

About the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards

WIDA's English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12: Frameworks for Formative and Summative Assessment and Instruction, 2007 edition, is a key component of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium's assessment system. WIDA's vision of language proficiency encompasses both social and academic contexts tied to schooling, particularly to standards, curriculum, and instruction. By developing these English language proficiency (ELP) standards, first published in 2004, the WIDA Consortium has responded to this emergent vision to link language learning with academic content. Furthermore, these ELP standards guide the development of test blueprints, task specifications, and ELP measures, primarily WIDA's ACCESS for ELLs® test.

Originally developed by consortium members with funding from a U.S. Department of Education Enhanced Assessment Grant, the standards are designed for the many audiences in the field of education who are impacted by English language learners (ELLs). This second edition reflects an evolving understanding of the needs of ELLs and their educators in the use of the ELP standards as an instructional and assessment tool.

Organization of the Standards

There are five WIDA ELP Standards, which appear in two frameworks: Summative (the outcomes of learning) and Formative (the processes of learning). The standards, identical for both frameworks, reflect the social and academic dimensions of acquiring a second language that are expected of ELLs in grade levels PreK-12 attending schools in the United States. Each ELP standard addresses a specific context for English language

development. Overall, the standards center on the language needed and used by ELLs to succeed in school.

Each standard is organized by grade level cluster (PreK-K, grades 1-2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12) and by language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Within each grade cluster and domain, there are five model performance indicators (MPIs), one for each language proficiency level from 1, Entering, to 5, Bridging. All five MPIs focus on the same example topic from a content area reflected in the standard, forming a “strand” that illustrates the language development continuum. Each MPI contains three elements: a language function (e.g., describe, justify), an example topic (e.g., weather, human populations), and a form of support through level 4 (e.g., pictures or illustrations, working in small groups). The components of the ELP standards, from frameworks down to the elements of an MPI, work together to form the standards document, a critical tool for educators of ELLs for curriculum development, instruction and assessment.

The WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards

- *English Language Proficiency Standard 1:* English language learners communicate for **Social** and **Instructional** purposes within the school setting.
- *English Language Proficiency Standard 2:* English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Language Arts**.
- *English Language Proficiency Standard 3:* English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Mathematics**.
- *English Language Proficiency Standard 4:* English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Science**.
- *English Language Proficiency Standard 5:* English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Social Studies**.

The ELP standards are often abbreviated as Social and Instructional language, the language of Language Arts, the language of Mathematics, the language of Science, and the language of Social Studies.

The Language Proficiency Levels and Performance Definitions

The five language proficiency levels outline the progression of language development implied in the acquisition of English as an additional language, from 1, Entering the process, to 6, Reaching the attainment of English language proficiency. The language proficiency levels delineate expected performance and describe what ELLs can do within each domain of the standards. The Performance Definitions define the expectations of students at each proficiency level. The definitions encompass three criteria: linguistic complexity—the amount and quality of speech or writing for a given situation; vocabulary usage—the specificity of words or phrases for a given context; and language control—the comprehensibility of the communication based on the amount and types of errors.

The Performance Definitions (see page 3) are a key component of the standards documents, and the use of the standards and corresponding MPIs must be in conjunction with the Performance Definitions. The MPIs, delineated by language proficiency level, give expectations for what students should be able to process and produce at a given proficiency level. The Performance Definitions describe how well the student can or should be expected to do so. For example, the language function “describe” appears in MPIs at levels 1-4. What language does a student at language proficiency level 2 need to produce in order to “describe”? What can he or she reasonably be expected to process to understand a description? How does this compare with a student at language proficiency level 4? The language

function “describe” for a level 2 student may mean producing or comprehending phrases or short sentences using common adjectives and modifiers, whereas a level 4 student may be expected to process or use extended discourse incorporating relative clauses, similes or metaphors. This example illustrates how the Performance Definitions are an essential companion to the strands of MPIs.

Performance Definitions for the levels of English language proficiency

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

<p>6 Reaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialized or technical language reflective of the content area at grade level a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level oral or written communication in English comparable to proficient English peers
<p>5 Bridging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the technical language of the content areas; a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports; oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English proficient peers when presented with grade level material
<p>4 Expanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specific and some technical language of the content areas; a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related paragraphs; oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with occasional visual and graphic support
<p>3 Developing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general and some specific language of the content areas; expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs; oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication but retain much of its meaning when presented with oral or written, narrative or expository descriptions with occasional visual and graphic support
<p>2 Beginning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general language related to the content areas; phrases or short sentences; oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with visual and graphic support
<p>1 Entering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas; words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-questions, or statements with visual and graphic support