

2025-26 Future K and Grade K ELPA Screener Updates

Overview

The following changes will be made to the Future/Early K and Grade K ELPA Screener:

- 2025-26: No changes from 2024-25.
- 2026-27: New, permanent cut points will take effect. ODE will retire the Grade K Screener cut points and use new, adjusted Future K Screener cut points year-round. This will return ODE to a single Screener test at the Grade K level.

Context and History

The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) Screener became available in OR in 2018-19. This test is used in tandem with the Oregon Language Use Survey (LUS) to determine which students meet the federal definition for English learner status, and consequently qualify for English language development services.

ODE and ELPA21 (the content provider who develops the ELPA Screener) have been paying close attention to ELPA Screener testing data, particularly in the early grades. After examining test data from multiple years, analyzing the effects of previous changes to Future K and Grade K testing, and conducting linking studies to other measures of academic performance in Kindergarten, ODE concluded in 2023 that the evidence supported a change to both Future K and Grade K screening.

ODE began with temporary adjustments to scoring thresholds on both the Future K and Grade K ELPA Screeners, intended to reduce testing inequities for students while ODE pursued longer term solutions in partnership with ELPA21.

In September 2025, ODE conducted a verification study involving ODE personnel and educators from Oregon school districts. During this study, participants reviewed Screener items at the K level. Their input was used along with Oregon testing data to establish permanent cut scores for performance levels 1-5 in all four domains (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking). These permanent cut scores will take effect on Kindergarten Screeners administered for 2026-27 and following school years.

Based on analysis of testing data and the results of the verification study, ODE has concluded that the Future K temporary cut points for Reading, Listening, and Speaking are appropriate. ODE concluded that the Future K temporary cut point for Writing was set too low. Based on these conclusions, the following changes will be made for tests administered for the 2026-27 and subsequent school years:

- No adjustments to Reading, Listening, or Speaking cut points. The temporary cut points currently in effect for the Future/Early K Screener will become permanent.
- The Level 4 Writing cut point will be adjusted upward (making the domain slightly more difficult).
- No adjustments will be made to cut points on the Grade K ELPA Screener. Instead, the cut points used for this test will be retired.
- The adjusted cut points used for the test currently called the Future/Early K ELPA Screener will be used year-round. This will result in a single test for the Kindergarten grade band, called the

Grade K ELPA Screener. This name change will take effect in August 2026, after the yearly system rollover.

- Just as with grades 1-12, a domain performance of 4 or higher on the updated Grade K Screener will contribute to a Proficient profile.

Questions and Answers

1. How does ODE expect the announced changes to affect proficiency rates?
 - a. Based on analysis of 2024-25 testing data, ODE expects the rate of students scoring Proficient in kindergarten to decrease from roughly 19% (using the temporary cut points) to roughly 8.3% (using the new adjusted cut points). This would bring Kindergarten in line with the proficiency rate observed across most other grade bands. It remains many times higher than the 1% proficiency rate observed prior to implementing the temporary cut points in 2023.
2. Why did ODE choose to raise the cut score for Writing level 4? This means that fewer students will score Proficient.
 - a. The goal of the Screener is to ensure that students who need English language development services receive them, not to maximize Proficient rates. Testing and panel data indicated that ODE's temporary cut score adjustment for Writing overcompensated and had been set too low. As noted above, proficiency rates in kindergarten significantly exceeded other grade bands, suggesting that some students who need English language development services might be missed by the instrument.
3. Did ODE consider removing the Reading and Writing domains entirely from Kindergarten ELPA Screeners?
 - a. This issue was discussed. The most recent federal guidance available (recorded in the [2015 Dear Colleague Letter](#) pp. 10-11 and verbally re-confirmed at events such as the February 2023 COSA EL Collaborative conference) clearly indicates that state ELP screening instruments must test all four domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking.
4. Are changes to ELPA test scoring retroactive?
 - a. No. The changes described in this document will apply to kindergarten ELPA Screeners administered for 2026-27 and subsequent school years.
5. Are similar changes planned for any other ELPA test?
 - a. Not at this time.

Contact Information

Contact [Ben Wolcott](#), ELPA Specialist, with questions or concerns regarding ELPA testing.

Contact [Kim Miller](#), Title III Specialist, with questions regarding Title III and the EL data collection.