This video provides an overview of the types of items students will be asked to complete in the English Language Arts portion of the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment.
Specifically, this video provides an overview of the structure of the DLM Alternate Assessment in English Language Arts using examples from grades 4 and 5. This video provides an overview of two reading testlets. In the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment, items are grouped together into testlets. Each testlet has 3-5 items that address a single DLM Essential Element.
The first testlet reviewed in this video relates to a 4th grade DLM Essential Element in Reading Information Text that reads, “Identify one or more reasons supporting a specific point in an informational text.”
The 2nd testlet relates to a 5th grade DLM Essential Element in Reading Information Text that reads, “Identify the relationship between a specific point and supporting reasons in an informational text.”
Both of these Essential Elements are found in Claim 1, Comprehending text in increasingly complex ways, and
In Conceptual Area 1.2, Constructing Understandings of Text.
For each Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Element, there are 5 linkage levels, each including one or more nodes identified in the DLM Learning Map. These nodes reflect a range of knowledge, skills, and understanding relative to the grade level DLM Essential Element. The five linkage node levels are: the initial precursor node, the distal precursor node, the proximal precursor node, the target node; and the successor node.
The node or set of nodes that most closely reflects the grade level Essential Element is the Target Node.
The easiest of the identified linkage levels is called the initial precursor. Testlets developed at this initial precursor level typically reflect foundational nodes in the learning map. These early, foundational nodes connect directly back to the target nodes through one or more pathways in the learning map. Testlets at the initial precursor linkage level are typically intended for students who do not yet have symbolic communication, and are usually administered by the teacher, who observes the student’s behavior as directed by the system, and then records responses in the system.
For the 4th grade Essential Element, Reading Information, Standard 8, the target node for the Essential Element is “Can identify the reasons the support points made in an information text.” The Initial Precursor that is linked to this target is, “Recognize different.”
The mini-maps that DLM creates to guide the development of the assessment, show the relationship between each node or set of nodes and the target. For the 5th grade example, there is one node identified at four of the five levels and two nodes called out at one level.
The initial precursor linkage node is, *Recognize some*. 
The distal precursor linkage node is, *Can identify the relationships between concrete facts or details.*
Two nodes have been identified at the proximal precursor linkage level. They are, *Can identify the points made by the author of an unfamiliar informational text* and *Can identify two related points made in an informational text*. 
The target node, which aligns most directly with the Essential Element is, *Can identify the relationship between specific points and the reasons supporting them in an informational text.*
Finally, the successor linkage node, which extends beyond the Essential Element toward the general grade level standard is, *Can identify examples supporting the points, reasoning, and details made by the author of an informational text.*
For each Essential Element assessed in the DLM Alternate Assessment System, a mini-map with five linkage levels has been extracted from the DLM Learning Maps. Students are directed to testlets at linkage levels that best reflect their skills and understandings as reported by the teachers and as demonstrated when using the DLM assessment system.
Let’s look at an example of an initial precursor testlet related to the 4th grade Reading Information Essential Element that reads, “Identify one or more reasons supporting a specific point in an informational text.”
Gather any objects you have used while reading Trains. Make sure you have two familiar, identical objects and three new or different objects.

Read the text with the student. Maximize your interaction with the student by using the objects you have gathered and pointing to objects in pictures while you read. Lead with comments, such as “Look at the train,” while pointing to a picture. Make sounds and perform actions when appropriate. After you read the text, you will read the text a second time and answer some questions using the objects.

On the first screen of the testlet you’ll see directions for the test administrator. These directions are aimed at the teacher because the typical student who is taking an initial precursor item would be unable to read and may find it difficult to understand directions presented by the computer using read aloud. Here, the directions to the teacher say, “Gather any objects you have used while reading Trains. Make sure you have two familiar, identical objects and three new or different objects. Read the text with the student. Maximize your interaction with the student by using the objects you have gathered and pointing to objects in pictures while you read. Lead with comments, such as “look at the train,” while pointing to a picture. Make sounds and perform actions when appropriate. After you read the text, you will read the text a second time and answer some questions using the objects.”
The text that is used in this example is a text that should be familiar to students before they sit down to complete the assessment. As part of the DLM™ Alternate Assessment system, we are providing teachers with access to many of the texts students will be asked to use in ELA testlets at the initial and distal precursor level. These “familiar texts” are available through a link on the Educator Resource Page on your state’s DLM webpage. Teachers can choose to use these texts during instruction or simply allow students to read them independently. By the time students are encountering these texts during the assessment, they should be familiar with them as well as any objects teachers have been using to increase interaction and engagement. To support students in responding to the items in a testlet, all students will read the entire text one time before reading it a second time with the questions embedded throughout. While reading the book twice does increase the amount of time it takes to complete the assessment, students must read the entire text to move beyond word and sentence-level comprehension. This will especially be the case when students are reading texts that are NOT familiar at higher linkage levels. If students are encountering a text for the first time during the assessment, the first read of the entire text before responding to questions allows them to become familiar with the entire text before answering questions about part of it.

After reading the teacher directions and gathering any objects, the teacher and student will read the book together using shared reading strategies and maximizing interactions along the way. This is a book about trains.
Trains move people and things.
Trains run on tracks.
Trains have wheels. The wheels roll on the tracks.
The engineer drives the train. He wears a hat.
Trains have engines at the front. The engines pull the train cars.
Old trains had steam engines.
Now most trains have diesel engines.
Some trains carry things in freight cars.
Some trains carry people in passenger cars.
Trains cross bridges.
Trains go through tunnels.
Trains move people and things.
At the end of the first reading of the text, there is a screen that reads, “This is the end of the text. Now, read the text again and answer some questions. Because this testlet addresses foundational skills, the questions focus on the student’s ability to recognize what is different.” In other words, the questions are not questions of the student’s ability to comprehend the text per se. Instead, the questions probe the student’s foundational understanding of different in the context of reading.
As you continue through this testlet
at the Initial Precursor level
you encounter teacher administered items.
This first item directs the teacher to, “SHOW: one of the familiar, identical objects. Then give the student a moment to explore the object.” Then SHOW: the other familiar, identical object. Then give the student a moment to explore the object.” Finally, the teachers is directed to “SHOW: a new or different object.” The teacher then observes the student’s response to the new or different object and selects the statement that best reflects the response. Here the statements read, “Attends longer to the new or different object; Attends equally to all of the objects; Attends only to familiar objects; Attends to other stimuli; or No response.” As you can see, this testlet assesses very early foundational skills. Students are not expected to identify an object that is different or contrast same with different. The student is expected to demonstrate what is described in the research literature as a habituated response by attending longer or with increased interest to the new or different stimuli.
As you continue through the book,
The engineer drives the train. He wears a hat.

you stop two more times
Trains have engines at the front. The engines pull the train cars.

to complete embedded items like the first one.
Old trains had steam engines.

First showing students
one item then a second item
Now most trains have diesel engines.

that is the same as the first
Some trains carry things in freight cars.

and finally
Some trains carry people in passenger cars.

observing the student’s response
Trains cross bridges.

while you present
Trains go through tunnels.

the third new
or different item.
Trains move people and things.
There will be a screen at the end of the items in the initial precursor testlet indicating that you have completed the set of items. This is a time when you can determine if the student is engaged enough to complete another testlet or requires a break before taking another testlet.
The next testlet is a target level testlet that addresses the 5th grade Essential Element, *Identify the relationship between a specific point and supporting reasons in an informational text.*
Read the text. Think about the details in the text while you read it. After you read the text, you will read the text again and answer some questions.

It starts with a direction screen that directs the students to read the text and tells them up front to think about the details while reading. Specifically it says, *Read the text. Think about the details in the text while you read it. After you read the text, you will read the text again and answer some questions.* While some students at this target level may require support navigating from one screen to the next or entering responses they have selected, it is expected that the students will engage in reading the text and answering the questions independently.
Students will read through the book
and have the option of having pages read aloud by the computer
if that preference has been set
There are waterfalls.

in the student's personal needs and preferences profile.
There are rivers.

Note the read aloud option
There are lakes.

has not been turned on
There are oceans.

in this example.
Water freezes into ice. Icebergs are frozen water.
Water is also an important resource.
A resource is something that is used by many people and animals.
People can play in water.
People can feel water when it rains.
Many things need water to survive.
Trees need water to grow.
Fish live in water.
Animals drink water.
All animals need water. Animals need water to live.
People need water too.
People need to drink water every day.
Water is an important resource.
There will be screen informing the student that the text is finished. It reads, *This is the end of the text. Now, read the text again and answer some questions.*
Embedded in the text during the second read are a number of questions.
Water is everywhere.
You can see water in many places.
There are waterfalls.
There are rivers.
There are lakes.
There are oceans.
Water freezes into ice. Icebergs are frozen water.
Water is also an important resource.
A resource is something that is used by many people and animals.
People can play in water.
People can feel water when it rains.
Many things need water to survive.
Trees need water to grow.
Presented as a simple, multiple choice item this question asks, *Why do trees need water?* With the answer choices: *to grow, to move, and to stretch.*
Fish live in water.
Animals drink water.
All animals need water. Animals need water to live.
Another question asks, *Why do animals need water?* With three answer choices that are *to live, to smell* and *to touch.*
People need water too.
People need to drink water every day.
A third question asks, *What do people need to do every day? Drink water, feel water, and hear water.*
Water is an important resource.
A final question at the end of the text asks, *Why is water an important resource?* With three answer choices (1) *people and animals need water to live* (2) *people and animals need water to look at*; and (3) *people and animals need water to touch*. 
As in the initial precursor testlet, there will be a screen at the end of the items indicating that the set of items is complete. This is a time when you can determine if the student is engaged enough to continue or requires a break before moving on.
To find your state’s DLM webpage, which includes DLM-provided resources and state-provided resources, go to dynamiclearningmaps.org, select operational testing or field testing from the assessment menu, and choose your state.
For more information about the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System please go to dynamiclearningmaps.org. Thank you!