

# ALTELLA Classroom Observation Protocol

**ALTELLA Tool** 

September 2018

Laurene L. Christensen, James D. Mitchell, and Indira E. Ceylan altella.wceruw.org

### **Suggested Citation**

Christensen, L. L., Mitchell, J. D., & Ceylan, I. E. (2018). *ALTELLA classroom observation protocol.*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

© 2018 by Laurene L. Christensen, James D. Mitchell, and Indira E. Ceylan. All rights reserved. Any or all portions of this document may be reproduced and distributed without prior permission, provided the source is cited as suggested. The contents of this report were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.

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.

#### altella.wceruw.org

#### **ALTELLA Staff**

Laurene Christensen, principal investigator, laurene.christensen@wisc.edu

Erin Arango-EscalanteMelissa GholsonSarah RyanKristen BurtonJonathan GibsonKristopher StewartIndira CeylanMiguel HernandezSonia UptonElizabeth CranleyJames MitchellCha Kai Yang

Publication Coordinator: Indira Ceylan Graphic Designer: Janet Trembley

## **Acknowledgments**

The ALTELLA team acknowledges the National Alternate Assessment Center's contribution to this work through their document, Student/Program Observation Tools (2010), that provided the basis for the initial iteration of this tool. The team thanks the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) for their assistance with the first draft of this document. Finally, the team is grateful for the efforts of Melissa Gholson, who contributed valuable input in conceptualizing this protocol.

# **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**

Observers are encouraged to rely on handwritten notes (no audio or video recording). Observers should limit interaction with educators and students to maintain a more authentic classroom environment. The suggested length of the observation is 20 minutes. Classroom observations using this protocol should be conducted by a team of two. After the observation the observers should convene to discuss what was observed and address areas of discrepancies.

# **ALTELLA Classroom Observation Protocol**

Date:_	Observation start and end time:
Obser	ver:
Schoo	ol:
Classr	room/Teacher ID:
Grade	p:
	number of students:
	number of English learners with disabilities:
1. Ins	structional Setting (choose the best description)
	General Education Class
	English Language Development class
	Special Education class with non-disabled peers
	Special Education class with students with disabilities only
	Homebound/hospital
	Related services (please describe)
2. In:	structional Group Arrangement (indicate all those observed)
	Large group instruction
	Small group instruction
	Independent work
	1:1 instruction
	Other (please describe)
3. Co	entent Area Observed (check all that apply)
	English Language Arts
	Math
	Science
	Social Studies
	English Language Development
	Other:

<b>4.</b> <i>A</i>	dult Presence (check all that apply and indicate how many present)
	Teachers:
	Related service providers (specify types if known) :
	Family members:
5. I	nstruction Delivery (indicate all those observed)
	Instruction delivered by general education teacher
	Instruction delivered by ESL/bilingual education teacher
	Instruction delivered by special education teacher
	Instruction delivered by bilingual/special education teacher
	Instruction delivered collaboratively by general and ESL/bilingual education teachers
	Instruction delivered collaboratively by general and special education teachers
	Instruction delivered by paraprofessional
	Instruction delivered by peer/peer tutor
	Instruction delivered by related service provider
6. I	nstruction Level (choose the best description)
	Instruction is on the grade level general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as other typical students of the age and grade level)
	Instruction is based on English language development curriculum
	Instruction is linked to the grade level general curriculum but may be at a lower grade level
	Instruction is delivered in the context of the grade level general curriculum but on different, non-academic
	skills (i.e., student uses the same materials in the same activities as other students but the expectations for
	learning are about something else – social, motor, etc.)
	Instruction is not linked to or delivered in the context of grade level general curriculum
	Instruction rationale was not clear.

Place + or - in the designated box to indicate whether the observation indicator was present or not.

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
7. Technology is present in the classroom.  Check all that apply:  Computer  Chromebook  iPad  Smartboard  Other (explain in notes)		(Provide examples of technology present in the classroom.)
8. The instructor uses technology in the classroom during the observation period.  Check all that apply:  Computer  Chromebook  iPad  Smartboard  Other (explain in notes)		(Provide examples of technology used in the classroom, e.g. instructor used smartboard to teach math concepts.)
9. Teacher uses chronologically age-appropriate materials.		(If not, list examples of materials that are not age-appropriate.)

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
10. Teacher has same expectations for student learning as chronologically aged peers.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
11. Instruction and activities facilitate the student's interactions with chronologically age-appropriate, general education peers.  (must be more than provision of the opportunity: the student must interact or be facilitated to interact)		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
12. Teacher's instructional approach allows for accommodations.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
13. Instruction is individualized for each student.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
14. Types of instructional tasks observed.  Check all that are observed:  cloze  cooperative learning  drills/ repetition  experiential learning  guessing game  information gap activities  interviews  jigsaw tasks  music/singing  negotiating meaning  problem solving  read aloud  retelling a story/ event  role-play simulations  Total Physical Response (TPR)  other (explain in notes)		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
15. The instruction provides various options for the student to have access to the instruction.  Check all that apply:		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
16. The students in the classroom use various tools to demonstrate what they know or are learning.  Check all that apply:  Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device  adapted keyboards bilingual resources custom overlays dictation drawing eye gaze picture cards pointing sign switches verbal response word prediction worksheet other (explain in notes)		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
17. In the classroom, the student has a way to communicate that matches their communication level.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
<ul> <li>18. Informal assessment observed:</li> <li>Expectation for students at this level is set at:</li> <li>recall/routine task (recall fact, information, or procedure)</li> <li>discriminate similarities/differences (simple analysis of presented concepts)</li> <li>application (use of conceptual knowledge in new and concrete situations)</li> <li>strategic (requires reasoning, developing a plan or a sequence of steps)</li> <li>extended (requires an investigation, time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem)</li> </ul>		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)

Observation Indicator		Notes
19. The student responds to opportunities to demonstrate language skills.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
Check all that are observed:  cup expressive language cup receptive language		
To what extent?  adaptive equipment (AAC device)  eye gaze head nods picture exchange cards (PECS) pointing signing verbalization vocalizations other (explain in notes)		
20. Please note the language domains observed.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
Domain:     listening     reading     speaking     writing		
21. The teacher utilizes the student's home language in the classroom		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)

Observation Indicator	+/-	Notes
22. The student utilizes their home language in the classroom.		(List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
23. The use of language learning strategies is evident in the lesson.  Check all that are observed:		(Observers should familiarize themselves with each language learning strategy. List examples of evidence to support your observation.)
Cognitive strategies     bilingual support materials     classification     goal setting     learning styles     listening/repeat     making inferences     note taking, highlighting     other mnemonic strategies     pronunciation/phonetic strategies     pronunciation/phonetic strategies     self-evaluation     use of graphic organizers     use of imagery     use of real objects/role play     visuals to imagery     social/affective strategies     asking questions     encouragement, lowering affective filter     social-mediating activities, empathizing     overcoming limitations in speaking through circumlocution, gestures, coining words, etc.		

# 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

National Alternate Assessment Center. (2010). *National Alternate Assessment Center student/program observation tools*. Retrieved from the National Alternate Assessment Center: http://www.naacpartners.org/toolsforAA/observationTools/NAACObsTools1009.pdf

ALTELLA is housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison | **altella.wceruw.org** Principal Investigator: Dr. Laurene Christensen | laurene.christensen@wisc.edu



The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.