

Administering the ELPA Screener with Physical Distancing

Guidance for Standard and Unique Screening

Districts must observe appropriate physical distancing while screening students for possible change in English learner status. Since every English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) Screener begins with a one-to-one Test Administrator (TA) and student component, ODE makes the following recommendations. The following serves as a supplement to (not a replacement of) health protocol guidance already present in ODE's [Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance \(Sections 1-3\)](#). Guidance found in Ready Schools, Safe Learners is not reproduced here; TAs should review the relevant sections of Ready Schools, Safe Learners and be familiar with the related health and safety protocols put in place at their schools.

The requirements and recommendations below apply to all administrations of the ELPA Screener with physical distancing, including both standard and [unique screening](#). (Note also that the US Department of Education has confirmed that English learner identification timelines for 2020-21 remain the same as in previous years: 30 days from the beginning of the school year, 14 calendar days once the school year has begun.)

Practice Step 1

The purpose of this step is to determine student facility with technology, identify possible need for technology assistance, and evaluate student participation. All of these observations should be possible while maintaining appropriate physical distancing.

Note: At the end of Step 1, the TA is required to indicate whether and to what degree a student is participating in the Screener. This is the TA's responsibility, not the student's, and will require the TA to momentarily operate the student computer. If the TA mistakenly ends the Screener for a student who is in fact participating, there is no need to create a new Temporary ID. The district should submit a test impropriety and request that the Screener be reopened.

Students who need technology assistance

If a student needs direct assistance from the TA throughout screening, the district will need to plan for a longer testing session than normal, depending on student need. Some students may only need help with a few tasks, while others may need the TA to make all answer selections on their behalf. Solutions in this situation will likely need to be tailored to the individual student. Refer to suggestions outlined under General Recommendations below.

The concept of “needing technology assistance” should be evaluated with care. A physically distanced environment may impact the feasibility or effectiveness of technology-related TA prompts or suggestions. One-to-one assistance may be appropriate for more students (or different students) than without physical distancing. This decision should be made based on what is most likely to enable the student to fully demonstrate what they know and can do in English on the Screener.

Step 2—“On the fly” Speaking scoring

Step 2 of the Screener begins with a set of Speaking items that must be scored on site, in real time (“on the fly”) by the TA. This requires the TA and student to exchange places, as the TA will enter the Speaking score on the student’s computer. In a physically distanced environment, the TA should be able to hear students who speak loudly and clearly; for softly-spoken students, the TA may need to “click back” to the items in question and listen to the recorded response (just as they would in a normal environment if they needed to hear the student speech sample multiple times).

Headsets and microphones

The purpose of a headset is to preserve test security and minimize possible testing disruptions for other students. If these concerns are sufficiently addressed in the testing environment (for example, testing in a separate setting), the student may test using speakers or other appropriate audio devices.

Step 3

There are no TA scoring responsibilities during Step 3 of the Screener. Physical distancing adaptations will only be needed for students who require one-to-one technology assistance from the TA.

General Recommendations

Under normal circumstances, screening procedures require TAs and students to handle the same equipment (keyboard, mouse, laptop, tablet, etc.). In addition, students who need one-to-one technology assistance would normally need to work in close proximity with the TA throughout screening.

The optimal solution for these challenges in a given district or school will vary depending on available resources and the nature of assistance required by students. Some guidelines and recommendations are listed below to help districts think through the best path for their local situation.

It is best practice for both district personnel and students to wear face coverings or face shields while sharing the same space (adhering to the most current statewide health and safety requirements if they are more stringent than this recommendation). If district personnel are to use health and safety equipment, including but not limited to disposable gloves and face masks, best practice would indicate they be trained in appropriate use of such equipment (see Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance, p. 17).

In some districts, it may be useful to create a “staging area” where Practice Step 1 and the Speaking items in Step 2 of the Screener are administered. Students ready to proceed independently (and thus no longer needing one-to-one TA assistance) could subsequently relocate to a supervised independent work area.

Districts should also consider health and safety measures for non-testing visitors, such as family members or accompanying guardians who may need to wait on district premises while the student is testing. Waiting areas will need to be disinfected and sanitized according to the requirements in Section 2j in ODE’s Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance (p. 25).

Requirements

- Students should wash their hands before and after using equipment (or sanitize if washing is not possible).
- Headsets and microphones should always be cleaned between uses. This is even more important in a COVID-impacted environment.
- If multiple students are to test on the same equipment, contact surfaces (keyboard, mouse, touch screens) should be cleaned between test sessions. The same is true for other contact surfaces in the testing area (chairs, tables, door handles, etc.).

Options for equipment handling and one-to-one technology assistance

- Attach multiple devices to the same computer (keyboard, mouse, etc.), or “rotate” devices during the testing session (such as swapping out one keyboard or mouse for another). TA uses one set, student uses the other.
 - It may be useful to clearly label or color code devices to indicate which are reserved for TA use and which for student use.
- Erect a clear plastic barrier between the student and TA.
 - When used in tandem with “multiple devices” above, equipment handled by TA would be on one side of the barrier, equipment handled by student on the other.
- Use device barriers such as keyboard or mouse covers.
 - Disposable barriers must be replaced between test sessions.
 - Reusable barriers must be cleaned between uses.
- TA wears gloves while operating student testing equipment.
 - If the TA is testing one student at a time, the TA should change gloves between test sessions. If the TA is testing multiple students simultaneously, they should use a different set of gloves to handle each set of equipment.
 - If the test is to be taken on a device with a touch screen, the district should verify beforehand if gloves to be used by the TA still permit conductivity sufficient to operate the screen. If touching a bare screen cannot be avoided, the TA should wash or sanitize their hands before and after operating the screen.

- Project the test on a screen, wall, or markable surface for students to indicate their answer choices.
- Lay a transparent, writeable and erasable surface over the screen so that students can mark their preferred answer.
 - Any objects handled by students, such as markers, must be cleaned before and after testing.
- Adaptive use of other existing designated supports or universal tools, such as Scratch Paper.