

The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM[®]) Aligned K-3
Literacy Alternate Assessment

Or

The Colorado Emergent Literacy Scales (CELS)
For Grades K – 3

Introduction



COLORADO
Department of Education

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Background

House Bill 12-1238: The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act) requires “teachers measure each students’ reading competency using interim reading assessments ... throughout the school year” (p.6) to ensure that “by the completion of third grade [students] can demonstrate a level of competency in reading skills that is necessary to support them in achieving the academic standards and expectations applicable to the fourth grade curriculum” (p.3). This requirement includes all students including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities who the team has determined that the academic standards for instruction are the alternate achievement standards which are, in Colorado, the Extended Evidence Outcomes. These are the students who would participate in alternate assessment in third grade and beyond. This group of students, who present a broad range of intensive and diverse needs, an alternate approach to interim assessment is required. This is largely due to the fact that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are working toward the Colorado Extended Evidence Outcomes and Extended Readiness Competencies. The need for an alternate approach is also required because the READ Act approved English Language Arts assessments for use by students without disabilities are not fully accessible to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. For example, most of the approved assessments require students to read aloud, and approximately 50% of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities cannot use speech well enough to read aloud. Many others cannot hold pencils or use standard keyboards, and all experience a combination of cognitive and linguistic impairments that make it inappropriate for them to participate in standard assessments even with accommodations.

The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM[®]) Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is intended to provide a developmentally appropriate, naturalistic approach to interim assessment beginning in the fall of kindergarten and extending through the end of third grade. Both the DLM Alternate Assessment System and the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment are built on the DLM Essential Elements, which are specific statements of the content and skills expectations linked to the Colorado Academic Standards and Extended Evidence Outcomes in English Language Arts. The DLM Essential Elements detail expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Exceptional Student Services Unit has developed a document, the [Standards Side-by-Side Reference Tool for English Language Arts](#), which provides a crosswalk between the DLM’s Essential Elements and Colorado’s Extended Evidence Outcomes.

The blueprint for the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment was developed based upon the blueprint for DLM Alternate Assessment System in grades 3-5. This approach will allow teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities in the primary grades to assess interim progress toward the skills and understandings that will be required for success in fourth grade and beyond as required by the Colorado READ Act. If students repeatedly exceed the target expectations in kindergarten to third grade on the DLM Aligned K-2 Reading Assessment, the team has strong evidence that should be considered when determining eligibility for the alternate assessment beginning in third grade.

Beyond the requirements for interim assessment, the Colorado READ Act requires the provision of intensive instruction for students who are not meeting target expectations in kindergarten through third grade. The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment will support this since scores on

each scale provide important guidance regarding next steps for instruction. Furthermore, the supplement supports provide specific examples of research-based approaches to helping students with significant cognitive disabilities make progress in reading.

A Structured Portfolio Approach

The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment uses an approach to assessment called the structured portfolio. This is a strengths-based approach to assessment that focuses on what students can do rather than what they cannot do. Recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2003), this approach is especially important for primary grades students with significant cognitive disabilities because it is a way to “capture real-life competencies in everyday settings and document even small improvements” (Bagnato, 2005, p.18). Like the DLM Alternate Assessment System for older students, the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is instructionally embedded. At the kindergarten to third grade level, this means that a variety of forms of data are collected during day-to-day instruction. This provides a more accurate picture of student’s abilities (NAEYC, 2003) and allows teachers to focus on teaching while engaged with the students. The data is then compiled and scored at least three times each year as part of interim assessment efforts.

As a naturalistic assessment of emergent and early reading development for students with significant cognitive disabilities, the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment uses work samples, photos, anecdotal notes, frequency counts, and other traditional data recording techniques. These different forms of data are collected as part of instruction each day. At intervals of 4-6 weeks, the data is analyzed to determine which three pieces of data reflect the highest level of skill or understanding on each of the six scales. When the score is determined, the date is indicated in the appropriate place on the student score sheet.

The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment Blueprint

An assessment blueprint communicates the scope of skills and understandings that are assessed. The scope of skills and understandings in the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment are defined by DLM Essential Elements. As indicated previously, the blueprint for the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is based on the third to fifth grade blueprint for the DLM Alternate Assessment System. Students who are meeting grade level targets on the DLM Aligned K-3 Reading Assessment are on their way to successfully meeting targets in fourth grade while those who are not yet meeting targets require additional, intensive interventions to help them close the gap. The DLM Essential Elements that are addressed in the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment are detailed in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. Dynamic Learning Maps Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment Blueprint

	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade
Reading Literature & Information Text: Key Ideas and Details				
1	EE.RL.K.1 With guidance and support, identify details in familiar stories.	EE.RL.1.1 Identify details in familiar stories.	EE.RL.2.1 Answer <i>who</i> and <i>where</i> questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a familiar text.	EE.RL.3.1 Answer <i>who</i> and <i>what</i> questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a text
2	EE.RL.K.3 With guidance and support, identify characters and settings in a familiar story.	EE.RL.1.3 Identify characters and settings in a familiar story.	EE.RL.2.3 Identify the actions of the characters in a story.	EE.RL.3.3. Identify the feelings of characters in a story.
Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details				
3	EE.RI.K.1 With guidance and support, identify a detail in a familiar text.	EE.RI.1.1 Identify details in familiar text.	EE.RI.2.1 Answer <i>who</i> and <i>what</i> questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a familiar text.	EE.RI.3.1 Answer <i>who</i> and <i>what</i> questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a text.
4	EE.RI.K.3 With guidance and support, identify individuals, events, or details in a familiar informational text.	EE.RI.1.3 Identify individuals, events, or details in a familiar informational text.	EE.RI.2.3 Identify individuals, events, or details in an informational text.	EE.RI.3.3 Order two events from a text as “first” and “next.”
Reading Information Text: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas				
5	EE.RI.K.8 With guidance and support, identify points the author makes in an informational text.	EE.RI.1.8 Identify points the author makes in a familiar informational text.	EE.RI.2.8 Identify points the author makes in an informational text.	EE.RI.3.8 Identify two related points the author makes in an informational text.
Reading Foundations: Letter Identification				
6	EE.RF.K.3.a With guidance and support, recognize first letter of own name in print.	EE.RF.1.3.a Identify upper case letters of the alphabet.	EE.RF.2.3.a Identify the lower case letters of the alphabet.	EE.RF.3.3.a In context, demonstrate basic knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.
Writing: Text Types and Purposes				
7	EE.W.K.2 With guidance and support, select a familiar topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to share information about the topic.	EE.W.1.2 Select a familiar topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to share information about it.	EE.W.2.2 Select a topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to compose a message with one fact about the topic.	EE.W.3.2 a. Select a topic and write about it including one fact or detail.
Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use				
8	EE.L.K.5.c With guidance and support, use words to communicate in real-life situations.	EE.L.1.5.c With guidance and support, demonstrate understanding of words by identifying real-life connections between words and their use.	EE.L.2.5.a Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., happy: “I am happy.”).	EE.L.3.5.a Determine the literal meaning of words and phrases in context.

The DLM Essential Elements are drawn from five of the six domains of English language arts in the Colorado Academic Standards in English Language Arts. They are: reading literature, reading information text, reading foundations, writing, and language. Speaking and listening is the only domain not included. This is not to suggest that domain is not important. To the contrary, effective communication skills are critical for all students. However, these are not areas directly assessed in grades 3-12 in the DLM Alternate Assessment System so they are not assessed here. While the blueprint spans the domains of English language arts, the specific DLM Essential Elements all focus on reading-related outcomes consistent with the requirements of the Colorado Read Act. For example, the DLM Essential Elements in the domain of writing build toward the ability to select a topic and communicate about the topic in writing. The set of skills and understandings required by these DLM Essential Elements are also critical to building skills in reading with comprehension, but are much easier to assess in a meaningful way with students with significant cognitive disabilities who are emerging in their understandings of reading and writing.

The Structure of the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment

The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is comprised of six scales that reflect the knowledge, skills, and understandings required by the assessment blueprint. Each scale captures development from early foundational skills through target skills at the kindergarten, first, second, and third grade level. Each of the scales has a single outcome statement associated with it that reflects the combined set of knowledge, skills, and expectations students should acquire across the three grade levels. Each of the 10 points on the scale has a description that links to the Learning Map in English language arts created by the DLM Alternate Assessment Consortium.

The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is intended to be a naturalistic assessment of emergent and early literacy development for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It should be used as an integrated part of everyday instruction with data collection focused on a variety of work samples, photos, anecdotal notes, frequency counts, and other traditional data collection techniques. The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is combined into a single assessment to address the fact that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will progress at dramatically different rates. Specific grade level targets are identified for each of the four grade levels, but the assessment is designed to track progress across rather within grade levels.

Collecting Data

Structured portfolios are collections of materials and information that are systematically created over a period of time, organized in a way that reflects a student's knowledge, skills, and understandings, and rated by teachers. For the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment, teachers will collect and store data starting the first week of school. The more frequent the data is collected will allow the team to have an adequate amount from which to score. The data should be organized, analyzed and scored three times each year. The types of data that are used to determine a score on any scale on the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment must be varied and reflect student performance across time and settings; however, they must always occur in the context of literacy-based interactions. This might include things like identifying

letters on a sign out on the playground or expressing an interest in a favorite book as an assistant removes it from a bag to return to the library, but the contexts of the observations must all relate to literacy. Note that Scales 1, 2, and 3 specifically require data that is collected during shared or independent reading.

There are numerous ways for teachers to organize the data as they collect it on a day-to-day basis. Teachers who are comfortable with and have access to technology can take digital pictures of notes, work samples, and other materials to store on the computer. Other teachers will have 3-ring binders or files where samples are stored until it is time to analyze and score them. Some teachers may use mailing labels to record observational notes (with student initials and date) so that they can write once and then stick the notes on a page in the student's notebook or file. Other teachers will type observational notes in word processors. There are literally endless ways to organize data that is collected for analysis in a structured portfolio. The most important thing is to have a system that makes it as efficient as possible to organize the data collected for each student and access it when it is time for analysis and scoring. Whatever system is used, it will travel with the student from one grade level to the next.

Sources of Data

There are many possible sources of data that can be collected and analyzed to produce a score on each of the scales on the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment. Whatever the source of data, the date collected and scale it reflects should be recorded. Some possible sources of data are described below.

Anecdotal Notes. Anecdotal notes can be used to record observations during instruction or to record information after instruction based on student work samples. When writing anecdotal notes it is critical to focus on the behaviors that were observed. Always be certain to write the student's name or initials, the context of the observation (shared book reading, writing, morning group), and the date of the observation. Many teachers manage anecdotal notes by writing the notes on mailing labels or other stickers. They keep stacks of them on clipboards around the room and then they can put the stickers into the student's portfolio at the end of the day without having to rewrite them. With the proliferation of tablets in schools, teachers are also finding that they can easily capture their observations by writing on the tablet and then organizing the notes after school or when students are engaged in activities with others.

Work Samples. Work samples can include everything from a writing sample, to an art project, to a form that a student has completed. When keeping a work sample add the date, a note about why it is important, and any additional information needed to recollect how and when the sample was created. Also be sure to note who worked with the student and how much support was provided.

Photographs. Photographs are an efficient way to store and manage data. Photos can capture activities and instruction in progress. Photos can also be taken of work samples and other remnants from daily instruction that could serve as a data source. Take the time at the end of each day to carefully name and date each photo. It makes sense to establish

a routine for naming the photos that includes the student's initials, the date, and the number of the scale that the photos supports. For example, a photo of Jane Smith on September 15, 2014 that is intended as data for scale 2 might be named JS.9_15_14.S2.jpg. This isn't a requirement, but whatever system is used, and should be consistent, manageable, and informative.

Videos. Videos are often far more effective than any other source of data when it comes to capturing growth in students with significant cognitive disabilities. When you capture videos, be certain to capture the student behavior as well as the context surrounding the behavior. Use a naming scheme like the one described for pictures and considers stating the date each time a video is captured so that it is a part of the record even if the automatic time/date stamp on the camera fails.

Performance Data. There is a long history of performance data collection in special education. This is the type of right/wrong or frequency data that is typically used to determine performance on IEP objectives. This type of data can be a useful additional the variety of sources of data that are collected when completing the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment.

Sources of data can vary greatly based on the student, the teacher, and the context where the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is being completed. One last thing to consider when collecting data is the use of Assistive Technologies (AT) and AAC. Be certain to record information regarding how the AT or AAC was set up for the student to use. For example, if the student identifies the character in a book by selecting a preprogrammed single message device, that is important information to record in the data. This is important because hitting a single message device to provide a programmed response is not the same thing as selecting the character from a group of 5 choices or saying the name of the character from memory. Be as detailed as possible in recording how the AT or AAC was programmed, supported, and used so that accurate judgments can be made when scoring the evidence. The goal is for students to demonstrate applied knowledge, skills, and understandings.

Analyzing and Scoring Data

Three times each year (fall, winter, and spring) all of the data gathered for an individual child is organized. The data is then sorted based on the scale it addresses. Next, the data for each scale is analyzed to find the highest score that has three pieces of evidence to support it. Typically, there is a great deal of variation across the data, but the score for a scale is data gathered from at least ***three different types of sources*** and is determined based on at least three pieces of evidence that all support the same score.

Students who are scored using the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment will be part of the administrative unit's annual READ collection through data pipeline. Data elements created for the 2015-2016 school year will accommodate this submission. The CDE Office of Literacy will provide support to district READ respondents to understand the new data fields and the way in which all students will be reported.

The six scales and outcome statements are:

Scale 1: Reading Literature & Information Text: Key Ideas and Details

K-3 Outcome: *The student can identify details and answer who, what, and where questions about details in familiar texts.*

Essential Elements Addressed

Kindergarten:

- EE.RL.K.1** With guidance and support, identify details in familiar stories.
- EE.RI.K.1** With guidance and support, identify details in familiar text.
- EE.RI.K.3** With guidance and support, identify individuals, events, or details in a familiar informational text.

First Grade:

- EE.RL.1.1** Identify details in familiar stories.
- EE.RI.1.1** Identify details in familiar text.
- EE.RI.1.3** Identify individuals, events, or details in a familiar informational text.

Second Grade:

- EE.RL.2.1** Answer *who* and *where* questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a familiar text.
- EE.RI.2.1** Answer *who* and *what* questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a familiar text.
- EE.RI.2.3** Identify individuals, events, or details in an informational text.

Third Grade:

- EE.RL.3.1** Answer *who* and *what* questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a text.
- EE.RI.3.1** Answer *who* and *what* questions to demonstrate understanding of details in a text.
- EE.RI.3.3** Order two events from a text as “first” and “next.”

Scale 2: Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details

K-3 Outcome: *The student can identify characters, settings, and actions in stories.*

Essential Elements Addressed

Kindergarten:

- EE.RL.K.3** With guidance and support, identify characters and settings in a familiar story.

First Grade:

- EE.RL.1.3** Identify characters and settings in a familiar story.

Second Grade:

- EE.RL.2.3** Identify the actions of the characters in a story.

Third Grade:

EE.RL.3.3. Identify the feelings of characters in a story.

Scale 3: Reading Information Text: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K-3 Outcome: *The student can identify the points the author makes in an informational text.*

*Essential Elements Addressed***Kindergarten:**

EE.RI.K.8 With guidance and support, identify points the author makes in an informational text.

First Grade:

EE.RI.1.8 Identify points the author makes in a familiar informational text.

Second Grade:

EE.RI.2.8 Identify points the author makes in an informational text.

Third Grade:

EE.RI.3.8 Identify two related points the author makes in an informational text.

Scale 4: Reading Foundations: Letter Identification

K-3 Outcome: *The student can identify the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet.*

*Essential Elements Addressed***Kindergarten**

EE.RF.K.3.a With guidance and support, recognize first letter of own name in print.

First Grade:

EE.RF.1.3.a Identify upper case letters of the alphabet.

Second Grade:

EE.RF.2.3.a Identify the lower case letters of the alphabet.

Third Grade:

EE.RF.3.3.a In context, demonstrate basic knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.

Scale 5: Writing: Text Types and Purposes

K-3 Outcome: *The student can select a topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to compose a message.*

*Essential Elements Addressed***Kindergarten:**

EE.W.K.2 With guidance and support, select a familiar topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to share information about the topic.

First Grade:

EE.W.1.2 Select a familiar topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to share information about it.

Second Grade:

EE.W.2.2 Select a topic and use drawing, dictating, or writing to compose a message with one fact about the topic.

Third Grade:

EE.W.3.2 Write to share information supported by details.
a. Select a topic and write about it including one fact or detail.

Scale 6: Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

K-3 Outcome: *The student will use words, signs or symbols to communicate in real-life situations making connections between words and their use.*

*Essential Elements Addressed***Kindergarten:**

EE.L.K.5.c With guidance and support, use words to communicate in real-life situations.

First Grade:

EE.L.1.5.c With guidance and support, demonstrate understanding of words by identifying real-life connections between words and their use.

Second Grade:

EE.L.2.5.a Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., happy: “I am happy.”).

Third Grade:

EE.L.3.5.a Determine the literal meaning of words and phrases in context.

Understanding the Scales and the Descriptions

The six scales on the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment each have 10 points. Each of the 10 points is associated with a description of knowledge, skills and understandings that links to the Learning Map in English language arts developed by the DLM Alternate Assessment Consortium. There are many ways that students can demonstrate that they have mastered the points on a scale. The goal is not just for students to achieve the highest score possible, but also for them to

demonstrate knowledge, skills, and understandings associated with each point on each scale. The descriptions themselves describe shared reading, familiar texts, and new texts in an effort to distinguish one score from another. Below are more detailed descriptions of each of these terms.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is the interaction between an adult and a student or group of students while they read a book together. Shared reading helps students who are not yet interested in reading books and/or have not yet developed intentional or symbolic means of communication. It is also appropriate for students who have these skills, and even those who are reading words in text, but are still learning to make connections and comprehend text. Shared reading can build vocabulary, background concepts, knowledge of print/Braille, text comprehension, and the ability to communicate using speech or some form of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The goal of shared reading is to maximize interactions page-by-page with teaching leading the way initially and students learning to direct the interactions by labeling pictures, asking questions, making comments, and directing the way that the adult navigates through the book.

While the goal is for the student to lead the interactions during shared reading, it starts with teachers guiding students, encouraging their engagement and interaction, and supporting communication. Teachers can do this by pointing out pictures, discussing words, connecting the words and pictures to the student's background knowledge and experience, and generally following the student's lead to maximize engagement and interaction. Teachers also incorporate objects into shared reading because it increases student's interest and engagement while supporting students in making connections with the book.

In a nutshell, shared reading focuses on maximizing interactions between the adult and students on a page-by-page basis while reading. It involves lots of exploration and interaction around the illustrations and words. It does not involve traditional wh-questions and does not focus on learning the specific content of the book. Rather it focuses on building communication skills, vocabulary, print concepts, and other important emergent literacy skills.

Familiar Text and New Text

The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment refers to familiar text and new text. *Familiar texts* are those that students have read with adults in multiple shared reading interactions. For most students with significant cognitive disabilities, it will take ***at least 5 meaningful shared reading interactions*** with a book for it to become a familiar text. The purpose of emphasizing familiar text in the DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment is to ensure that students have a chance to demonstrate skills and understandings in familiar routines and contexts. As students make progress toward end-of-second grade Extended Evidence Outcomes, they will be challenged to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and understandings in the new texts. *New texts* are those that students are reading for the first time. The DLM Aligned K-3 Literacy Alternate Assessment Scoring Guide provides guidance on scoring and student score sheets that are used to record scores and keep with each student's data.