

# English Language Development Assessment (ELDA)



ELDA is a battery of tests designed to allow schools to measure annual progress in the acquisition of English language proficiency skills among non-native English speaking students in grades K-12 (K-2 assessments).

ELDA measures both academic and social language proficiency in the four domains of language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They are tests of language skills with content drawn from age-appropriate school curricular and non-curricular sources. They are not tests of academic content; in other words, no external or prior

content-related knowledge is required to respond to the test questions.

The ELDA is a product of the collaboration among LEP State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (LEP SCASS) member states, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the U.S. Department of Education. Funding to support the development of this assessment has come from LEP SCASS member states, CCSSO and the U.S. Department of Education through a Section 6112 Enhanced Assessment Instruments grant.

*“What the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) professes to do, it does.”*

A teacher involved in the 2005 pilot test of ELDA



*“In creating the ELDA, we stayed very connected to the end users including actively involving classroom teachers in developing test items. A number of players were engaged to ensure the ELDA would do what it was designed to do.”*

Robert Mata, Director of Assessment & Equity,  
Davenport Community Schools (IA)



## Why is it needed?

NCLB includes LEP students in its accountability system. It requires states to include students who are limited English proficient (LEP) the state's accountability system; establish English language proficiency standards; annually administer a language proficiency assessment to measure progress toward English proficiency and attainment of English proficiency; align the annual English language proficiency assessment to the state's English language proficiency standards and link to the state's content area standards; and develop annual measurable achievement objectives.

To fulfill NCLB assessment and reporting requirements in regards to students who are limited English proficient, ELDA provides a score in each domain of language as well as a score for comprehension derived from the listening and reading assessment.

ELDA has been specifically designed to assess the construct of "academic English." ELDA items and prompts are written in the language of the classroom and of the academic subjects, and do not require skills in or knowledge of content in those subjects. The concepts are not being assessed; rather, the students' understanding of spoken and written text about the concepts and ability to write and speak about the concepts is measured.

## How was it created?

The tests were designed and developed through collaboration among the thirteen member states of the LEP SCASS, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the American Institutes for Research, the Center for Studies in Assessment Validity and Evaluation at the University of Maryland, and Measurement, Inc.

ELDA test design began with a synthesis of all state-level ELP standards that existed among the project's participating states. A common core of standards for each domain was agreed upon and assigned to the appropriate grade cluster.

Pilot testing began in 2003 in the LEP-SCASS states and the assessment has continued to be revised and improved based on feedback from teachers, school administrators, consultants and state personnel.

## What's promising about the ELDA?

### **Comprehensive: K-12**

The ELDA was developed to measure the English language proficiency of students ranging from beginning learners to those who are advanced and fully English proficient. The assessments are grouped in grade clusters (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) to provide measures of developmentally appropriate language. These clusters also reflect common administrative clustering in many school systems and allow for inclusion of academic language representative of the grade level curricula.

## Aligned to Standards

The tests are aligned with the English language proficiency (ELP) standards of project member states and are developed to provide content coverage across three academic topic areas and one nonacademic topic area:

- ➔ English/Language Arts (ELA)
- ➔ Math, Science, and Technology (MST)
- ➔ Social Studies (SS)
- ➔ School Environment (S-E), including topics on extracurricular activities, student health, homework, classroom management, lunchtime and other.

The ELDA ELP Standards have now been used by some states to guide the development and/or revision of their own state ELP standards.

*"The ELDA goes beyond our assessment scales for newcomers and gives us a better picture of how kids are doing in the content areas and their strengths and weaknesses. Although administering the ELDA is time-consuming, it is time well-spent."*

Ann Dolan-Bishop, ESL Teacher,  
Davenport Community Schools (IA)

### **Useful Results**

There are five levels of proficiency indicated in the narrative Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) that allow states to measure student progress from year to year.

ELDA allows schools to more precisely identify where additional instructional support for LEP students is necessary. The results can help focus attention and resources where they are most needed and can lead to increased academic achievement for English language learners. In addition to the scores reported for each of the domains and comprehension, there are narrative Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) for the five levels of proficiency that provide information for the teachers regarding their students' English proficiency and enable states to measure student progress from year to year. School, district, and state-level summary reports provide the information needed to meet the requirements for NCLB reporting.

### **Valid and Credible**

ELDA is a valid and reliable assessment that helps educators determine the progress students are making in acquiring English language skills. Notably, a consortium of states created ELDA in a rigorous process. States were involved in every step of the process, ensuring credible, useful tools and assessments. Experts in the language development of second-language learners, including linguists and early childhood specialists were engaged in the conception of the ELDA and advised throughout the development process.

Validity studies were meticulously conducted according to the American Psychological Association's standards for test

construction. Extensive documentation of the process is available in technical reports.

### **Lack of Bias**

Eliminating cultural bias was a preeminent concern in developing the ELDA. A recent review of five assessments examined the bias question and only the ELDA clearly succeeded in eliminating cultural bias.

### **Strong Supports**

Technical support, materials and trainings accompany the ELDA. An interpretive guide provides detailed information on using the ELDA. Trainings are efficient and thorough in explaining how to use the ELDA appropriately.

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### **What continues to be improved with the ELDA?**

#### **Length**

ELDA was developed to provide sufficient coverage of standards, valid measurement at each proficiency level, and adequate range in score points to measure student progress in learning English. However, initial feedback from the field testing of the ELDA indicates that the assessment may be considered long for students and time intensive for administrators. ELDA developers are now exploring what items might be eliminated while still ensuring comprehensive, credible results.

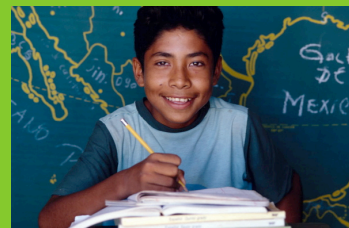
#### **Data**

The ELDA Student Reports currently provides scores at the domain level and Proficiency Level Descriptors that can be used by teachers to develop specialized English language instruction. Developers are now examining the potential for providing more detailed information possibly at the standard levels. Second-language

experts, measurements experts, and users of the scores will be involved in this process to ensure the score reports provide meaningful, helpful, valid and reliable subscores.

***“The ELDA is truly aligned to our standards. It effectively tests the skills that we want our students to master in learning English. We know that the ELDA tests what we are teaching.”***

Catherine Neff, Title III/ESOL  
Consultant,  
South Carolina State  
Department of Education



**JULIA LARA**  
COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE  
SCHOOL OFFICERS

ONE MASSACHUSETTS  
AVENUE NW, SUITE 700  
WASHINGTON, DC 20001

TEL: 202-336-7000  
FAX: 202-408-8072

[WWW.CCSSO.ORG](http://WWW.CCSSO.ORG)

Schools and districts of LEP SCASS member states have permission to use the ELDA and should contact their state education agency.

## Deliverables

As an assessment tool, the ELDA includes varied and comprehensive test items. The chart below outlines the item types, totals and estimated testing times for ELDA operational forms in each domain.



	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
<b>K-2</b>	Under development			
<b>Grades 3-5</b>	16 constructed response items 25 minutes	50 multiple choice items 60 minutes	50 multiple choice items 60 minutes	15 multiple choice items 3 short constructed response items 1 extended constructed response item 60 minutes
<b>Grades 6-8</b>	16 constructed response items 25 minutes	50 multiple choice items 60 minutes	50 multiple choice items 60 minutes	15 multiple choice items 3 short constructed response items 1 extended constructed response item 60 minutes
<b>Grades 9-12</b>	16 constructed response items 25 minutes	60 multiple choice items 75 minutes	60 multiple choice items 75 minutes	15 multiple choice items 3 short constructed response items 1 extended constructed response item 65 minutes

Estimated testing times include estimates for instructions.