

ELPA21 — What Is It and What Do Results Mean?

Nebraska's English language proficiency assessment, explained in plain language.

Many Languages. One Community.



Every year, your child takes the ELPA21. Here's what that means.

If your child is in the Multilingual Learner (ML) program, they take the ELPA21 assessment each year. This guide explains what the test measures, what the results look like, and what to do if you have questions.

What is the ELPA21?

ELPA21 stands for English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century. It is a state-required assessment given each year to all students in the ML program. It is not a pass/fail test — it is a growth measure. The goal is to track how your child's English language skills are developing over time.

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Your child listens to spoken English and answers questions.	Your child speaks aloud in English in response to prompts.	Your child reads English passages and answers questions.	Your child writes responses in English to given prompts.

What do the proficiency levels mean?

ELPA21 results are reported on a scale from Level 1 to Level 5. Each level describes how well your child uses English. Here is what each level means:

1 Beginning

My child is just starting to learn English. They understand and use a few words and short phrases.

2 Early intermediate

My child understands simple sentences and can communicate basic ideas in English.

3 Intermediate

My child understands and uses everyday English but still needs support with academic language.

4 Early advanced

My child communicates well in English in most settings. Some complex academic language is still developing.

5 Advanced

My child communicates in English at or near grade level in all four skill areas. Exit from ML program is possible.

Goal: Your child's goal is to reach Level 4 or 5 in all four skill areas (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing).

When does my child take the ELPA21?

The ELPA21 is given every year, typically in January through March. Your child takes it in school during regular school hours. You do not need to do anything to prepare — the best thing you can do is encourage your child, make sure they get a good night's sleep, and eat a good breakfast.

When and how will I receive results?

Results are typically sent home in the spring, after testing is complete. You will receive a report showing your child's score in each of the four skill areas and their overall proficiency level. If you have questions about the results, contact your child's ML teacher or Tracy Garvey, ML Program Coordinator.

What happens after the ELPA21?

Your child is making progress, but not yet proficient	Your child has met proficiency	Continuing support
They continue receiving ML services. Their teacher will use the results to adjust instruction and support.	They may exit the ML program. You will be notified in writing.	They are monitored for four additional school years to ensure continued success without ML support.

Questions? We're here.

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