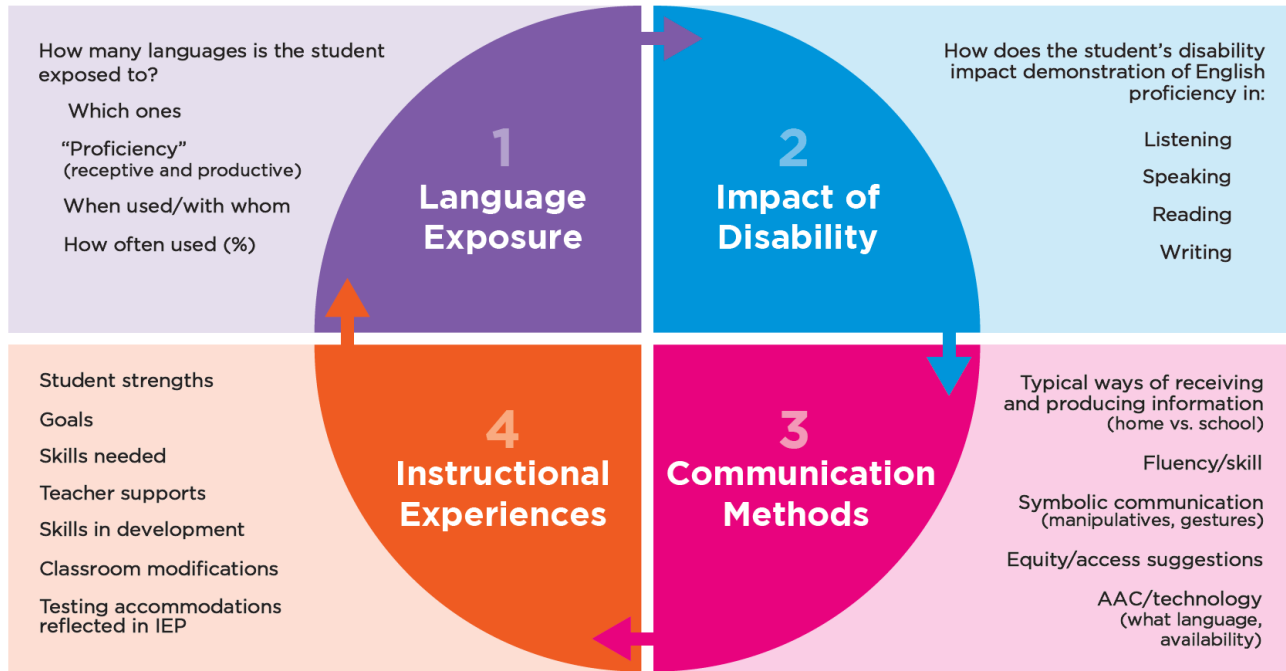
Instructional and Assessment Accessibility Decisions

Supports that a student receives in instruction may not be identical to the accessibility features available for the Alt ELPA. Instruction focuses on content knowledge (e.g., reading, English language arts, math, science, social studies) and developing English skills in English learners. The Alt ELPA assesses English language proficiency in the domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. Thus, the accessibility features must allow for appropriate interpretations related to what is being learned or measured. It is important to keep the language emphasis in mind for the Alt ELPA.

Figure 1 provides a model 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 Alt ELPA. Teams may want to start with Section 1, and then work around the cycle.

Figure 1

Accessibility Considerations

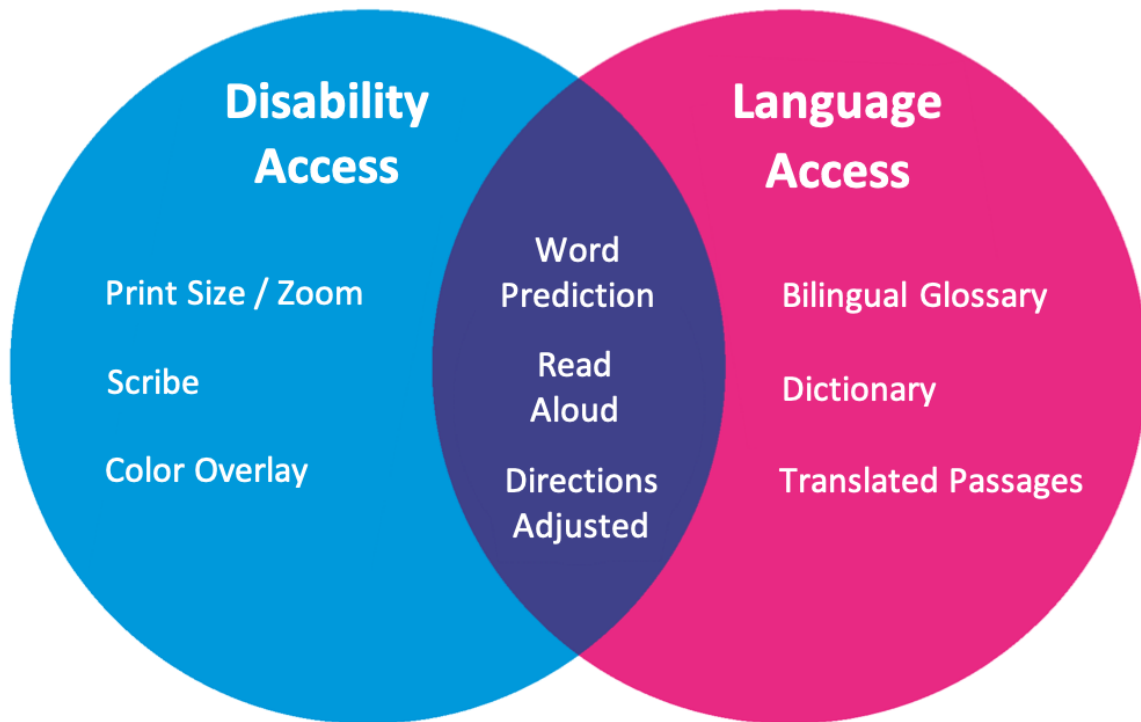


For each student, identify (a) how many languages the student is exposed to and the student’s receptive and productive language skills in each, (b) the impact of disability on English language skills (i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), (c) what communication methods the student uses, and (d) the student’s instructional experiences. See Appendix A for student examples using the model and Appendix B for Tool 1: Template for Applying Accessibility Considerations to guide decision-making using the model.

Typically, accessibility features that support a student’s developing English proficiency are not allowed on standard English language proficiency assessments. Features that address a student’s disability generally are 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 Alt ELPA. Figure 2 shows how different accessibility features may address a student’s disability, language ability, or both.

Figure 2

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



Note. Blue = Allowed on the Alt ELPA; Purple = Conditionally Allowed by Domain on the Alt ELPA; Pink = Not Allowed on the Alt ELPA.

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 Alt ELPA.

Resource A: Student Examples of Applying the Accessibility Model

The two student examples presented here show how to apply the accessibility considerations presented in Figure 1 above. The underlying template of these student examples is also provided as **Tool 1: Template for Applying Accessibility Considerations**.

Mya Win (*7th grade student with emergent symbolic communication*)

Mya Win is a 7th grade English learner with Down syndrome. Her family came to the U.S. from Myanmar two years ago. She is the middle child of three children. The parents use the Karen language at home, and the children use both English and Karen with one another. Mya uses primarily single words in both languages. She responds to yes or no questions, usually nodding or shaking her head. She requests objects by pointing or reaching for an object. She can make choices between two objects and occasionally with three objects. Mya Win attends a school that does not have widespread access to technology, so her teachers typically make hard copy materials or use physical objects in the classroom. Materials that are malleable or soft and colorful appeal to her, such a playdough, marshmallows, and foam to form objects, letters, and numbers. Given choices between two or three objects or large high-contrast flash cards, she can identify different shapes, sizes, most of the English alphabet, and sequence some numbers. She wears glasses and has difficulty attending to pictures, whether on paper or a computer, especially if there are many details. Occasionally, she will look at images or video clips if they are simple, large, and with contrasting colors on a topic of interest.

Has student taken the Alt ELPA before? (circle one) Yes No

If yes, review prior form and update any section information below as appropriate on new form.

Table A1

Student Exposure to Languages

Languages	General Proficiency	When Used and with Whom	How often? (% overall)
Karen	Basic, uses single words	Uses with parents most of the time at home	70%

Languages	General Proficiency	When Used and with Whom	How often? (% overall)
English	Basic, uses single words, most of English alphabet, and can sequence some numbers	Uses with siblings at home and at school	30%

Table A2

Impacts and Communication Methods in Instruction

Domains	Disability Impact on English Proficiency	Communication Methods and Fluency/Skill
Listening	Hearing tests show normal hearing ability, but cognitive ability limits overall language use.	Listens at basic level.
Speaking	Speaks using some single words but currently uses nodding and gestures in response, or initiates with pointing to or moving objects.	Primarily uses physical communication (nods, shakes head, points, reaches).
Reading	Identifies most letters in the English alphabet, but no words yet.	Uses objects and high-contrast flash cards in class.
Writing	Physically manipulates writing tools and press keys on keyboard, but her English language skill level does not allow for composition using these tools.	Points to, reaches for, or moves objects to communicate.

Are there any suggestions for equity/access in access to technology?

The school currently has limited access to technology and is pursuing grant funding in this area. In the meantime, teachers make hard copies of materials. If the school were to obtain more technology, Mya would need to access it using simple high-contrast content.

Table A3

Instructional Experiences

Category	Notes
Student Strengths	Motivated on topics of interest, likes to socially engage with peers in her classes. Although Mya prefers the soft colorful letterforms, she is

Category	Notes
	getting good at identifying the letters in other contexts. Her literacy awareness is broadening beyond the forms.
Goals	Learning alphabet and ordering numerals. A big goal is shifting to symbolic communication.
Teacher Supports	Helps to adjust color/contrast and magnification for materials on computer or hard copy/printed. Teacher modifies materials for contrast, simple lines, and includes colors and textures that interest Mya.
Classroom Modifications	Need access to printer, objects, and flashcards.
Skills Needed	Learn all alphabet letters to advance to sound and letter correspondence to create words. Needs to broaden topics of interest.
Skills in Development	Mya is working on alphabet letter identification and ordering numbers. She is expanding her attention on areas outside favorite topics. Mya is also working on choosing between three options when working on shapes, sizes and letters.
Testing Accessibility Features and Accommodations Reflected in IEP (If Available)	Color choices, print size/zoom, print on request, teacher helps navigate screens and assists with answer response location, redirect to test, extra time, use of objects, read aloud, strikethrough, text-to-speech.

Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

Review the student’s instructional impacts, methods, and experience in the above sections with the menu of universal features, designated supports, and accommodations found in the *Oregon Accessibility Manual*. Then fill in the following table with the appropriate features in each category from the manual. The first row applies to all domains of the assessment (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), and the following row applies to specific domains per the individual needs of the student.

Table A4

Individualized Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

Alt ELPA Domains	Universal Features	Designated Supports	Optimal Testing Conditions	Accommodations
All Domains	Redirect to test Teacher assists with test navigation screens and response location Strikethrough (online or paper equivalent if printed material)	Color choices Magnification		Print on request
Specific Domain Speaking		Read aloud	Although Mya can physically speak, this likely will not occur for the testing window this year. Instead, use pointing and moving objects, materials.	

Review whether accessibility features for the Alt ELPA have implications for instruction and note them here:

Mya primarily uses physical and referential communication when a speaker describes things to her, but she may benefit from introducing a focus on speaking when she is ready. This would also benefit her growth in reading letters to advance to phonemes, as she transitions to more symbolic language use.

Student example: Arif

Arif was born in Indonesia, where he spent his first four years in an orphanage. He is profoundly deaf with unintelligible speech and has a severe intellectual disability. He also has limited mobility. While in the orphanage, he learned some of the local sign language in Jakarta, but his progress was slow. He was adopted by an Indonesian-speaking family from Australia who were not familiar with any sign languages but were willing to learn what was needed to support Arif. In Australia the family continued to use the signs Arif had learned in Jakarta while introducing some ****Australian***

Sign Language (Auslan) at home to prepare for what public schools would use. Arif also has some motor challenges that affect his ability to sign, so his parents acquired a device so he could press or point to sign icons or pictures to facilitate communication. The family immigrated to the U.S. due to a job transfer. Now Arif is enrolled as a kindergartner in a U.S. school. He has been identified as an English learner because although his father is a fluent bilingual speaker in English, the family predominantly speaks Indonesian in the home. Arif and his family now have to shift to learning American Sign Language (ASL). He is unable to read or write in any language and does not produce speech.

The school’s special education staff are working with Arif using information from his parents about what specific signs he had been working on in the southern dialect of Auslan in Melbourne as well as his prior Jakarta signs. They are trying to smooth the transition to ASL but find they need to rely a lot on the picture and symbols device that he had started using in Australia with his family. The family has concerns about the recent shifts between sign languages and is coordinating with the school staff on his continued use of social interaction signs and gestures and pictures and signs to practice with him at home, aligned with the kindergarten standards.

**A language with different vocabulary and grammatical structure from ASL*

Has student taken the Alt ELPA before? (circle one) Yes No

If yes, review prior form and update any section information below as appropriate on new form.

Table A5

Student Exposures to Languages

Languages	General Proficiency	When Used and with Whom	How Often? (%)
Jakarta Sign	Low	Family	80%
Auslan-Australian Sign Language different from ASL	Very low	Family	10%
ASL	Very low, just started	Family, friends, teachers, & deaf community (e.g., online content)	10%

Table A6*Impacts and Communication Methods in Instruction*

Domain	Disability Impact on English Proficiency	Communication Methods and Fluency/Skill
Listening	Deaf, can't hear English sound correspondence to phonemes.	Receives input through familiar signs, symbols/pictures, gestures/expressions, and objects/touch. Student uses AAC device for Jakarta signs and new English vocabulary at basic levels. Content is repeated as many times as needed.
Speaking	Unintelligible speech.	Uses familiar signs, symbols, pictures, gestures and expressions. Student uses AAC device for Jakarta signs and new English vocabulary at basic levels.
Reading	No phonemic awareness. Cognitive ability requires a lot of repetition and highly contextualized visual or tactile chunks of information.	Same method as for Listening, with content repeated as many times as needed.
Writing	Motor challenges holding writing tools or typing keys. Not able to use speech-to-text.	Same method as for Speaking.

Are there any suggestions for equity/access in Table 2 (e.g., access to technology)?

No suggestions at this time.

Table A7*Instructional Experiences*

Category	Notes
Student Strengths	Social, positive energy, not easily frustrated with repetition or mistakes. Student can use AAC device with switch somewhat independently.
Goals	Transitioning to ASL. No discussion on when may start cued speech.

Category	Notes
Teacher Supports	Teacher assists Arif in accessing classroom computers and navigating onscreen content.
Classroom Modifications	Arif needs a lot of one-on-one time during instruction, and a clear path visually and any other relevant contextual cues in the classroom.
Skills Needed	Arif needs to be consistent and reliable with pictures and signs already learned while assigning meaning to new pictures and signs to build and expand his vocabulary.
Skills in Development	Arif is working on basic social language to describe needs and wants in English, as well as grade-appropriate vocabulary.
Testing Accommodations Reflected in IEP (If Available)	Arif has not yet participated in any state content assessments, and no IEP planning for accessibility needs on the state content alternate has occurred.

Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

Review the student’s instructional impacts, methods, and experience in the above sections with the menu of universal features, designated supports, and accommodations found in the *Oregon Accessibility Manual*. Then fill in the following table with the appropriate features in each category from the manual. The first row applies to all domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) of the assessment, and the following row applies to specific domains per the individual needs of the student.

Table A8

Individualized Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

Alt ELPA Domains	Optimal Testing Conditions	Universal Features	Accommodations
All Domains	Directions adjusted. Use AAC device with switch. Use symbols, pictures, and focusing prompts and materials, as allowed for each item.		Use AT (AAC device with switch). Help entering answers.

Alt ELPA Domains	Optimal Testing Conditions	Universal Features	Accommodations
	Help with navigating test platform.		
Specific Domain Listening			Student may need exemption for listening portion due to disability and the allowed accessibility features.

Review whether accessibility features for the Alt ELPA have implications for instruction and note them here:

Need to discuss timing for introducing cued speech and how much emphasis while transitioning to ASL.

Resource B: Template for Applying Accessibility Considerations

Has student taken the Alt ELPA before? (circle one) Yes No

If yes, review prior form and update any section information below as appropriate on new form.

Table B1

Student Exposures to Languages

Languages	General Proficiency	When Used and with Whom	How Often? (%)

Table B2

Impacts and Communication Methods in Instruction

Domains	Disability Impact on English Proficiency	Communication Methods & Fluency/Skill
Listening		
Speaking		
Reading		
Writing		

Are there any suggestions for equity/access in Table 2 (e.g., access to technology)?

Table B3

Instructional Experiences

Category	Notes
Student Strengths	
Goals	
Teacher Supports	
Classroom Modifications	
Skills Needed	
Skills in Development	
Testing Accommodations Reflected in IEP (If Available)	

Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

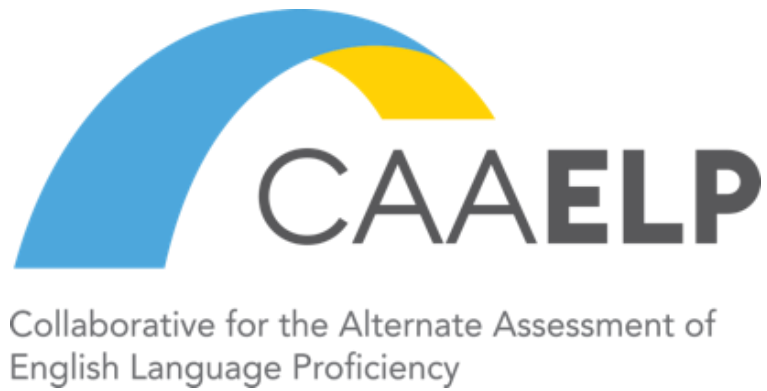
Review the student’s instructional impacts, methods, and experience in the above sections with the menu of optimal testing conditions, universal features, and accommodations found in Table 1 of the *Alt ELPA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual*. Then fill in the following table with the appropriate accessibility features in each category from the manual. The first row applies to all domains of the assessment (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), and the following row applies to specific domains per the individual needs of the student.

Table B4

Individualized Accessibility on the Alt ELPA

Alt ELPA Domains	Testing Considerations	Universal Features	Accommodations
All Domains			
Specific Domain			

Review whether accessibility features for the Alt ELPA have implications for instruction and note them here:



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