



ALTERNATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The ALTELLA project aims to apply lessons learned from research on successful instructional practices, accommodations, and assessing English learners and students with cognitive disabilities to inform alternate English language proficiency assessments for these students.



Background

Many English learners (ELs) with the most significant cognitive disabilities are not included in the required state

English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. Currently there is limited evidence regarding the progress toward English proficiency for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Such evidence is critical to ensure success in school, the path to college, career, and community readiness.

The Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA) project builds on the lessons learned from the past decade of research on assessing ELs and students with significant cognitive disabilities, as separate groups. The project seeks to examine instructional practices and policies for English learners with significant cognitive disabilities to develop an evidence centered design approach.

The project examines current ELP standards with the goal of developing a foundational knowledge base and furthering the inclusion of students in English language instruction. This work is critical to inform development of an alternate English language proficiency assessment.



Partners and Staff

The ALTELLA project is funded by an Enhanced Assessment Instruments grant from the U.S. Department of Education awarded to the Arizona Department of Education.

The ALTELLA project is a partnership between five state departments of education and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, located at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This project establishes a collaboration of states including Arizona (lead), Michigan, Minnesota, South Carolina, and West Virginia.

ALTELLA staff members include experts in research, assessment, special education, and English language development.





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Project Activities

ALTELLA is divided into six project activities:



1 Developing an Individual Characteristics Questionnaire (ICQ) that will be administered in participating states

The ICQ will be used to gather key information about the characteristics of English Learners (ELs) with significant cognitive disabilities, including the technology-based tools that they may use to access everyday instruction.

2 Observing and interviewing educators who work with ELs with significant cognitive disabilities

These classroom observations and interviews will provide information about instructional and assessment strategies for this population of students that can inform the development of the assessment.

3 Prioritizing which English language proficiency (ELP) standards will be included in the assessment blueprint

The project will conduct a consensus-building process with state representatives and technical advisory committee members to identify appropriate alternate ELP standards to inform item template development.

4 Developing templates for innovative items based on existing ELP standards

The items will be designed to be compatible with students' assistive technology devices, as well as with other technology tools students may use in the classroom, to accurately assess the receptive and expressive English language development of ELs with significant cognitive disabilities and provide valid assessment results and interpretations.

5 Maintaining formal collaboration among partners

The team will create a template for a Request for Proposals (RFP) that states can use at the completion of the project to continue the work of developing the Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA).

6 Disseminating project findings for feedback

Results will be shared at national conferences and within publications to gain formative feedback on grant activities and move forward.

Contact Information

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ALTELLA is housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison.