

Assessments Friday Focus Webinar Series 2026-2027

Using AZELLA Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) - Meeting Transcript



Finn, Gabriela 0:45

I think that most people are in already, so we can go ahead and start. Hello and good afternoon, everyone. My name is Gabriela Finn and I am the Director of English Language Assessments here with the Arizona Department of Education. The assessment section of ADE has scheduled a series of webinars on Friday afternoon to assist and support the field with different topics for all statewide assessments. So, this afternoon it is a turn for AZELLA, and the topic today is understanding proficiency through domain performance. The actual title of the webinar, as you see it on our website, is Using AZELLA Performance Level Descriptors.

But, and to that effect, as you know, we have a new vendor for our test, and that is Cambium Assessment. And ELPA 21 is the test that we are utilizing this school year. And here with us to present today are Cathryn Still, who is the Executive Director of ELPA 21, and Kayci Reyer, who is the Assessment Design Project Manager. So, I would like to thank them very much for taking the time and preparing this webinar. I, before they introduce themselves and start the webinar, I would like to remind everyone that it's preferable to hold off on your questions until we get to the section of the webinar when questions will be answered. We will have plenty of time for that. Sometimes when there are multiple questions in the chat, people might get distracted. So, we want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to focus on what is being presented, and we appreciate your questions.

And Cat, Kaci, and ADE, if necessary, will be so glad to answer your questions. So, with that, I will give it to Cat. Thank you.



Still, Cathryn 3:22

Thanks so much for the warm welcome, Gabbie. We are delighted to be here with the Arizona Department of Education and the Assessments Unit to share more about ELPA 21, which is your new ELLP assessment.

So there we go. I'm Cathryn Still. I am the Executive Director of ELPA 21 and one of

ELPA 21's founders. And I thought we'd start off today just by letting you get to know us a little better so that you kind of have a deeper connection to what we're bringing to the table and how we hope to be a long-term part of your support for English learners and how glad we are to be working with you.

I have spent more than 30 years working in educational assessments, and my work is driven by a fundamental question. How can we make assessments more engaging for students and more powerful for educators? And this question harkens back to the first time I encountered standardized assessments, which was, you know, back when we all took them in high school.

I've been fascinated by them ever since, and I believe deeply that assessments should serve teaching and learning, not the other way around. Assessments should be fair, inclusive, and useful, give educators meaningful information that helps them understand and support their students. My work with ELPA 21 focuses on English learners and on ensuring that our assessment systems recognize the full range of students we serve, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. I'm passionate about bridging the gap between large-scale assessment and classroom instruction, helping to turn what we learn from assessments into practical resources, better informed decisions, and meaningful opportunities for every English learner.

And I'm thrilled to be here with you today, helping you learn more about our assessments, our scores, and the uses of those scores for instruction.

I'd like to invite Kayci to do a brief introduction.

RK **Reyer, Kayci** 5:16

Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you, Cat. Tough act to follow there. My name is Kayci Reyer. I am a project manager on ELPA 21's assessment design team. I am a second language acquisition specialist. I have my master's in ESL, as we call it here in Louisiana, curriculum and instruction, and this is my 10th year in education serving English language learners.

I entered the field because I believe multilingualism and multiculturalism is an asset and that every student has the right to an accessible and high-quality education. So, I'm coming to ELPA 21 off many years teaching secondary science and ELA to linguistically and culturally diverse students in the American South and Southeast Asia.

Most recently, I led the ESL program and served as an instructional coach at one of

Louisiana's largest high schools, where I was also, importantly, a test administrator and a de facto test coordinator for ELPA 21 assessments. So, our dynamic screener or the placement test, as well as ELPA 21's summative or reassessment test.

And that perspective heavily informs the work that I do now at ELPA 21, where I lead the development of resources and training materials that support educators, test administrators, and test coordinators. And I could not be any happier to continue to support my colleagues in this field and to be in community with you all today.

Looking forward to a great afternoon.

SC Still, Cathryn 6:38

Thank you so much, Kayci. So as Gabbie mentioned in the introduction, we'll have time for questions at the end. So please jot them down as you think of them, and we'll leave ample time for some discussion after we kind of lay the groundwork. But what I'm hoping you may find is that as we move through our slides and our presentation today,

Some of those questions you came with today will be answered. And we look forward to answering the ones that we don't cover during the Q&A section at the end. So, our presentation today is intended to help you understand how your new ELPA 21 AZELLA assessments define and report English language proficiency.

We'll focus on the four domains of language and how students' performance in those domains contributes to their proficiency. We'll do a deep dive into the information on the new individual student report and look at some sample student scores together. We can also discuss how domain level information on the score report provides a more complete picture of students' strengths and areas for growth. which is robust information that an overall score alone just can't provide. We'll highlight ways you can use this information to inform instructional planning and program decisions and to support collaborative conversations across your agencies about student progress. As I mentioned, we'll have some time for questions at the end. And if any of you were at the recent Pell meeting, you probably saw Kayci and I in person, and this presentation will be very similar. So hopefully hearing it a second time, if you are hearing it a second time, helps to spark thought and maybe generate some new questions, which we would love to hear.

So before we dive into the details, I want to share a little bit more about ELPA 21, again, to help you get to know us better. I know your previous vendor and your previous assessments were with you for a very long time, and we know we're the new

kid in town. So, we're excited to get to know you and let you get to know us. ELPA 21 stands for English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century. I know it's a mouthful, but it's a mouthful of meaning. We really believe that we are doing something new and different for English learners that traditional English language assessments did not quite achieve. Our focus is exclusively on English learners, measuring the development of English, and supporting educators who work with English learners.

We don't do content assessments. We don't do assessments of math, ELA, or science. We focus exclusively on English learners and English learner assessments. We provide states with a cohesive assessment and instructional system consisting of English language development standards, English language proficiency assessments, professional learning, and instructional support for classroom educators. Arizona standards, which you will keep using, are so incredibly similar to ELPA 21s. And in fact, the standards we use are the ones that form the foundation for Arizona standards. So, we already have a lot in common. We're based at UCLA.

And we have worked with some of the best student advocates, researchers, psychometricians, and educators in the country to create a turnkey system of assessments and instructional support. And states that have joined us recently have been excited to kind of open up the box and unpack what we bring and realize how approachable it is and how turnkey it is. And we're hoping that you'll have the same experience.

As I mentioned, we focus on language. Our assessments are designed to measure English students, the English that students use in content-related tasks, not the matter, the mastery of the underlying subject matter. So, in other words, we are measuring the language of math, but we are not measuring any math. A student does not need any math content to come in and access the assessment.

All they're doing is showing us that they have the grade level language that they need to participate in a math class, or that they have room to grow. So academic language, as we all know, becomes more complex as a student progresses through the school years, through their career, and through the subject matter that they encounter.

Our assessments focus really on that great appropriate language, as defined in your content standards, that students need to interpret information, communicate their reasoning, and collaborate around academic content. We believe that proficiency is about much more than conversational English. It's about students having the

academic language they need to access and participate in grade level learning and to set themselves up for college and career success.

Our work is student-centered. We believe English learners bring valuable linguistic, cultural, and educational assets to the school, to the classroom, and to the lives of everyone who encounters them. We believe every student can continue developing the language needed to participate successfully in grade-level instruction.

We believe assessments need to be fair, valid, and accessible for all students.

Students deserve assessments that they can access and engage with. And we think a lot about student engagement down to, you know, like all assessments, the subject matter we're presenting, but we are constantly looking for ways to elicit as much language as possible from our students and then to give them credit for everything that they're showing us on the assessment. We're definitely on their side with an open heart and not a red pencil. So, one of the things that helps us center on students is partnering with educators like you. No one knows our students better than you. We value educators, we value our state partners as essential collaborators in supporting English learners and supporting the states and the educators who serve them.

Assessment results give us important evidence about a student's English language development, but as you all know, that evidence is most meaningful when it's combined with the expertise of educators. Arizona educators know their students, their classrooms, and their communities in ways no assessment can capture.

We wouldn't try. We trust you, we value your judgment, and we couldn't do this without you. Your expertise, combined with our experience in English language proficiency assessment, helps educators make better informed decisions about language instruction, services, and support for students and Arizona obviously knows this. Since we began our partnership with Arizona, our team has been so impressed with how beautifully the Arizona Department of Education supports English learners and the educators who work with English learners. It's awe-inspiring to be in a room like the room we were in last week at the PEL Conference with so many professionals who work specifically with English learners.

So many state agency folks who have English learner in the title of their role who focus on English learners. This is actually quite rare. We work across the entire country and to see staffs and teams in the state agencies and in the districts that are so big that are dedicated to supporting English learners is really special.

There are so many brilliant and educated folks in your agency, and we're just, you

know, scratching the surface of getting to know Arizona educators, the Arizona Department of Education, and everything that comes together to support growth for English learners. And we're really excited.

This diagram is an overview of ELPA 21's assessments, scores, and instructional supports. Our cohesive system offers ELP and alternate ELP standards. And again, yours, you will continue and we will continue to use Arizona standards, just showing these standards here because they form

kind of our starting point for the entire assessment system. These standards reflect the language students need to succeed in school and be ready for college or careers or the workforce, whatever their interests and capabilities take them. We provide screeners to identify student's support in their English language development. These have been called placement tests in Arizona, so screeners that help us make decisions about program placement. We offer summative assessments, which you've called annual reassessment. These reliably measure students' language growth every year toward attaining grade level English.

We provide user-friendly and meaningful scores, and we're going to talk a lot about those today and show you some ways that you can use those scores to help guide your program placements and instruction. I know that's probably very much on everyone's mind as the school year is getting started. Our system also offers progress monitoring activities to help you see where students are growing and where they need more support relevant and turnkey professional learning, instructional strategies, and educator resources. And in fact, our professional learning is designed for your colleagues who are content area teachers. It's to help them get a better sense of how to support English learners in their content classrooms. So

There's a wide suite of resources that we're bringing to the table and that we'll share with you over time. And we're welcoming you into this cohesive system that we've built for educators just like you. So today, as I mentioned, we're going to focus on scores.

So now you have a better sense of who we are and how we work with English learners, how we work with educators. So, we're going to take a closer look, starting with how ELPA 21 defines proficiency. We're going to spend a good chunk of today's work on just the scores and how to use them, how to understand them in terms of student information and how to use them to help you plan instruction for the English learners in your districts and schools.

So with a new assessment comes some change, but I want to start with some

reassurance. The way you use the ELPA 21 AZELLA scores will be about the same as it was for your previous AZELLA. Our scores meet federal and state accountability requirements, so that hasn't changed. We help you fulfill ESSA requirements to track and promote student growth toward English language proficiency, and we support state peer review submissions. In fact, we do a whole turnkey package for state peer review. And we also provide the same type of data for state accountability reporting under Title 3 and local program evaluation. So those factors around the ELL assessment are exactly the same. We're still doing all the federally mandated and required kind of compliance things that an ELP assessment has to do. We're also still assessing the four domains of language. So, the real fundamentals of what we're all doing together haven't changed. Proficiency on ELPA 21 has the same meaning that it has always had. Proficient means that a student is demonstrating grade level language that they need to participate in instruction, engage in the classroom, and interact with school staff and peers.

The difference comes into the scores. So, we're going to take a closer look at those. As I mentioned on the previous slide, your new ELBA 21 AZELLA assessments measure the four domains of language. Those domains are critical to informing your instruction, and our assessments and scores give you powerful tools to do that. Our research and understanding of English language development has taught us that students develop language at an individual pace. Each student's journey is their own. Some develop oral skills more quickly. Some students may show intermediate reading or writing while speaking and listening is still emerging. There's every combination you can possibly think of you will see in an English learner classroom. So to truly understand what language a student has and where they need support in their development, we focus on considering the domain scores separately. That's really where the power behind our scores is. The domains interact as a student's language develops and grows. One domain growing tends to support growth in other domains. And you've all seen this from your work with English learners. This is not news that I'm sharing with you, but it's the philosophy that underlies how we score our assessment, how we report those scores to you, and how we recommend you use those scores. So, these domain scores are probably the most powerful tool that you have for understanding students and planning instructions. That's why we focus on them. We take the focus away a little bit from the overall proficiency rating. and we focus really on those domain scores. And we'll talk a little bit more about that right now. So, this is going to give us an opportunity to take a closer look at domain

scores using an individual student report. So, if you have given the AZELLA dynamic screener slash placement test, you have seen a student score report. They look like this.

This is where you'll find the most powerful information on the score report is right here in this box at the bottom that I've circled with green. These are your domain scores.

This slide is a zoomed in view of the box that I just highlighted on the last slide. So, let's take a closer look at our domain scores and performance level descriptors. You'll also hear these called performance descriptors, performance level descriptors, or PLDs, which is a pretty common term in assessments. Let's orient ourselves to the components of our domain scores, which will help make the rest of today's presentation make sense. We're going to go into detail on each of these.

In the leftmost column, we list the four domains of language. This is pretty standard for an ELLP assessment.

In the middle, we have our student domain scores. These are domain performance levels. They range from one to five, with one being where a student is just beginning to show their emerging language, 5 being an advanced student. In this column, you'll see these colored bubbles.

If you see an E instead, E means that the student was exempted from the domain. That's all that means.

We spell out the names of the performance levels up here at the top in this orange box. So, the performance levels are one through 5, beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. And those correspond with these Circles and numbers here.

These are the performance level descriptors I referred to earlier. These descriptors are derived from your ELP standards, and they explain the language use that a student demonstrated on the assessment. And they're pretty detailed. The domain PLDs are the best way to connect assessment data to instruction. So, when you're looking at what the student has achieved, you can then look up the next level to see how to get them from where they are to where they need to be to achieve proficiency on the assessment. And you're going to hear a lot more about this from my colleague Kayci later in the presentation.

There we go. Now let's look at those domain performance levels more closely. So, these are the numbers that were in the colored bubbles on the score report. The labels that you'll see on the score report are over here in the blue column. Again,

level one is beginning. Level 2 is early intermediate. Level 3 is intermediate. Level 4 is early advanced. And ELPA 21 reports a level 5, which we call advanced. That one doesn't correlate to a previous level of the AZELLA, but the other four do. So, we did a correlation from what we call level one to what AZELLA. Your earlier AZELLA called level one.

And the AZELLA level called pre-emergent or emergent correlates to our level that's called beginning and so on. So, this is a slide that can help your crosswalk some of your student scores. Like I think on your ELL 70 report, you have a roster of students and their performance either on last year's reassessment or this year's dynamic screener.

And this slide can help you make sense of those results.

And we'll be sharing out all these slides after this presentation, so you'll have this right at your fingertips.

Let's look at how these labels reflect a progression of language skills. So this table summarizes what each of the five domain performance levels mean across all four language domains. So on the score report, you saw a detailed performance level descriptor for that grade, that domain, and that performance level.

At a policy level, we describe the domain performance levels with the language that you see on this slide. So this shows a progression from beginning, which is level one on this top row, where a student has few English language skills and needs intensive support. That language is really just starting to develop and show up.

for that student. You'll see a progression through these descriptions. And students who get to level 4 and level 5 are using English at or above grade level expectations. So this is where level 4 in all domains, in all grades, is where we consider the student to be achieving grade level in that domain.

And that's level 4 that I just pointed out. So that's really your power level. When you go, when a student crosses from level 3 into level 4, they've achieved grade level in if it's reading, writing, listening, or speaking. And those are the students who, as they have all fours, will be eligible

for program exit, and we'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

Okay, there we go. So we focus again on domain scores because they give us the clearest picture of how a student is developing across listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Proficiency then comes from the full pattern across all four domains, which work together and should be understood as an independent picture of the student's language development.

Now that we understand domain scores, let's take a look at how these domain scores and their information help us understand whether a student is proficient.

So proficiency on the new AZELLA is defined just the way we have it here on the screen. Again, this is a policy level definition.

And this would show up at the top of a student score report.

So the way we view proficiency is different from your previous AZELLA assessments.

For ELBA 21, proficiency is not represented by a single cut score. And you'll learn from working with us that we don't put a lot of focus on the cut scores. We're happy to share them with you. We know that they convey additional information for you as you're looking at, you know, what's a student in a high level 3 versus a low level 3, Where do they need that support? But when we're looking at proficiency, we consider proficiency to be the set of single digit domain scores where each domain score has equal weight and none obscures another. So this is a key concept for understanding the way we score the assessments and the way we view proficiency.

The student is using grade level language when they've achieved proficient and they're doing so independently. This means that this student is achieving grade level language in all four domains, again, independently. So this is not a student who's A5 in reading and a three in speaking.

The student who's a three in speaking still needs some help to get up to that grade level demand in speaking. So we're looking for a student to have fours on all four domains to achieve the rating of proficient.

We know that English learners are diverse and unique individuals and that their language development is complex. We, as I mentioned, believe a student needs to attain grade level English in all four domains, and that proficiency can't be expressed by a single scale score or a decimal. So when you're thinking about whether a student is proficient or whether they're in one of these two other categories, you'll be looking at a list of their domain scores, not a sum, not an average, just a list. So that list might look like one, two, one, two. It might look like 4, 4, 4, 4. It might look like one, two, three, one. Really just depending on the student.

Based on those four single digit domain scores, the students do fall into one of these three categories. These categories are pretty big, which is why we continually encourage you to look beneath the category and look down at that big chunk of information at the bottom of the score report. That's really where the powerful information is. So your domain scores,

With the exception of students who are eligible for exit, your domain scores are really

where you're going to lean for your instruction. So let's take a look at these. These are the same proficiency categories I just mentioned on the previous slide. We use domain scores again to determine whether the student is proficient or which other level that they are in. So on the left, you see the four proficiency levels that we show on our score reports. Just a note before we dive into the details, across the bottom, the row in kind of a burgundy and red, this is only available on the screener. So this is a category you'll only see on the screener. And it is a student who was not able to engage with the assessment that day.

And so they're going to be considered eligible for ELL services.

Students who are emerging, that is a category that represents students whose language is just beginning to come in. Those are students who on their domain scores have all ones and twos. So all ones and twos on their domain scores, and that student is eligible for ELL services.

Students who are in the progressing category, this is a big category. It's kind of a mix of a variety of levels. There's usually, but not always a three, but they're going to be levels where at least one is above A2 and at least one is below a four.

So this student is eligible for ELL services. Your students who are proficient, as we mentioned on earlier slides, they have domain scores of all fours and fives. So they have achieved or surpassed grade level English in all four domains, or if they had a domain exemption, all the domains that they were tested in.

This student, if they're taking the screener, is not an English learner. If they're taking the summative reassessment, this student is a student that would be exited.

All right, so your big take away is to look for that list of domain scores like we show here and not a sum or an average. These are policy definitions for the proficiency category. So this is really how we describe the language that we see for the students that are in these categories. These categories are a useful summary.

but they're only a summary. They don't really paint a detailed picture of where the student is growing, where they're operating independently, or where they need some additional support. So that's again why we urge you to go back to those domain scores. Those domain scores help us look beyond a single cut score or an overall category.

to really tailor our instruction to the individual student and support their continued growth. That's really important because some students, two students in the same category might have very different profiles of performance. So when we looked at that progressing category on the previous slide, there are all kinds of combinations

of domain scores that will show up in the progressing category.

But if you really look beneath the surface at those individual domain levels and what they are, that's where you unlock that powerful information. So to give you more guidance about how to take that information that's on the score report and what we've shared with you today and apply it to your instruction, I'm going to hand the mic to Kayci.

RK

Reyer, Kayci 31:44

Thank you so much, Cat. I'm happy to follow the thread of how we kind of get under the hood, look at those domain level scores, and consider how they impact day-to-day instruction in our classrooms. So as we move into connecting domain scores to instruction, I want to emphasize again, Cat has mentioned it, but I really want to highlight it before we move on, that

A student's proficiency determination is one piece of a larger puzzle, and it does not tell the entire story. And I think we're ready for the next slide, Cat.

Thank you. So we have three major categories, as Cat's been explaining. We have emerging and we have progressing and we have proficient. And that one in the middle, progressing, it's pretty big and it can contain multitudes of domain score profiles that tell us a lot about individual students. We wouldn't otherwise know if we didn't take a closer look beyond the overall proficiency determination.

Two students can have the exact same proficiency determination and have very different strengths and very different needs across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. That's why it's useful to look at the individual domain scores. The proficiency determination tells us how a student is classified, kind of where they fall in the larger landscape of proficiency determination,

but the domain scores give us the detail about where the student is relatively strong and where their English language development continues to progress. What that means for us as educators is that that additional information can help us not only interpret results more accurately, but also make more targeted instructional decisions.

day-to-day and have more targeted planning opportunities with folks on our teaching teams or in our buildings about how we serve these students. So as we continue on in this section and look a little bit more closely at domain scores, just a reminder that the goal is not even to see the number for each domain, but rather the pattern that each number

for each domain makes up to tell the student's story about where they currently are in their English language proficiency development. And then what that pattern can tell us about their classroom instruction.

So in this first example, we have a student who has scored an emerging, excuse me, who has scored emerging on their proficiency determination. Take a second to look at the characteristics that are shown on the slide. So we have on the left hand side, the four domains, 4 performance level, excuse me, domain level scores. We have their emerging proficiency determination.

and some information about what that proficiency determination means.

In this example, you'll see that the student has a domain level 2 in listening, and then domain levels of 1 in reading, speaking, and writing, respectively.

Because of that score combination, all twos or ones or both, or one or the other, this student has landed in the emerging proficiency determination. On the ELBA 21 AZELLA, that proficiency determination indicates that the student has not yet attained a level of English skill that they need to be able to engage with grade level content related academic tasks in English.

on their own or with support. So students who receive that emerging proficiency determination are identified for ongoing program support.

And you'll note that as Cat has explained earlier, twos and ones together in some form or fashion result in an emerging proficiency determination. But how those twos and ones might show up can be super different student to student. This is part of where we begin to see the value of looking under the hood, so to speak, to see where a student might be a little scoring a little bit higher or still in need of more intensive support as we go on, even in that emerging category, because it does make a difference as we go to plan our instruction. And we see that reflected in our PLDs. So the performance level descriptors that are associated with a level one domain level one in reading are not the same as those that exist for a domain level 2 in reading. And as we also saw earlier, those performance level descriptors can be very specific. And that specific information is what we use to, we can help use it to determine instructional strategy as we go forward in our classrooms day-to-day for these students.

We're going to look at a couple of other examples that include other proficiency determinations. This one is progressing. It is the one that you may find yourselves thinking about the most often statistically, because it's a huge category that's going to contain a lot of students for you that fall across a variety of domain level scores in

their

domain level patterns that you're going to see. So in this example, the student has a level 4 in listening, a level 3 in reading, a level 4 in speaking, and a level 3 in writing. There are a lot of different combinations of domain scores that can result in that progressing determination. A student is classified as progressing if they have one or more domain scores above a level 2, but they don't yet meet the requirements for a proficient determination, which would be having all fours or fives. That's one way to think of it.

Another way to think of what makes a progressing proficiency determination is a student whose highest domain score is at least a level 3 and their lowest domain score is at most a level 3. And a third simpler way to think about it is a student is progressing when they have neither all ones or twos.

nor all fours and fives. Anything other than those equals progressing. So as you can imagine, it's a pretty big category that contains a lot of diversity in domain level scores. But no matter how a student gets there, what a progressing proficiency determination means on the ELPA 21 AZELLA is that

students are able to approach the level of English language skills that they need to engage with grade level content related academic tasks in English with ongoing support. So their language is no longer emerging. They're establishing some of these independent skills, but they do are still in need of ongoing support to be able to access

that academic language or that grade level content that their peers are using in an academic context. So like students in the emerging category, students who receive a progressing determination are also identified for ongoing program support. And finally, we're going to take a look at a student who has been determined proficient. This student has fours and fives across the board. So fours in listening, reading, and writing, and a five in speaking. This equates to a proficiency determination of proficient. It's kind of a mouthful there, because the student has fours or fives in all domains. That's the key distinction in this profile versus the one we just saw.

The other student also had fours, but they were accompanied by threes. So that put them in the progressing determination. This student is fours and higher, 5, which is the highest we go, but fours and higher. So their proficiency determination is that of proficient. At this level, the student has been able to demonstrate that they have the English language skills that they need

to work independently with grade level academic tasks in English. That doesn't mean

that the teacher can just say, you're good, congratulations, you did it, see you at graduation. Of course, like any student in our classrooms, they will continue to need support in ways that are specific and unique to them, but their English language ability has been demonstrated to be sufficient for them to independently interact with what's put in front of them in grade level and academic context. Once a student receives A proficient determination on ELPA 21 AZELLA, they are reclassified. They're no longer considered an English learner. They have met the criteria that they needed to be reclassified from this program. So across these three examples, we've seen how the individual domain scores come together to make up proficiency determinations and how they can be really different and very specific to each student.

So why this domain level information matters for instruction, we've talked about a little bit, but because of its huge impact, we're going to talk about it some more. And I hope that we continue to talk about it as we continue to be in community with you all to implement our suite of assessments, as you have questions about the things we provide.

because instruction is so rich. There are so many opportunities to bring in data and observation and the soft skills and the science and all of these things as we try to figure out how to help students acquire the language that they need to be successful, not only in our classrooms, but in their personal dreams and desires and in their lives as our neighbors.

And so we really look forward to continuing talking about the value, not just of assessing a student, but using that assessment information and informing their instruction. So the examples that we've looked at over the last three slides show that there are many paths to the same proficiency determination. As I've mentioned, this is super important with the progressing category because there are so many different combinations of domain levels that can result in the same overall determination. Two students might both be progressing, but what they are currently demonstrating and listening, speaking, reading, and writing can look really different. For a teacher, knowing those individual domain levels provides so much more actionable information than just knowing if a student is emerging or progressing.

or even proficient. The differentiation that we need in our classroom exists in the details of those domain scores. So knowing a student's specific domain level for each domain helps inform the kind of language supports and tasks and opportunities that

we provide them. It gives us a more specific way to think about the student's language development over time, what growth looks like, how we set targets, how we get that productive struggle.

that we're always looking for in our classrooms. Domain information can also support planning. I touched on this earlier. I don't know if Arizona uses PLC language or if you have a different acronym, but I know we all do it. We're planning with the people on our teams or in our hallways or in our grade bands. When you have very specific information about

different skills a student has currently demonstrated mastery of or ability to do, you can have much more focused and targeted conversations with your planning team, your co-teachers, about how you support that student's growth. So instead of simply saying, well, the student is progressing, you can have a lot more of a focused conversation about what the student has actually demonstrated in each domain.

and how that can inform instruction as we want to move them to the next level and support their growth. And then finally, when we look beyond individual students and we look at patterns across all students in our grade or our roster or our building or even our district, you can begin to see domain patterns that may help schools and districts identify broader trends.

which could also inform professional learning opportunities or resource allocation or decisions about programming. It's really big for individual student instruction, but it's also really impactful on how we move forward as a system that supports all of its learners, including English learners. So the main take away is that the proficiency determination is useful.

But for instructional planning and school level planning, drilling down to the domain level gives us a much richer picture to work with.

And here, I just want to absolutely hammer this home. You may be thinking, I got it, I know, but when you start getting score reports in at a higher volume, it can feel a little overwhelming. So we do want to take just a little more time and talk more about how the progressing category, this kind of giant progressing category can contain richer information

when you look at a closer level. So this comparison are two hypothetical students.

We're taking a look at two students who have both been determined or both been given the proficiency determination of progressing. The student on the left has threes in listening and reading, a two in speaking and a one in writing.

The student on the right has a four in listening, a three in reading, and twos in

speaking and writing, respectively. Those are two very different domain level patterns. However, those two students have the same general proficiency determination of progressing. If we had, if we were all teaching together, all 100 and 60 something of us. Wouldn't that be a dream, first of all? But if we all were sitting down to plan about these students and all we knew is that they were both progressing, we may take similar approaches to the instruction of each student. We might say, well, they're not brand new and they haven't nailed it yet. So they got to be somewhere in the middle. Let's just try some scaffolding or some strategies and see what sticks.

And most of us have probably been there before when you're working with a student where you might not have data yet or you're trying to figure it out or you're new to the classroom. And there's plenty of value in the try something till it works, because I know that realistically speaking, we've all been there. But what we hope to do in providing the specific information is help you avoid situations like that where you do do have more actionable information at your fingertips, and you do have something to, a place to start when you're determining how best to support a student who has entered your classroom. So instead of saying these two students are both progressing, let's take a similar approach, you can look a little bit more closely and create more of an individualized approach for each student based on what they've demonstrated

their ability to do and what areas they've demonstrated that they need some additional support with. So the first thing that you might do is reference those performance level descriptors. So we touched on these earlier. They're associated with each domain score. As Cat mentioned, the PLDs for a domain level will describe in

pretty solid detail what skills the student has demonstrated on the assessment. And then the PLDs for the next level up in each domain will describe what the student can work on next to grow their skills in that domain. And the PLDs are domain and grade band specific. So if you have a student in 3rd grade, they are not working on the same skills at a level 2 in speaking necessarily as a student.

in the 11th grade. These performance level descriptors are really drilled down to be applicable to the student where they are right now, and then as they progress through their academic journey. You could also apply the domain level information in kind of a holistic way, determining if you don't, I hope you do get in the weeds with the PLDs, they're so useful, but

Even if you don't or you kind of start at a more bird's eye view, you could just look and say, where do they have strengths and how can we leverage those strengths to support the areas that might still be developing? So for the first student, we might look at that and say, writing is going to need some really intensive scaffolding. We might want to provide additional modeling or shared or guided writing.

visual supports, more opportunities to rehearse their ideas aloud before asking a student to write independently. For the second student, they may benefit from less intensive writing scaffolding, but we may be thinking more about ways to leverage their receptive language skills in listening and reading to build on their skills in speaking and writing. So we might do discussion before writing and sentence frames, are models that help the student move from understanding language to producing it in a more independent way. So you all probably have a lot of tools in your toolkits where you could see a student's score in these two hypothetical students. And you may think right away, well, I see, I know something that I already do in my classroom that's great for a kid who's really, really struggling with writing.

but demonstrating like a lot more independence in listening and reading. We hope that this kind of information will help you know exactly what pouch in your toolkit you're reaching into when you're trying to pull something out that your students might need. But I do really want to emphasize that the scores you see here aren't meant to prescribe any specific instructional strategies on their own.

They are just one source of information. They're a snapshot in time. And we want you to use this one data point with what you already know about the student, what you observe about them in the classroom, what your professional experience has told you, what you know from your education and your time in the classroom. We hope that all of these things can come together

in harmony, because that's what makes teaching an art and a science. We can't just hand you a score and say, this tells you everything you need to know about your student, because that wouldn't even come close to cutting it. You guys are the experts on your students. You're the experts in your field, and we hope that we can provide something that is a tool for you to use as you continue to serve the students well as

as you always do. We hope to be your partner in that. So to wrap it up, the important part is that progressing here or any proficiency determination doesn't describe a type of learner. Looking at the domain profile helps us understand on a more individual level what our students need in our classrooms as we make instructional

decisions.

So with that, I'm going to turn it back over to Cat to talk about ELPA21 AZELLA Resources and support.

 **Still, Cathryn** 49:06

Thank you, Kayci. So, and we're going to move to questions very soon, as in now. This slide is here for your future reference. These are places to go get help. If you need help in the future, you always, of course, can turn to your assessments team at the Arizona Department of Education. There's also your state portal with Cambium, so your Arizona Cambium ELPA 21 portal. There is a rich set of resources in there for you. You can also access practice tests and training materials through that portal when they're available. If you have technical questions ranging from what kind of headphones do I need to how to log in to.

It seems like, you know, something's wrong with our audio. Go to the HelpDesk, the Arizona HelpDesk at : <https://az.portal.cambiumast.com/contact.html>. They are dedicated HelpDesk for Arizona. And so they keep Arizona hours and they have a binder full of Arizona specific information. So that's a great place to start for anything related to Cambium systems.

any kind of technical questions like that. And then of course, for state policy and administration questions, go to the experts, AZELLA at azed.gov.

So with that, we are happy to spend some time answering any questions that you have. So I'm going to turn it back over to our meeting facilitators to bring us questions.

 **Finn, Gabriela** 50:36

Before Candis reads the questions to the presenters, I just wanted to clarify that Candis reminded me that participants cannot unmute themselves during the Friday Focus webinars. So rather go ahead and put your questions in the chat now. And we will be happy to respond to those. Go ahead, Candis. Thank you.

 **Middlebrook, Candis** 51:06

Thank you, Gabbie. We have a question about if a student is new to Arizona and has an ELPA 21 score from another state, do we have to test the student?

 **Still, Cathryn** 51:16

That's a great question. I would defer to Gabbie on that since that's really a state policy question.



Finn, Gabriela 51:23

Correct. So, the policy has not changed. We do not have access to the student data files from other states. And so, yes, you need to administer a screener to the student. If you happen to, if you receive a student from an ELPA 21 state, and by the way, part of the question is, they are curious to know which are the other states that are part of the consortium. Then, and if you have a copy of



Still, Cathryn 51:55

Mhm.



Finn, Gabriela 52:02

the individual student report, you are welcome to communicate with us and let us know which test the student was administered before in the previous state. And we will provide guidance because maybe it is not the dynamic screener that the student needs to take. Maybe they should take the group 8 test. So, in short, yes, you need to test the student, but if you have information on that, go ahead and get in touch with us. But Cat can respond to the part of the question about the other states.



Still, Cathryn 52:41

Yes, I'm happy too. So, we are proud to be providing assessments in 11 states. Those states are Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and West Virginia. So, kind of all across the country. Open 21 is the assessment system of choice.



Middlebrook, Candis 53:08

Thank you. Next question. And this was a rather long one, but I want to read the whole thing so that you get the full question. The former AZELLA reassessment was paper and pencil for K1 and allowed test administrators to administer all of the domains except speaking as a whole class or small groups. The new summit of ELPA 21 is online and based on the group 8 version. It seems that most or all of the domains would need to be administered one-on-one.

What does K-1 administration look like in other states and what recommendations do you have?

SC Still, Cathryn 53:37

This is the exact same question we got during the Pell session, and we haven't gotten those Q&As wrapped up yet, so I'm glad you asked it again here. I'm going to speak to the test itself and then again ask Gabbie to speak to the administration requirements. So, the kindergarten and 1st grade tests for ELPA 21 AZELLA are entirely online.

They use technology appropriate grade appropriate skills for kiddos in kindergarten and 1st grade. So, we're not asking them to type, you know, a lot of words on the keyboard. We might be asking them to find one letter on the keyboard, but mostly we give them a palette of letters to drag and drop into a word like a CVC combination. So, we're not asking them to.

type. Typing's not really in state standards until grade 2. So, we certainly are not asking kindergarteners to do that. As far as the administration of the domains, Gabbie, do you want to speak to...

the administration kind of requirements of how many domains you can give in a day.

Oh, and I'm sorry, one more thing. The group 8 assessment is essentially the placement test, which has mixed domains. The reassessment or summative test has each domain as a separate subtest that you start and stop.

separately. So that may be information that helps you with that question. And then Gabbie can speak to your ratios for test administrators to students and the number of sections you can give per day.

 **Finn, Gabriela** 55:10

Thank you, Cat and Alex. That's a really good question. And we have talked about that during a zoology as well. This, was it this week? Yes, it's a long week. But it was this week. So yes, the importance of

providing plenty of opportunities for students to practice with a practice test is, you know, is really big. So you need to provide those opportunities starting now and as they approach to the reassessment summative test.

But when it comes to kindergarten and grade one, the speaking portion of the test or meaning the speaking subtest, because as Cat mentioned, there will be a listening subtest, a reading subtest, a writing subtest, and a speaking subtest.

So, for the speaking subtest for kindergarten and grade one, that will be administered one-on-one, and that might not be what other states are doing, but that is part of our policy, and that is not a change because that's what you have been doing already. So, group administration for the other three sub tests and sufficient, you know, staff, meaning proctors in addition to the test administrator, depending on the group, especially for these young students.

Thank you.



Middlebrook, Candis 56:58

Okay, and I just want to mention that we will be providing the recording and the presentation slides on our website. We do have a couple of questions about that. And yes, we will have those available to you on our website early next week. Next question, do you foresee ELPA 21 ever giving us standard level data to be able to use formatively?



Still, Cathryn 57:19

We give you that data kind of cooked into the performance level descriptors, but because we design our assessment to be really compact, some of our items measure multiple standards at the same time. So, a weighted, so the short answer is not currently, but the long answer is because that's a feature of the way the test is designed, not a bug. So, the way we give students as much credit as possible for language is that we measure the language that they're receiving, as well as the language that they're producing, sometimes in the same test question. So, if a student is reading a... a passage and then they're speaking their response. We're measuring both their reading and their speaking as part of that item. So, giving you information then on all 10 standards for that item wouldn't really be instructionally useful. So that's why we're not currently reporting like that. We do have some tools for you to monitor progress and look at more of a kind of formative assessment moment in your classroom. Kayci, could you speak a little bit to what those resources are?



Reyer, Kayci 58:28

Yeah, absolutely. So, we have a new kind of edition of those come out annually that helps provide resources that are kind of one-off. You don't need to do a whole ton of

work to be able to bake or embed them into your lessons. We want them to be low lift and high impact in terms of the information you can get out of those.

They can be used as bell ringers. They can be embedded in your lesson planning.

They can be sort of a brain break, a little bit of a shift as you're between other content that you may be working on or part of an ELD specific class. And they are designed to...

be similar to the types of tasks that a student might see on the summative or on the reassessment but also provide kind of a wider variety of inputs and outputs that allow any teacher or content specialist to do a quick check-in on discrete skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

 **Still, Cathryn** 59:26

Thank you.

 **Middlebrook, Candis** 59:30

Thank you. We have a question about what devices are required for ELPA 21, which devices will be necessary for the summative test. LEAs need to know what they will need to be purchasing.

 **Still, Cathryn** 59:42

Gabbie, I don't know that they need to purchase anything new as long as they have a headset with a mic and a minimum screen size. Do you want to speak to that?

 **Finn, Gabriela** 59:50

Mhm.

Sure. So, the same devices that you were using for the previous version of the AZELLA are sufficient, including for those districts and schools that serve students in kindergarten and grade one.

There will be possibly a need for external speakers and an external microphone for that individual administration of the speaking. But other than that, the regular headphones for the listening, reading, and writing,

domains or subtests. And then for the speaking for grades 2 and up, students will need a headset with a unidirectional microphone, just like all the equipment that you had before.

 **Still, Cathryn** 1:00:51

And there's a specific training inside the Arizona ELPA 21 portal for technology coordinators that goes into a great deal of detail about browser updates and hardware requirements, but everything you've been doing, as Gabbie said, should be sufficient.

 **Middlebrook, Candis** 1:01:09

Thank you. Next question. When we group students for targeted ELL instruction, how do we see the previous proficiency levels with new ones? For example, can we group a student with basic or intermediate overall proficiency level in spring reassessment last year and a new student with progressing overall proficiency level this year together?

 **Finn, Gabriela** 1:01:33

for the administration of the test.
or for instruction. I'm sorry, I must have missed something.

 **Middlebrook, Candis** 1:01:43

So the question does say grouping students for targeted ELL instruction.

 **Finn, Gabriela** 1:01:46

Oh, targeted. Yes. Well, I will, I will defer too, that would be a good question for OELAS. And, but I think that with the information that you have been receiving from ELPA 21, you would have a very good picture.
of what the student needs.
And we have established a very general comparison between the two, the previous version and this version.

 **Middlebrook, Candis** 1:02:23

Thank you, Gabbie. And I see that Denella has also entered into the chat that you can reach out to OELAS at OELAS at azed.gov.

 **Finn, Gabriela** 1:02:30

Great. Thank you, Denella.



Middlebrook, Candis 1:02:34

And next question, if a student scores a three in listening, is there any information in Cambium to see what the student did well in and did not do well in in listening? All we all see regarding information for the four domains are the scale scores and performance with colors and percentages.



Still, Cathryn 1:02:50

So I would recommend when you see a student that you're trying to get from a level 3 to a four in listening or any of the other domains, to go back to the standards. Focus on the standards that measure listening and receptive language and see what skill differences are between level 3 and level 4 in those standards. Does a little formative assessment to kind of check in and see where the student is. Kayci, do you have anything you want to add to that advice?



Reyer, Kayci 1:03:18

Yep, taking a look at the standards and also at those performance level descriptors, they inform, the standards obviously inform those performance level descriptors, but you may find some additional or more specific detail that you're looking for and what might get a student from a three to a four. My interpretation of this question is that it's very similar to the question about standard level information and whether or not, you know, we have access to that as Cat explained.

We don't, and it's on purpose. It's because of the way we design our assessment. And so particularly if you're used to working with content assessments where you kind of get a breakdown of how they did on the standard and that standard, this does take a little bit of a different approach, but it's due to the way that we design our assessment. So it's not necessarily something that you're going to see in the Cambium.

system, like a breakdown of standard level performance, but taken in alongside your classroom instruction and your classroom observation and your formative assessments, looking at those performance level descriptors as well as the standards should give you kind of a guiding light on how you can begin to move a student to that next domain level in whatever domain it may be.



Still, Cathryn 1:04:24

Yeah, and I think a nice way to look at it holistically is that as the student progresses from level one in a domain to level 4 or five in a domain, you're removing scaffolds gradually and you're seeing more independence in the student's use of language. And those are described in great detail in the Arizona standards. I think the Arizona ELP standards do a really beautiful job of distinguishing between what the different performance levels look like for each of those 10 standards.



Finn, Gabriela 1:04:58

Okay, I would like to quickly address some of the questions regarding technology for the little ones, but we will have a FAQ document also available on the website. So, of course, a touch screen is acceptable for KN1 and probably



Still, Cathryn 1:05:04

Mhm.



Finn, Gabriela 1:05:23

probably easier to utilize by these young students, but MICE are also acceptable and that should be an option. That's why the practice is so important. And just keep in mind that for these younger students, many of the items

Students just need to click on their selected answer and it doesn't have to be with great precision because, right? So, or they will also need to, if you look at the practice test, they will also need to learn how to



Still, Cathryn 1:05:55

It.



Finn, Gabriela 1:06:07

drag and drop if they don't know how to do that. So, you know, I think the key is providing sufficient practice for the students. And Alex, your question, how are they going to be able to use a trackpad? I think that those students would need an external

mouse would be easier for them. So that's something a little bit that you need to determine with your own students what works best.



Still, Cathryn 1:06:40

Yep.

Yeah, and I would add, just to emphasize what Gabbie said about the practice test opportunities. That's so critical for all students, but it's also, I think, critical for everyone who works with the assessment. Go take a practice test and you'll see exactly what we're asking students to do so that you can best support them, whether it's building a practice test into a lesson plan or taking everyone to the computer lab for an afternoon,

It gives you rich information about what the student will experience on the test. The practice test is not a full-length test. It is a training opportunity for students to know what they're going to encounter. It's an opportunity for them to hear the test directions translated if they need it. So, you can use translations during the practice test.

Translations are available both in written form and audio form. And you're giving that student the leg up when they come to test day, they feel prepared, they feel empowered, they feel like they've seen it before. And then they are able to kind of navigate their own test experience, which is really empowering. And then of course, we want you to have plenty of support in the room with the students when they're taking the test in case they do have any struggles with you.

technology or just major scaffolding. Yeah. But get in there and take a practice test. Yeah.



Finn, Gabriela 1:07:51

Absolutely.

Yes, and I just...

Oh, sorry, Cat. I just wanted to remind everyone that those directions in a language other than English are available only for the practice test, not for the operational test. So, it would be a very nice and gradual transition for the student to at first



Still, Cathryn 1:07:58

Go ahead.



Finn, Gabriela 1:08:19

do the practice test with directions in a different language, and then transition into directions in English when they feel more comfortable. But those will not be available for the operational test.

Um... Well, Lisa, we can answer that question in...

Okay, understood. Alex, we can, you can send us an e-mail and we can talk about that. I think we already went over for about 10 minutes, but I did want to to thank both Cat and Kayci for their time today, their expertise and their knowledge, and for providing all of us with such valuable information. I am sure that some of these things you've heard before, Cat and, or rather, Kayci, has been attending our AZELLA sessions. So, we hope that she can continue to be there and she will be able to answer your questions there as well. I want to thank all the participants for spending their Friday afternoon with us and hope that, you know, you visit, download the slides and you visit the, or view rather, the recording or share it with your teachers. and with whoever is interested in these topics. Thank you very much and have a fantastic weekend, everyone.

SC **Still, Cathryn** 1:10:21
Thanks, everyone.

RK **Reyer, Kayci** 1:10:23
Thank you.