The Individual Proficiency Test (IPT) Enhances Support for Marathon Elementary School's PreK–1 English Learners

See how educators are leveraging the IPT's robust and reliable data for identification, placement, intervention, progress monitoring, and designing targeted instruction.

The Hopkinton Public Schools campus, located in the greater Boston, MA, metro area, is situated on the highest point in Middlesex County. The district is made up of five schools and serves 260 English Learners (ELs), accounting for 21% of the student body. The most common languages among ELs in the district are Telugu, Hindi, Chinese, and Tamil.

Within the district, Marathon Elementary School serves 130 ELs in its PreK–1 program. At the helm of the EL department are dedicated educators Chantel Schools and Meghan Stathakis. Since Massachusetts became a member of the WIDA Consortium (a network of states, territories, and federal agencies focused on supporting multilingual learners in K-12 education), Schools and Stathakis have desired a more comprehensive screener for assessing EL language development. "The WIDA screener left us wanting more," Schools admitted. "We had used the IPT in Massachusetts prior to becoming a WIDA state, and that got us thinking that was something we wanted to get back to."

Ballard & Tighe's **Individual Proficiency Test (IPT)** is an English language development screener for PreK–12 that includes both oral and literacy components. Starting in 2016, Marathon Elementary transitioned from using the WIDA screener to the IPT Oral for their kindergarten students. They plan to adopt the IPT Early Literacy as a benchmark for first graders in the 2023–24 academic year.

Both Schools and Stathakis believe that the IPT delivers what they need in the form of comprehensive reports, teacher tools, and especially, targeted information to guide Response to Intervention (RTI) and instruction. The amount of time dedicated to EL instruction varies across the district due to multiple factors. As a result, the significance of assessment data becomes even more crucial. "Every year the amount of time we have for instruction with them varies," Schools said. "We wanted something that would help us maximize our time to target the skills that each individual student needed."

Stathakis echoed Schools' sentiments, stating, "We love this [the IPT]. We thought it would be great to share how and why we use it with other teachers."

One Language Proficiency Assessment Offers So Many Uses

Within their Learning Support Team (LST), the IPT has been invaluable for the EL team as they've used it for a variety of applications, including instructional design, placement, and progress monitoring. According to Stathakis, the IPT provides data that is normed to other ELs throughout the country, offering a more comprehensive understanding of a student's language development progress. The IPT reports can even serve as evidence for students who are being considered for special education services. Stathakis explained, "We administer the IPT before LST and IEP meetings. It provides percentiles, which is helpful during those meetings and also for parent conferences. If a parent has questions about why their child qualified, the IPT provides specific areas where students need additional growth."

The data from the IPT is instrumental in Marathon's decision-making process, and can even help identify bigger problems, earlier on.

"This year I had a foundational student," Stathakis recalled. "Both the teacher and parent had concerns with where the student was going. I did the first IPT in November, just in time for parent conferences, and then I gave the second one a little earlier than we typically would, but that child was going through the IEP process, so I wanted just a little bit more information on where they were and how they were doing. We were able to see that progress was not made from fall to spring, and eventually she was diagnosed with having some problems with word retrieval."

Schools had a similar anecdote about a student who was brought into the LST for literacy concerns, having scored poorly on standard school assessments. After taking the oral and literacy IPT, the reports revealed he had difficulty understanding basic test directions. "We determined that before a decision could be made on a disability, the student first needed a little bit more time to develop his first language," said Schools.

> **It gives us really great concrete data when it comes time to write progress reports or report cards. (With the IPT), we have evidence to back up everything that we are sharing.**
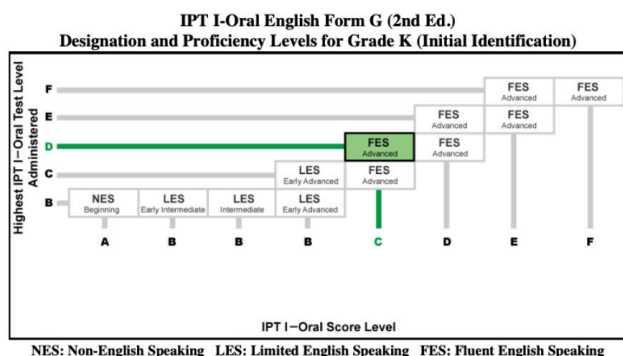>
> ~ Chantel Schools
> EL Teacher

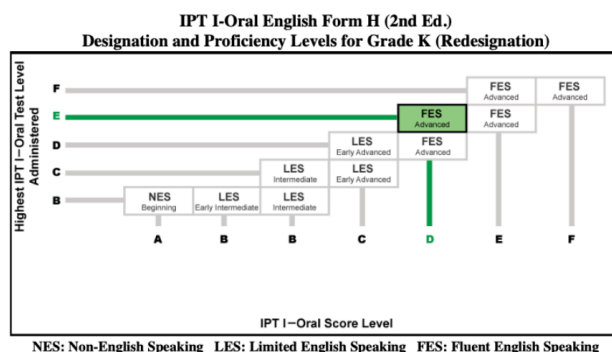# Robust Reporting Features to Guide Instruction:

A Clear Snapshot of Student Performance Across Testing Periods

Schools and her team use the IPT grids, like the ones below, to gain clarity on where students need additional support.

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FALL 2022

IPT I-Oral English Form G (2nd Ed.)
Designation and Proficiency Levels for Grade K (Initial Identification)

NES: Non-English Speaking   LES: Limited English Speaking   FES: Fluent English Speaking

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SPRING 2023

IPT I-Oral English Form H (2nd Ed.)
Designation and Proficiency Levels for Grade K (Redesignation)

NES: Non-English Speaking   LES: Limited English Speaking   FES: Fluent English Speaking

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The IPT also provides easy-to-reference guides that describe key identifiers based on student levels. "We love this can-do section," Stathakis said. "It shares what students can typically do at this level."

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FALL 2022

Students at Level C can typically:
- identify common occupations, farm animals, and foods.
- express himself or herself using the simple present and present progressive tense of common verbs.
- understand possessive pronouns.
- follow simple directions involving identifying location on a page.
- use negatives correctly.
- repeat simple sentences correctly.
- comprehend and identify major facts of a simple story.

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SPRING 2023

Students at Level D can typically:
- identify household items.
- use common weather vocabulary.
- understand comparatives.
- name the days of the week.
- use prepositions correctly.
- ask simple present tense questions.
- express himself or herself using the past, present, and future tenses.
- summarize the main idea and descriptive or supporting details of a story.
- express opinions in complete sentences.
- comprehend and predict the outcome of a story using modal auxiliaries such as "might, may, will."

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Another helpful component of the IPT score report includes this grid below, comparing student scores across testing periods. Student errors are clearly highlighted in red. "So it helps us to fine tune." Stathakis explained. "We can look at this and say, 'OK, here are the specific skills that this student was lacking, and these are the things we are going to target and focus on when we're designing our instruction and time with the student."

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	LEVEL B[1]	LEVEL C	LEVEL D	LEVEL E	LEVEL F
VOCABULARY	3.School Personnel 4.School-related Objects 5.Clothing 6.Body Parts 7.Foods 8.Animals: Pets 12.Household Items	16.Occupations 17.Animals: Farm 18.Food	31.Household Items 32.Weather 35.Calendar: Days of the Week	47.NA 48.NA	61.NA 62.NA 65.NA 66.NA
GRAMMAR	11.Regular Plurals 13.Verbs: Present Progressive	19.Verbs: Present Progressive 22.Negation	33.Verbs: Simple Present 36.Prepositions 37.Question Formation	46.NA 50.NA 51.NA 52.NA	63.NA 64.NA 67.NA
COMPREHENSION	*9.Spatial Concepts *10.Spatial Concepts 14.Story: Identify Characters' Feelings 15.Story: Identify Characters' Feelings	*20.Pronouns: Possessive *21.Spatial Concepts 26.Story: Identify Details 27.Story: Identify Details 28.Story: Identify Details 29.Story: Identify Details	*34.Comparatives	53.NA 54.NA 55.NA 56.NA	
LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS	1.Give Own Name 2.Give Own Age	23.Sentence Repetition 24.Sentence Repetition 25.Sentence Repetition 30.Describe Likes/Dislikes	38.Predict Events 39.Describe Events (Past) 40.Identify Personal Likes/Dislikes 41.Summarize a Story 42.Provide Supporting Details 43.Give Rationale 44.Predict Events 45.Predict Events	49.NA 57.NA 58.NA 59.NA 60.NA	68.NA 69.NA 70.NA 71.NA 72.NA 73.NA 74.NA 75.NA

1 Level A is a placement designation only. Students who score Level A answered less than 50% correct on Level B.
* Comprehension items test the accuracy of students' comprehension of item content. Asterisks indicate items that require a nonverbal response. All other Comprehension items require a spoken response.

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	LEVEL B[1]	LEVEL C	LEVEL D	LEVEL E	LEVEL F
VOCABULARY	3.School-related Objects 4.School-related Objects 5.Clothing 6.Body Parts 7.Foods 12.Household Item	16.Occupations 17.Animals: Farm 18.Food	31.Household Items 32.Weather 35.Calendar: Days of the Week	47.Classroom Items 48.Classroom Items	61.NA 62.NA 65.NA 66.NA
GRAMMAR	11.Regular Plurals 13.Verbs: Present Progressive	19.Verbs: Present Progressive 22.Negation	33.Verbs: Simple Present 36.Prepositions 37.Question Formation	46.Comparatives 50.Verbs: Irregular Past 51.Verbs: Simple Present 52.Question Formation (Past Tense)	63.NA 64.NA 67.NA
COMPREHENSION	*9.Spatial Concepts *10.Spatial Concepts 14.Story: Identify Characters' Feelings 15.Story: Identify Characters' Feelings	*20.Pronouns: Possessive *21.Spatial Concepts 26.Story: Identify Details 27.Story: Identify Details 28.Story: Identify Details 29.Story: Identify Details	*34.Comparatives 27.Story: Identify Details	53.Auditory Discrimination 54.Auditory Discrimination 55.Auditory Discrimination 56.Auditory Discrimination	
LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS	1.Give Own Name 2.Give Own Age	23.Sentence Repetition 24.Sentence Repetition 25.Sentence Repetition 30.Describe Likes/Dislikes	38.Predict Events 39.Describe Events (Past) 40.Identify Personal Likes/Dislikes 41.Summarize a Story 42.Provide Supporting Details 43.Give Rationale 44.Predict Events	49.Describe Objects 57.Retell a Story 58.Retell a Story 59.Retell a Story 60.Retell a Story	68.NA 69.NA 70.NA 71.NA 72.NA 73.NA 74.NA 75.NA

1 Level A is a placement designation only. Students who score Level A answered less than 50% correct on Level B.
* Comprehension items test the accuracy of students' comprehension of item content. Asterisks indicate items that require a nonverbal response. All other Comprehension items require a spoken response.

The overview chart below breaks down each language development skill, providing teachers with a quick and clear view of student performance and identifying any relative weaknesses between testing periods. The purpose of comparing this data is to assess the growth of students based on the targeted instruction they have received, aiming for improvement over time.

FALL 2022

Diagnostic Profile of ▮▮▮▮▮'s Test Performance 10/13/2022

Diagnostic Dimension*	Insufficient items administered to provide diagnostic information	Relative Weakness		
		None	Mild	Severe
Vocabulary		Vocabulary		
Grammar			Grammar	
Comprehension		Comprehension		
Language Functions (including academic language)			Language Functions (including academic language)	
Listening			Listening	
Speaking			Speaking	
BICS (social language)		BICS (social language)		

*See last page for an explanation of dimensions

SPRING 2023

Diagnostic Profile of ▮▮▮▮▮'s Test Performance 4/14/2023

Diagnostic Dimension*	Insufficient items administered to provide diagnostic information	Relative Weakness		
		None	Mild	Severe
Vocabulary		Vocabulary		
Grammar		Grammar		
Comprehension		Comprehension		
Language Functions (including academic language)		Language Functions (including academic language)		
Listening		Listening		
Speaking		Speaking		
BICS (social language)		BICS (social language)		

*See last page for an explanation of dimensions

This table highlights even more specifics, including individual language skills such as grammar or language function, giving teachers more granular data that they can use to further guide student growth.

FALL 2022

Level C

IPT Vocabulary Items	IPT Grammar Items	IPT Comprehension Items	IPT Language Functions Items
No weakness detected	Mild weakness detected	Mild weakness detected	Mild weakness detected
	Verbs - Simple present - Future tense - Past tense - Conditional may/might/will **Prepositions** - of location **Question Formation** - Positive questions	- Understand comparatives	- Understanding descriptions (comparative form) - Predicting events - Describing events (past) - Identifying likes - Summarizing plot - Giving supporting details - Explaining rationale - Predicting what will happen next

SPRING 2023

Level D

IPT Vocabulary Items	IPT Grammar Items	IPT Comprehension Items	IPT Language Functions Items
No weakness detected	No weakness detected	No weakness detected	No weakness detected

Stathakis and Schools assert that all the reporting features included with the IPT are extremely valuable in supplying hard data on student progress, which helps teachers better prepare and guide instruction. "It gives us really great concrete data when it comes time to write progress reports or report cards," Schools offered. "[With the IPT], we have evidence to back up everything that we are sharing."

> *We wanted something that would help us maximize our time to target the skills that each individual student needed.*
>
> ~ Chantel Schools
> EL Teacher

Leveraging Data for Targeted Instruction and Customized Learning Resources

Stathakis and Schools highlighted how they can effectively utilize IPT data to guide instruction and develop RTI plans. For example, a few specific questions focus on students' ability to make predictions, particularly using the future tense. Students look at a picture and they are asked to say what they think will happen next. If the student does not give a response, there is a follow-up question that asks them to tell the examiner what is **going to** happen.

Students who struggle with this skill can be placed in an RTI group. To address this area of need, Stathakis and Schools, along with their EL team, put together a comprehensive unit with books, activities, and discussions centered around making predictions, while also providing language supports and scaffolding based on individual levels.
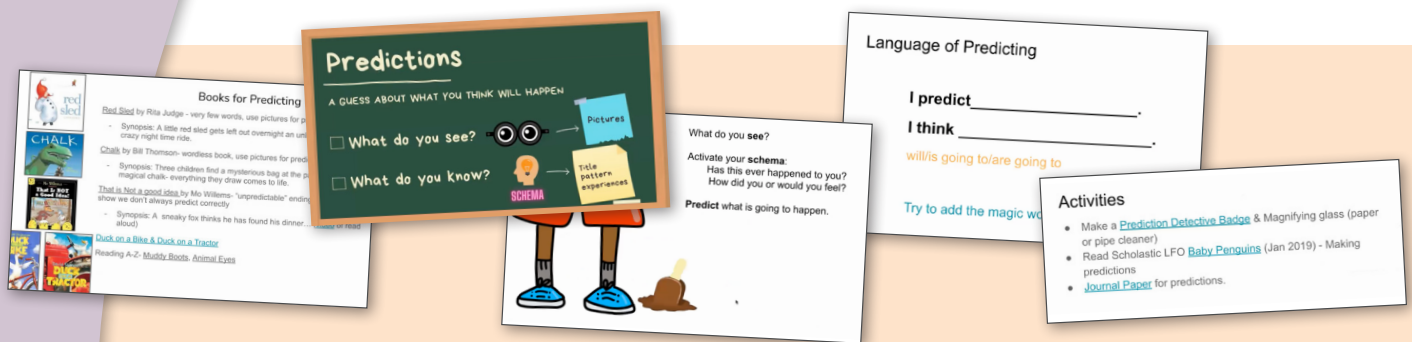
The IPT has proven to be an invaluable tool for Marathon Elementary School in supporting their PreK–1 English Learners. By harnessing its robust and reliable data, Schools and Stathakis, along with their EL team, have been able to make informed decisions regarding identification, placement, intervention, progress monitoring, and designing targeted instruction. The comprehensive insights from the reports aid in the RTI process, allowing educators to better tailor instruction and develop customized learning resources.

The data-driven approach enabled by the IPT not only benefits individual students but also helps identify larger issues at an earlier stage, providing opportunities for timely intervention and support. The IPT's reporting features, including grids, can-do sections, and comparative data, empower educators to fine-tune their instructional approaches and address specific areas of student need.

Since adopting the IPT, Marathon educators now have the precise data they need to help their ELs thrive academically and linguistically.

Take a Closer Look at the OnlineIPT

IPT Oral and R&W Diagnostic Reports
(Available in both English & Spanish)

Reports provide actionable data!

Student IPT Progress Report

Student progress reports can cover 2-3 test periods and are great for tracking progress for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), newcomers, native Spanish-speaking students, and English language development testing across the board. This is also an effective way to document language dominance in English-Spanish dual language programs.

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LET'S CHAT

Diagnostic Reports
☑ Designations
☑ Proficiency levels
☑ Strengths & weaknesses
☑ Instructional implications & recommendations

onlineipt
Language Proficiency Assessments
English & Spanish, Pre-K – 12

Reading & Writing Test Administration
Reading: 45–50 minutes
Writing: 25–60 minutes
group administered

Reading + Writing Test (Part 1)	Writing Test (Parts 2 & 3)
online administration, each student needs a computer	print test for paper-based administration or administer online if students' typing skills allow
☑ computer scored	☑ scored by trained raters
	enter writing scores online for record keeping and reports

Oral Test Administration
15–20 minutes per student
Individually Administered

interview format
only the examiner needs a computer

☑ instant scoring
☑ instant results
☑ instant reports

Student interacts with the examiner, who scores the student's responses correct or incorrect on the computer as the test proceeds. Automated scoring rules tell the examiner when to stop testing.

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