



## Overview of the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards September 21, 2009

WIDA's innovative standards and assessments exceed the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and are boldly advancing the field of English language learner (ELL) education. WIDA created its English language proficiency (ELP) standards (2004, 2007) to address the need for students to become fully proficient in both social and academic English. The WIDA ELP Standards were adapted by TESOL as the national model in 2006.

WIDA's ELP Standards for PreKindergarten through Grade 12 encompass:

- Social and Instructional language
- the language of Language Arts
- the language of Mathematics
- the language of Science
- the language of Social Studies

The five WIDA ELP Standards are organized into:

- Two frameworks: summative and formative;
- Four language domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing;
- Six language proficiency levels: 1-Entering, 2-Beginning, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-Bridging, and 6-Reaching;
- Five grade-level clusters: PreK–K, 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.

The WIDA ELP Standards document consists of thousands of model performance indicators (MPIs). An MPI is a single cell within the standards' matrices that describes a specific level of language proficiency for a language domain. Each MPI consists of a *language function*, or a verb indicating how ELLs can process or use language, an *example topic*, which is flexible but helps educators embed language instruction within an academic context, and a form of *support* (sensory, graphic, or interactive) through level 4 to help ELLs access meaning. While the WIDA ELP Standards engage students in higher order thinking skills at all levels of language proficiency, the linguistic performance definitions for each level vary. That is, WIDA emphasizes that students will process or produce language with higher degrees of *linguistic complexity*, greater specificity of *vocabulary usage*, and increasing *language control* as they progress along the continuum of language development and mature in age.

WIDA is defined by its persistent inclusion of educators in all stages of developing its products and services, including the standards, and its collaboration with numerous experts and leaders in the field. Alignment services, professional development, and research importantly complement WIDA's ELP standards and assessments. Based on the WIDA ELP Standards, WIDA has produced a large-scale assessment, ACCESS for ELLs<sup>®</sup>, a screener test, the W-APT<sup>™</sup>, and the WIDA MODEL<sup>™</sup>, which can be used as a placement or benchmark assessment. Current WIDA-affiliated grant projects are developing FLARE<sup>™</sup> formative assessments and the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs<sup>™</sup> test for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

To learn more, please visit [www.wida.us](http://www.wida.us).

## Performance Definitions

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

<b>6- Reaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level</li> <li>• oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers</li> </ul>
<b>5- Bridging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialized or technical language of the content areas</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays or reports</li> <li>• oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade level material</li> </ul>
<b>4- Expanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific and some technical language of the content areas</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences or paragraphs</li> <li>• 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 sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>3- Developing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general and some specific language of the content areas</li> <li>• expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs</li> <li>• 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 sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>2- Beginning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general language related to the content areas</li> <li>• phrases or short sentences</li> <li>• 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 sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>1- Entering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas</li> <li>• words, phrases or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> <li>• oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>