

Early Proficient Policy and Resources

Last update: 11/21/25

Overview: ELPA Summative Results and EL Status Decisions

There are four proficiency determinations on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) Summative: Emerging, Progressing, Early Proficient, and Proficient. These determinations are used to make decisions about the testing student's English learner (EL) status.

- Emerging and Progressing: the student remains in EL status.
- Early Proficient (first available on the 2025-26 ELPA Summative): the student's parent, guardian, or the adult student themselves decides whether the student remains in or exits EL status.
- Proficient: the student exits EL status.

This guidance document must be reviewed *at a minimum* by district personnel including the District Testing Coordinator and the Title III Coordinator or equivalent (e.g. Multilingual Services Coordinator).

Definitions

This guidance document uses two shorthand terms, with the following assumed definitions.

- **Family:** the parent or guardian making decisions on behalf of a student, or the adult student themselves.
- **Family contact or contact:** a real-time, direct engagement conducted in a language the family can understand. Examples include telephone, video call, face-to-face meeting, or similar.

Early Proficient Scoring Category

Purpose and Overview

Early Proficient is a scoring category first available on 2025-26 ELPA Summative. The Early Proficient scoring category increases family input in decisions regarding a student's EL status and addresses the existence of measurement error in ELPA testing. It provides additional tools to ensure that students continue to receive English language development services as long as needed, while also having the opportunity to exit when the time is right.

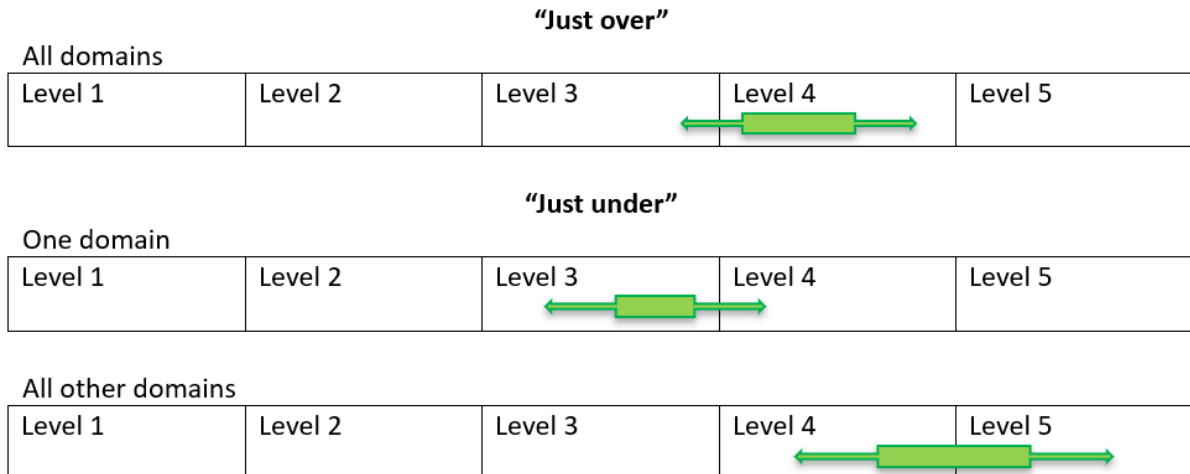
As with the current Proficient result, students scoring Early Proficient are eligible to exit EL status. Unlike a Proficient result, however, the student's family makes the final decision about the student's EL status.

An ELPA Summative score falls in the Early Proficient range if one of the following is true:

- A. The student scored 4 on all non-exempt domains *and* the student's conditional standard error of measure for each of those domains extends below the level 4 cut point, OR

- B. The student scored 3 on exactly one non-exempt domain and a 4 or higher in all other tested domains, *and* the student's conditional standard error of measure for the domain that scored a 3 extends above the level 4 cut point.

In plain language, Early Proficient scores are either "just over" or "just under" the Proficient threshold. The following illustration visually approximates profiles that qualify for Early Proficient.



Each student has a unique conditional standard error of measure. Therefore, it is not possible to publish tables listing Early Proficient score ranges.

Requirements

For all students scoring Early Proficient on the ELPA Summative, the district must inform the family of the student's test result and offer them a decision about the student's EL status. This includes making a good faith effort (meaning, making multiple attempts through multiple methods) to:

- A. Contact the student's family (per the definitions of "contact" and "family" above), *and*
- B. Provide the family with ODE-produced Early Proficient Family Flyer and the ODE-developed Early Proficient Family Decision Form.

The ODE-produced Early Proficient Family Flyer and Early Proficient Family Decision Form should be provided and discussed during the family contact if possible, independently if not (e.g. if real-time contact is not possible or feasible, these materials could be provided asynchronously through mail, email, or other means of communication such as a district parent and student interface).

The family then chooses one of the following:

1. The student will exit EL status.
 - a. Just as with any other student who exits via a Proficient result, the student will no longer receive English language development services and will no longer test yearly on ELPA.

2. The student will remain in EL status.
 - a. Just as with any other student who has EL status, the student will continue to receive English language development services and test yearly on ELPA.

Details

Once contact is established, the ensuing conversation must equip the family to make an informed decision by providing information on the meaning of the Early Proficient ELPA score and the results of the family decision point. Part of this requirement involves providing both the ODE-produced Early Proficient Family Flyer and the Early Proficient Family Decision Form.

Only a family decision indicated on the Early Proficient Family Decision form will exit a student from EL status. If the family does not indicate a clear decision via this form, the student remains in EL status. The district may impose a reasonable deadline for submission of the Family Decision Form. The reasonable deadline must include sufficient time to schedule a live or in-person meeting for families who wish such an engagement. For students who test later in the test window, providing families with a reasonable deadline may require the district to update EL status in the fall EL data collection.

The family indicates their choice by fully completing a single ODE-created Early Proficient Family Decision Form and returning that form to the district. Districts will honor family decisions as recorded in the submitted form, even if contact was not established. A district may, but is not required to, accept a replacement form at any time prior to enacting the family's EL status decision via a submission to the EL data collection. For example, a replacement form may be appropriate if the family indicates they made a mistake or did not understand the form.

It is permissible to translate the Family Decision Form or reproduce it in other formats (for example, an online version that can be filled out remotely). If a school or district chooses to reproduce the form, they must use the exact wording of the original (the same words in the same order), with the following exceptions.

- It is permissible to pre-fill the student name and return-by date on behalf of the family.
- It is permissible to make minor changes to the layout to adapt the form to the new format (e.g. break lines in different places, change font size).

It is also permissible to translate the Early Proficient Family Flyer or reproduce it in other formats. As with the Family Decision Form, the exact wording of the original must be preserved. It is permissible to supply additional neutrally-phrased information along with the Flyer. The Form and Flyer may be made available at the same time or different times, as

The Family Decision Form should only be made available to families with students who score Early Proficient. As mentioned above, provision of the Form and Flyer should be part of a larger process that involves meaningful contact and conversation with the family. ODE-created Early Proficient materials are designed to support, not replace, this meaningful contact and conversation.

Districts must sign the Family Decision Form to document receipt and must retain it in the student's permanent record. Districts report EL status through the EL data collection by using the EL record types for "Early Proficient" (1-F or 4-Q depending on participation in the EL instructional program). ODE will monitor district implementation of Early Proficient processes during regular monitoring and data reviews.

Family Contact

Family contact is a real-time, direct engagement conducted in a language the family can understand. A successful family contact should involve a conversation that explains Early Proficient and the associated family decision. The full conversation does not have to happen at the moment of contact; it may take place in stages and be scheduled for mutually agreed-upon times and places. ODE recommends the full conversation cover the following topics:

- The purpose of EL status and language services
- The purpose of the ELPA Summative testing
- The student's observed academic performance, both in ELD and content area classes
- The Early Proficient scoring category and requested family decision about EL status
- Potential outcomes of the family decision (e.g. impacts on the student's schedule, participation in future ELPA testing, access to academic support)

It is best if the conversation involves district personnel who have direct academic experience with the student in question. If this is not possible, the conversation should involve district personnel who are knowledgeable about English learners and the district's English language development program.

Information must be presented neutrally, with no attempts to influence the family decision in either direction. It is permissible to share information about the student's observed English proficiency (both in formal and informal settings) and academic performance. It is also permissible to respond to family questions about current English proficiency or academic performance and questions that ask for professional judgement about the student's probable future success if they exit EL status vs. remaining in EL status. If the family directly asks district personnel to recommend a decision, or to make the decision on their behalf, district personnel should explain that the district is not permitted to recommend an outcome or make the decision for the family.

If family contact cannot be established, the district must still make a good faith effort to provide the Early Proficient Family Flyer and the Early Proficient Family Decision Form asynchronously. If despite the preceding efforts the family cannot be provided with the Early Proficient Family Decision Form, or is provided with the form does not complete and return it, then there is no clear family decision and the student will remain in EL status.

The Early Proficient District Resources section of this guidance document contains additional resources to support districts in their conversations with families.

Other Policies

Early Proficient makes no changes to EL status or any other policy governing EL status.

- Students who exit EL status via a decision based on an Early Proficient scoring result are subject to academic monitoring for four years (just like students who exit via a traditional Proficient score).
- Students who score Early Proficient but remain in EL status will continue to receive language services and will test annually on the ELPA Summative until they score Proficient (in which case they will exit) or Early Proficient (in which case a new decision will need to be made by the student’s family). An Early Proficient result does not carry forward year to year.
- Early Proficient makes no changes to On Track to ELP calculations.
- Early Proficient applies to the K-12 general ELPA Summative (remote or in-person) only. There is currently no Early Proficient score range for the ELPA Screener or the Alt ELPA.
- Early Proficient is an Oregon policy and does not apply to test results from other states (even other ELPA states).
- Early Proficient makes no changes to ODE’s [Honoring Student Proficiency on the ELPA Summative and Alt ELPA](#) policy, which is calculated based on domain performance levels 1-5.
 - Note: a student who scores Early Proficient and does not exit EL status will *drop all carried domains*. They will be eligible to begin carrying domains again on their next ELPA Summative.

Revisiting the Early Proficient Decision

Family decisions documented and implemented via the Early Proficient Family Decision form are final and not subject to appeal. If the family or district comes to believe that an Early Proficient decision resulted in an inappropriate EL status, resolve those concerns using the following process.

Concern 1: Inappropriate exit. The student exited EL status, but the district or family now believes they should have remained in EL status.

Action 1: If the district has reason to believe that the student may be experiencing a persistent language barrier, they may readminister the ELPA Screener. The student may then be reentered into EL status if they (a) do not score Proficient on the ELPA Screener, and (b) the family consents to this reentry.

Per the Office of Civil Rights’ [2015 Dear Colleague Letter, page 34](#)¹: “If district monitoring indicates that a persistent language barrier may be the cause of academic difficulty because general education and remediation services have proven inadequate, school districts should re-test the student with a valid and reliable, grade-appropriate ELP test [in Oregon, the ELPA Screener] to determine if there is a persistent language barrier and must offer additional language assistance services where needed to meet its civil rights obligations. In no case should re-testing of an exited student’s ELP be prohibited. If the results of the re-testing qualify the student as EL, the school district must reenter the student into EL status and

¹ This document was rescinded by the US Department of Education, but the laws and court cases supporting its text remain in force.

offer EL services. If the student is reentered into EL services, school districts should document the bases for the reentry *and the parents' consent to such reentry* [emphasis added].”

Concern 2: Inappropriate retention. The student remained in EL status, but district or family now believes they should have exited.

Action 2: Early Proficient decisions are not subject to appeal. The student remains in EL status. The family may waive English language development services if desired. The student continues to test on ELPA. If the student scores Proficient on a future test, they will exit EL status. If the student scores Early Proficient on a future test, the family will decide at that time whether the student exits or remains in EL status.

Score Reporting

Individual Student Reports (ISRs) will continue to display domain scores as 1-5. An Early Proficient performance will be indicated in the overall Proficiency Status field. Early Proficient is indicated only on official score reports generated in ODE data applications such as Accountability Warehouse Extracts (AWE). Early Proficient will not appear on unofficial ISRs generated in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS).

Data downloads from ODE data applications will indicate Early Proficient overall performance with an “E” in the ELPA21ProfSts field. “E” means that the student’s score for eligible domains met the definition of Early Proficient outlined above. The domains which qualified the test for an Early Proficient result will be indicated (R, W, L, S, or A for All) in the Approaching Proficient field in the AWE download file (field: ApprchngProfCd).

Questions and Answers

1. Why does Early Proficient include criterion A (“just over” the Proficient threshold)?
In past years, a score of all 4s or higher was considered Proficient.
 - a. Early Proficient is an attempt to account for measurement error, a factor which is present in all tests (not just the ELPA Summative). Measurement error means that the student’s true knowledge and skills could exceed or fall short of their performance as measured in this one test event. Structuring Early Proficient to include both “just under” and “just over” scores accounts for both directions of measurement error. Applying the standard error of measure in only one direction would be a misuse of the concept.
2. What should districts do if they discover an Early Proficient score from a previous year that was overlooked?
 - a. Students scoring Early Proficient only exit EL status if both of the following occur:
 - i. The district receives a clear family decision to exit the student.
 - ii. The district reports this outcome in the spring or fall EL data collection of the same calendar year that the Early Proficient score was earned.
 - b. If a district discovers that an Early Proficient score was overlooked, and sufficient time remains before the fall EL data collection to establish contact as defined above, the district may still reach out to the family. If sufficient

time does not remain, or the fall EL data collection has closed, this means the district did not receive a clear family decision and the student will remain in EL status.

3. Can a district choose not to act on an Early Proficient result?
 - a. The district must make a good faith effort to contact the family, explain the Early Proficient result, and offer the family a decision about the student's EL status. Districts may not unilaterally decide to discard or ignore an Early Proficient result.
4. What if the family does not fully complete the Family Decision Form, or submits more than one form and the forms contradict each other?
 - a. The family decision must be captured on a single, fully completed form. Any other outcome means there is no clear family decision, and the student remains in EL status.
 - b. It is permissible for the district to reach out to the family to resolve confusion about the Family Decision Form (for example, to confirm if one form was intended to replace another, or to obtain missing information on a partially completed form).
5. Can the family change their mind about their Early Proficient decision and request a different outcome?
 - a. This may be possible under some circumstances. If the family changes their mind *before* the student's EL status has been reported, see information about submitting a replacement form in the Details section above. If the family changes their mind *after* the student's EL status has been reported, see Revisiting the Early Proficient Decision above.
6. Why do carried domains drop if a student who scores Early Proficient does not exit EL status?
 - a. If a family chooses for their student to remain in EL status, or does not communicate a clear desire for their student to exit EL status, this is assumed to signal that the family wants their student to continue receiving English language services. Carrying domains could result in exiting a student against the family's will.
7. What happens if a district tries to contact the family, but they cannot be reached (e.g. no response, contact information out of date) or it proves impossible to schedule a real-time conversation (e.g. scheduling conflicts, family declines to meet)?
 - a. If family contact proves unsuccessful, the district must still attempt to make the Early Proficient Family Decision Form available asynchronously.
 - b. If district attempts to provide the Early Proficient Family Decision Form are unsuccessful, or the family does not return the form prior to the district's reasonable deadline, then there is no clear family decision, and the student remains in EL status.
8. Can Early Proficient be applied to tests taken prior to 2025-26?
 - a. No. Early Proficient is not retroactive. It only applies to general ELPA Summative tests completed in the 2025-26 school year and following.

9. For students who do not score Early Proficient, is it possible to find out how close they came?
- a. No. Each student has a unique conditional standard error of measure, so ODE cannot publish tables with set score points for the Early Proficient range.

Contacts

For questions regarding...	Please contact...
ELPA testing	Ben Wolcott , ELPA Specialist
English learner status and the EL data collection	Kim Miller , Title III Specialist
Official ODE data applications (including retrieving score reports)	Your Regional ESD Partner

Early Proficient District Resources

Early Proficient Process Summary

- 1) Student completes the general ELPA Summative and district retrieves a score report.
 - a. If the student did not score Early Proficient, **stop here**. Resolve the student's EL status using existing procedures.
 - b. If the student scored Early Proficient, **continue**.
- 2) The district makes a good faith effort to establish contact with the student's family.
 - a. As part of the contact process, either hold or schedule a meaningful real-time conversation with the family to explain and help the family navigate the following steps. This conversation is best held in person.
- 3) District provides the family with the Early Proficient Family Flyer and the Early Proficient Family Decision Form.
 - a. Provide these documents during an in-person meeting if possible, independently if not.
 - b. The district must communicate a reasonable deadline for returning a completed Early Proficient Family Decision Form.
- 4) Family may make a decision about the student's EL status and return the Early Proficient Family Decision Form to the district at any time within the reasonable deadline.
 - a. The Flyer is informational only and does not need to be returned.
 - b. If the family decides to exit the student, district reports the student as exiting in the next EL data collection.
 - c. If the family decides the student will remain in EL status, district reports the student as continuing to receive language services in the next EL data collection.
 - d. If no clear family decision is available (family did not return form within the reasonable deadline, family did not clearly mark form, or similar), the student remains in EL status.
- 5) District reports student's EL status in either spring or fall EL Data Collection.
 - a. District preserves documentation in student's permanent record.

Family Contact Conversation Guide

The following conversation guide may help districts plan family contact. Its use is optional and sample dialogue following each point is provided for illustrative purposes only. Do not treat dialogues as a script that must be read word for word.

1. Begin with necessary and appropriate greetings and introductions.
2. Briefly review English learner status and ELPA testing.
 - a. As you know, (student name) receives English language services at our school. These services are one way we support (student name)'s success at our school. (Student name) takes a test every year, called the ELPA, that tells us if they still need language services.
3. Explain the Early Proficient scoring category.

- a. This year, (student name) scored Early Proficient on the ELPA. That means that they are very close to the Proficient and might no longer need English language services.
4. Explain the family decision point.
 - a. Because they scored so close to Proficient, we are asking you what you would like to happen with your student. You may choose for your student to leave English learner status, which means they would no longer get English language services and stop testing on ELPA. Or you may choose for your student to stay in English learner status, which means they will keep getting English language services and test again on ELPA next year.
5. Explain how you will help inform the family decision.
 - a. While we can't make this decision for you, we can answer any questions you may have. We will tell you how your student is performing in school, including what we have observed about the student's ability to read, write, and speak English. We will also tell you how we will continue to support your student whether they leave or stay in English learner status.
6. Explain how to make the decision.
 - a. Once we've answered your questions and you have had the time you need to think about your decision, tell us your choice by filling out this form [show Early Proficient Family Decision Form]. The form, and the reminder sheet that goes with it [show Early Proficient Family Flyer], have some reminders of what we talked about today.
 - b. You don't have to decide today. To prepare for next year, we will need your decision by (date). You make your decision by marking either "leave EL status" or "stay in EL status" on the decision form and returning it to our school. If we don't get a decision by (date), (student name) will stay in EL status.
7. Emphasize that whatever the family's decision, supporting the student remains a priority.
 - a. If (student name) stays in EL status, they will have more chances to demonstrate proficiency on future ELPA tests. You also have the right to waive English language services for (student name) even if they stay in EL status. We will keep supporting (student name)'s success at school whether they leave or stay in EL status.
8. Close and offer more chances to connect.
 - a. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We are happy to have more conversations or get more information to help with your decision.

Family Decision: Questions for Reflection

Districts may use the following questions to anticipate information and topics that might be of value to families or help families think through issues that matter to them. ("My child" phrasing assumes a parent or guardian, and should be adjusted for adult students.)

Student Learning & Progress

- Has my child shown growth in their ability to read, write, and speak English?
- Which areas of English language development (reading, writing, speaking, listening) seem to be improving most? Which still need support?
- How confident does my child feel using English in academic settings and social situations?

Academic Performance

- How is my child performing in classes taught in English (e.g., math, science, social studies, specials or electives)? How fully are they able to understand the content and participate in these classes?
- What do teachers report about my child's English proficiency?

Student Voice & Experience

- What does my child say about their experience in the ELD program?
- How does my child feel about EL status? Does EL status have social, emotional, or self-esteem impacts that matter to or for my child?
- What are their goals for school and beyond? How does ELD fit into those goals?

Scheduling & Opportunities

- If my child exits the ELD program, will that open up time for other classes or activities that are important to them (e.g., electives, advanced coursework, extracurriculars)?
- How will the school support my child if they still need help with English after exiting the program?

Family Observations & Values

- What have I noticed about my child's use of English at home and in the community?
- Do I feel they are ready to succeed without the additional support of the ELD program?
- What are my hopes for my child's education? How does this decision align with those hopes?

Early Proficient Process Flow Chart

