

# Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)

AUTHENTIC

RESEARCH BASED

FIELD TESTED



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# a better way to conduct assessments

These days, no one doubts the importance of early literacy assessment. But the question remains: how is it possible to conduct assessments in a way that's natural and comfortable for the child, yet provides reliable and valid results?

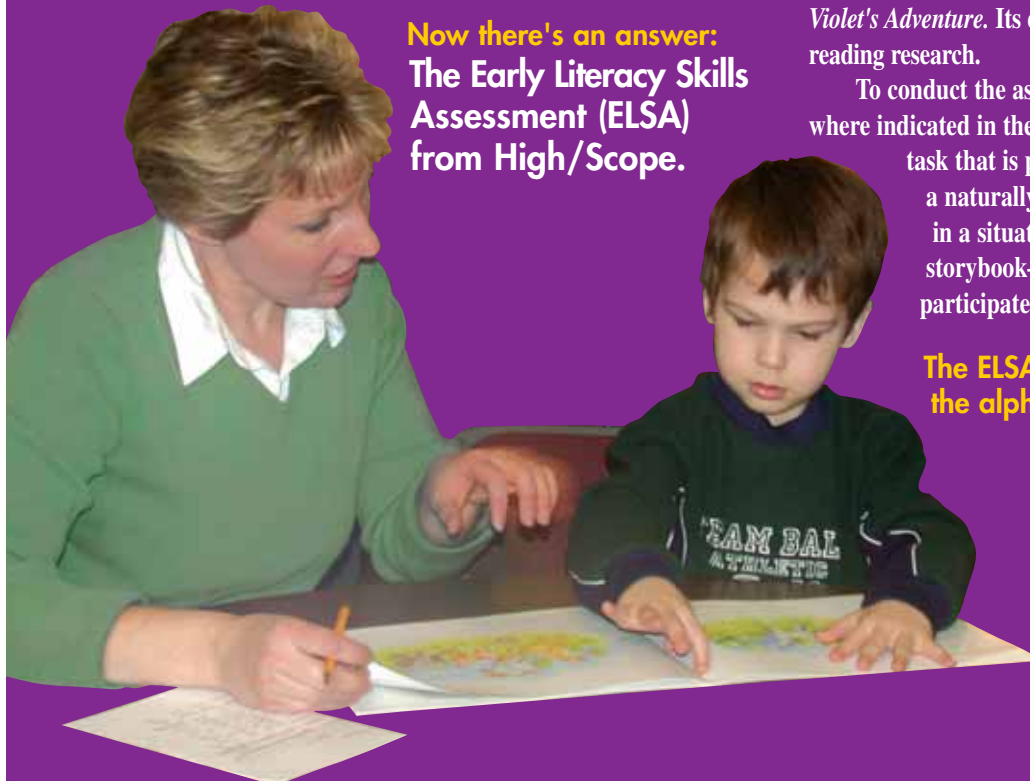
Now there's an answer:  
**The Early Literacy Skills  
Assessment (ELSA)  
from High/Scope.**

## **An Authentic, Engaging, Research-Based Tool**

Unique among early literacy instruments, the ELSA is an authentic assessment in the form of a children's storybook titled *Violet's Adventure*. Its design was guided by scientifically-based reading research.

To conduct the assessment, a teacher reads the story with an individual child, stopping where indicated in the book to ask questions or elicit ideas. The ELSA engages children in a task that is personally meaningful, occurs in a real-life context, and is grounded in a naturally occurring instructional activity. Because the assessment takes place in a situation familiar to most young children—the joint reading of an engaging storybook—it focuses their attention and provides motivation for them to participate.

**The ELSA measures comprehension, phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, and concepts about print.**





**Four Key Principles** *The ELSA is designed to measure the four key principles of early literacy emphasized in the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act (January 2002), the National Reading Panel Report (2000), and the summary of the National Early Literacy Panel Report (Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). Typically, children who develop competence in these four areas of early literacy before entering kindergarten experience more academic success than those who do not.*

### What It Measures

The ELSA makes it possible to measure all four key principles of early literacy using one instrument. Each principle is defined below, and the specific skills measured are listed.

**Comprehension** is the process of deriving meaning from speech and text by linking what is being learned to what is already known. The ELSA measures comprehension through retelling of story events, making predictions, and making connections to real life.

**Phonological awareness** is the general ability to attend to the sounds of speech—that is, to perceive the sounds that make up words. The ELSA measures phonological awareness through rhyming, segmentation, and phonemic awareness activities.

**The alphabetic principle** is the knowledge of a systematic relationship between letters and sounds. The ELSA measures understanding of the alphabetic principle through letter identification, letter sounds, and sense of word.

**Concepts about print** relates to how print is organized and used in writing and reading. For example, books have covers, pages, pictures, and words, and the print on the page carries meaning. The ELSA measures knowledge of print concepts through children's understanding of book orientation, book parts, first and last parts of the story, where to begin reading (from left to right), and where to go after the end of the line (return sweep).

**The ELSA measures progress in all early childhood programs — including, but not limited to, those using the High/Scope educational approach.**

### References

- National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.
- No Child Left Behind Act*. Public Law (PL) 107-110, 115 stat 1425 (08 January, 2002).
- Snow, C.E., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Strickland, D.S., & Shanahan, T. (2004). Laying the groundwork for literacy. *Educational Leadership*, 61(6), 7–77.

### Scoring the Assessment

The ELSA is a developmentally sensitive instrument. Every item on the ELSA represents a topic contained in one of the key principles of early literacy. The ELSA provides information about specific skill areas and gives an overall developmental level in each of the four key early literacy principles. Each level is linked to a child's natural early literacy skill development.

### A Superior Assessment Tool

Most early literacy assessments rely on traditional testing methods, such as pointing to answers on separate, isolated pages. This type of testing is not only stressful for many young children, making them uncomfortable and restless, but can distort any evaluation of what the child actually knows.

In contrast, the Early Literacy Skills Assessment provides an authentic means of determining young children's early literacy development. The ELSA doesn't rely on unrealistic or arbitrary time constraints, nor does it emphasize instant recall or depend on lucky guesses. Instead, it offers teachers valuable information for planning appropriate literacy lessons and experiences.

In addition, the ELSA meets the psychometric standards of demonstrated reliability and validity. By supplying statistically rigorous, developmentally sound information, the ELSA clarifies what children already know and highlights areas that require more time, support, and practice.

# a better way to conduct assessments

## The ELSA Process

The ELSA is an authentic assessment in the form of a children's storybook titled *Violet's Adventure*. The teacher reads the story with an individual child, stopping where indicated in the book to ask questions or elicit ideas. The child's responses are easily recorded on a score sheet.

The ELSA measures comprehension, phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, and concepts about print.

This assessment engages children in a task that is personally meaningful, takes place in a real-life context, and occurs during a natural part of their daily activity. Because this assessment occurs in a situation familiar to most young children—the joint reading of an engaging storybook—it focuses their attention and provides motivation for them to participate.

As part of the ELSA, you receive three forms. The first, the ELSA Score Sheet, is used while reading with the child. The second, the ELSA Child Summary, is completed as soon as possible after each ELSA session. It shows the child's scores on each item and in each content area as well as the child's developmental level in each content area. The third form, the ELSA Class Summary, is completed when all the Child Summary forms are finished. It depicts the levels of all the children in an individual class in each of the content areas, pre-test and post-test.

The Early Literacy Skills Assessment provides an authentic means of determining young children's early literacy development. It does not rely on unrealistic or arbitrary time constraints, nor does it emphasize instant recall or depend on lucky guesses. It offers teachers valuable information for planning appropriate literacy lessons and experiences.

While the ELSA is an authentic measure, it also meets the psychometric standards of demonstrated reliability and validity as its more standardized counterparts in testing do. The ELSA supplies statistically rigorous, developmentally sound information that will provide teachers with a window into what children already know and areas in which they need more time, support, and practice.

## Materials Included in the ELSA Kit

- ★ 2 copies of *Violet's Adventure*
- ★ 1 *User Guide*
- ★ 2 *Scoring Pads (60 each, Score Sheet and Child Summary Forms)*
- ★ 12 *Class Summary Forms*
- ★ 60 *Family Report Forms*



# Sample Pages from *La Aventura de Violeta*—

Imagine...

*An early literacy assessment that looks like a storybook.*

## Introducing the *Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)* in Spanish!

This child-friendly assessment provides an authentic means of determining young children’s early literacy skill development. The **Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)** engages children in a task that is personally meaningful, takes place in a real-life context, and is grounded in a naturally occurring instructional activity—the reading of a storybook, *La Aventura de Violeta*.

The **Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)** is designed to measure the four key principles of early literacy: comprehension, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and concepts about print. Below and right are samples of a few pages of *La Aventura de Violeta* and the principles it measures.



Comprehension



Concepts About Print



Phonological Awareness



Alphabetic Principle



## Instrument Comparison

### Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Skills Assessments

Assessment	Components Assessed				
	Vocabulary	Print Knowledge/Concepts About Print	Phonological Awareness	Alphabetic Principle	Comprehension
Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)		X	X	X	X
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	X				
Get it Got it Go! (Preschool version of DIBELS)	X		X		
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPPP)	X	X	X		
Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-3)		X		X	