



ALTERNATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROJECT

# ALTELLA Teacher Interview Protocol

ALTELLA Tool

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The Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA) project researches instructional practices, accessibility features and accommodations, and assessment of English learners with significant cognitive disabilities to develop an evidence-centered design approach that informs our understanding of alternate English language proficiency assessment for these students.

The ALTELLA project is a partnership of five state departments of education and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This collaboration involving Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, South Carolina, and West Virginia is funded by an Enhanced Assessment Instruments grant from the U.S. Department of Education awarded to the Arizona Department of Education. ALTELLA is housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

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## Purpose

This protocol can be used by educators and administrators to learn more about the instructional strategies teachers are using with their English learners with disabilities. This classroom observation protocol was created for use by the Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA) project. The original version was used to collect data on English learners with significant cognitive disabilities, an ALTELLA project activity (see Christensen & Mitchell, 2018) and was partially adapted from the National Alternate Assessment Center (2010). This version of the protocol has been broadly adapted to include English learners with any disabilities, not limited to those with significant cognitive disabilities

## Instructions

This interview portocol is meant to be used following a classroom observation of the educator being interviewed (see Christensen, Mitchell, & Ceylan, 2018). Before interviewing the educator, it is important to give an introduction of yourself that describes who you are, your role, and the purpose of the interview (see sample script below). The ALTELLA team recommends that you provide the following to educators participating in your research:

- Name and affiliation of interviewers
- Goal of the study (share informational brochure if applicable)
- How teachers were identified to participate
- How information is being collected from the interview (e.g., audio or video recording, handwritten notes)
- How information will be kept anonymous (if applicable)
- How information from the interview will be disseminated and who it will be shared with
- Contact information of the interviewers
- Information about follow-up activities
- Opportunity for interviewee to ask questions before beginning interview

## Sample Script

*Thank you for allowing us to observe your class today. We are [names of interviewers] and we work with [affiliation of interviewers]. Our study [name of study, if applicable] is trying to learn more about students with disabilities who are also English learners. The goal is to [goal of the study].*

*[Information about how teachers were identified to participate in interview]. We really enjoyed observing your class, and now we are hoping to ask you some questions about what we saw as well as ask some other questions related to the strategies you use to promote language development in your class. [Information about how information is being collected]. [How information is being kept anonymous if applicable]. [Information about dissemination of results from the interview].*

*If you have any questions about or project or want to tell us anything after we leave today, here is more information on the study, along with our contact information. [Information about follow-up activities].*

*Do you have any questions for us before we start?*

## ALTELLA Teacher Interview Protocol

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview start and end time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom/Teacher ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of students: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of English learners with disabilities: \_\_\_\_\_

***Intro Script: Thank you for letting us observe your class today! Now we would like to hear more about what strategies and adaptations you utilize in the classroom, as well as how English learners with disabilities are assessed, and what types of supports you have or wish you had in these areas.***

1. Tell us a little about the lesson we observed today. What were your goals for the lesson?  
(Prompt: Were these goals based on standards? If so, what standards? Participate in a short reflection with the teacher.)
  
2. In the class that we observed today, what kinds of disabilities were present? (If appropriate, ask about the disabilities of the English learners in the classroom.)



6. What were some relevant strategies you used today to support the language development of English for your student(s)?

7. How did you decide to use those strategies?

8. Are there strategies that you find helpful, but weren't observed today?

9. In what ways do you provide accommodations and/or differentiate instruction for your English learners with disabilities?

10. Do your English learners with disabilities have language development goals on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?

11. Do your English learners with disabilities participate in the state English proficiency assessment?  
(Prompt: Remind teachers that their answers are confidential.)

Who is involved in this decision?

12. What kinds of formal or informal techniques do you use to evaluate the students' proficiency in English?

13. How do you use the results from your state's English language proficiency assessment from your English learners with disabilities? (Prompt: If the teacher answers negatively, follow up with –what would you need to be able to use the results? What would give you the best information on what your students can do in English?)



***Transition Script: Now we would like to ask you questions about you, your background, and your professional experience.***

14. What is your gender?

15. What is your ethnicity?

16. How many years of professional experience do you have overall?

17. Years of professional experience in this school?

18. How many years have you taught English learners with disabilities?

19. If you are an English language teacher, what kinds of professional development have you gotten around special education students? If you are a special education teacher, what kinds of professional development have you gotten around EL students?"

(Prompt: Show the teachers the options to let them select answers.)

- Formal professional development activities related to accessing the general curriculum
- School based activities (staff meetings, teacher work groups, etc.) related to accessing the general curriculum.
- Teacher to teacher activities (planning times, scheduled or unscheduled collaboration, etc.) related to accessing the general curriculum.
- Technical assistance (from district or entity liaison, curriculum specialist, or outside consultant, etc.) related to accessing the general curriculum.
- Receive no support.
- Other:

20. What kinds of professional development formats are most helpful to you?

21. Is there anything we have not talked about today that you think would help you teach your English learners students with disabilities?

22. Any final comments?

## References

- Christensen, L. L., & Mitchell, J. D. (2018, September). *Classroom perspectives on English learners with significant cognitive disabilities*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin–Madison, Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA). Retrieved from University of Wisconsin–Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research: <http://altella.wceruw.org/resources.html>
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