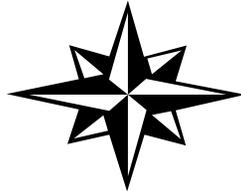


Appendix A: Wisconsin's K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards

WIDA Consortium



K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards
for English Language Learners

FRAMEWORK FOR LARGE-SCALE ASSESSMENT

Overview

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WIDA's K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards: Framework for Large-Scale Assessment

Organization and Format

WIDA's *K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards: Framework for Large-Scale Assessment* is the first of a series of frameworks and formats that are designed for English language learners, teachers, administrators, and test developers who are members of the Consortium of states under the WIDA umbrella. While the English language proficiency standards, domains, grade level clusters, and language proficiency levels remain constant, each framework will have a specific purpose. Although the large-scale assessment framework has applicability for curriculum and instruction, its primary focus is on the model performance indicators that will be used to generate the specifications for the English language proficiency test as well as anchors for the measure itself. The English language proficiency standards are listed below, followed by a description of their components.

The English Language Proficiency Standards

The five **English language proficiency standards** cover the social and academic language proficiencies expected of English language learners in grade levels K-12:

English Language Proficiency Standard 1:

English language learners communicate in English 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.

Each English **language proficiency standard** addresses a specific context for language acquisition, in social and instructional settings as well as each of the major content areas associated with schooling; language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Overall, the language proficiency standards center on the language needed and used by English language learners for social and academic purposes.

Each language proficiency standard addresses four **language domains**-- listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Each language proficiency standard is divided into four **grade level clusters**; K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Each language proficiency standard is illustrated by **model performance indicators**, representative samples from the corpus of language associated with English language learners' acquisition of social and academic proficiencies. The model performance indicators incorporate the language necessary for students to move towards the attainment of state academic content standards.

The model performance indicators for each content standard typify the progression of language development implied in the acquisition of English as an additional language as outlined in the five **language proficiency levels**, from 1, **entering** the process, to 5, **bridging** to state academic content standards.

The Model Performance Indicators

The **model performance indicators** are functional, measurable indices of the language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and aimed at the age/developmental levels of English language learners. They represent a full range of linguistic complexity and cognitive engagement within and across content areas. Model performance indicators are presented in a developmental sequence across language proficiency levels and grade level clusters.

The model performance indicators in this document are adapted from TESOL's preK-12 ESL standards (1997) and states' (in particular, Wisconsin, Delaware, Arkansas, and the District of Columbia) academic content standards. The academic content standards of Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have also been incorporated into the design of WIDA's English language proficiency standards.

Model performance indicators for Standard 1, *English language learners communicate in English for social and instructional purposes within the school setting*, for each language proficiency level are applicable to all grade level clusters, given developmentally appropriate tasks. The model performance indicators presented in Standards 2-5 reflect universal language functions that are coupled with grade cluster specific content of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The framework for large-scale assessment appears like a rubric. This format is intentionally used in order for teachers, administrators, and test developers to visualize the developmental nature of language learning across language proficiency levels and emphasize the scaffolding of language demands at each grade level cluster. It is built upon the assumption that the effects of accruing language at each subsequent grade level cluster and language proficiency level are cumulative.

To summarize, the framework for large-scale assessment consists of:

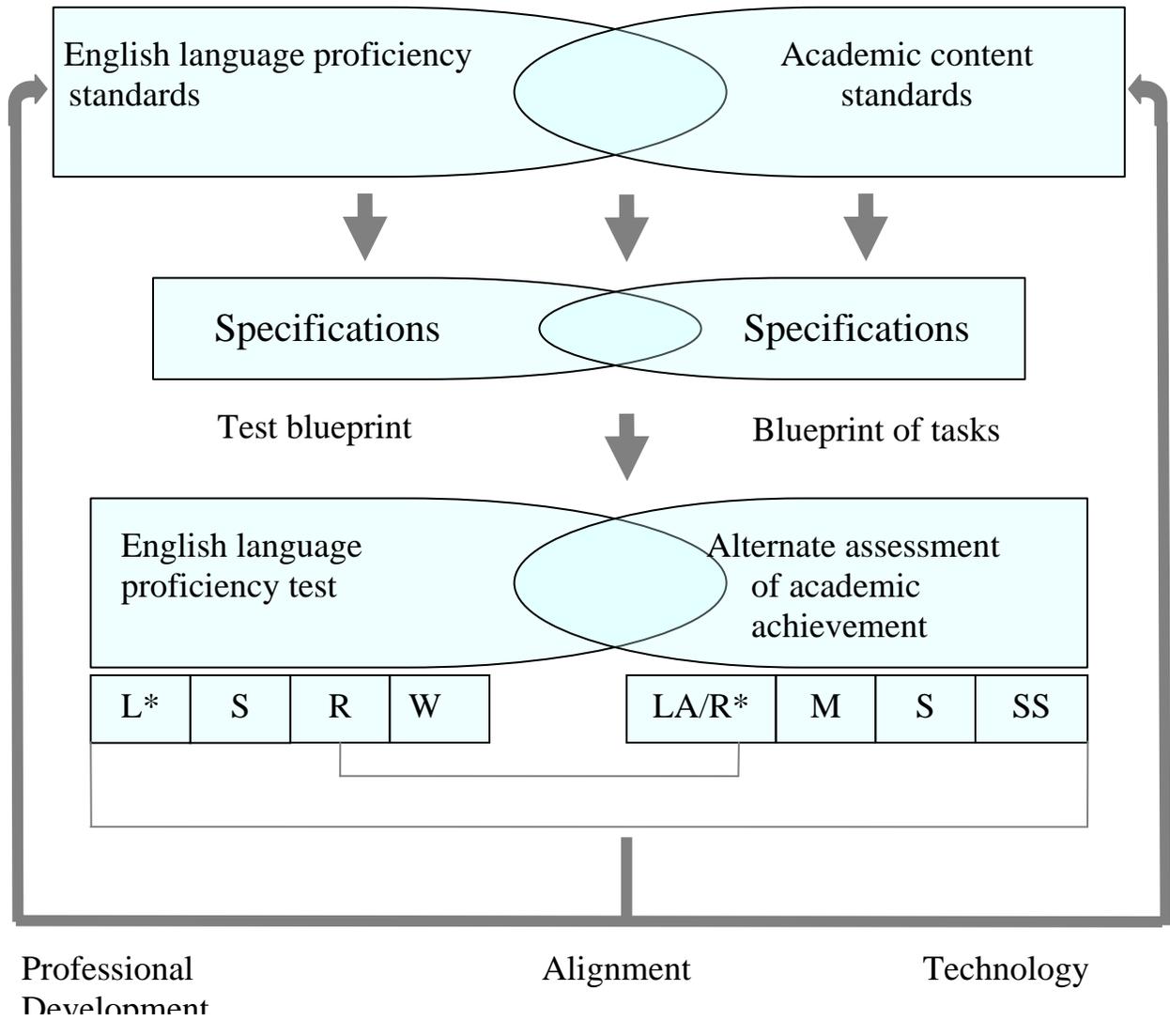
**5 English language proficiency standards,
4 grade level clusters,
5 levels of language proficiency,
4 domains,
20 performance indicators per domain, and
80 unique, model performance indicators per standard.**

The English language proficiency standards are a component of an enhanced assessment system designed for English language learners. The large-scale assessment framework defines the parameters for the creation of the test blueprint and specifications of tasks. The specifications, in turn, guide the development of the standards-based English language proficiency test that encompasses the four language domains.

As seen in the diagram of this system, the components associated with English language proficiency overlay those associated with academic achievement (that includes the content areas of language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies). The process of developing alternate assessment parallels that of English language proficiency testing with one unique qualification.... the system is under-girded by an identical set of core standards, specifications, and assessment tasks. The overlap between the sets of components ensures alignment and validation of the system. Concomitantly, it produces a continuous stream of data that will allow English language learners to make a seamless transition as they progress toward the attainment of state academic content standards.

Ongoing professional development planned for members of the consortium of states will facilitate a thorough understanding of the implementation and use of the system. Technology will enhance the ability of the consortium members to share information, data, and expertise to create a truly exemplary assessment model.

WIDA's Enhanced Assessment System for English Language Learners



L* = Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing in English

LA/R* = Language arts/ Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies in English (L2) or the students' home language and language of instruction (L1)

Rationale

The need to develop English language proficiency standards that articulate with state academic content standards stems from three sources: 1. pedagogy, 2. assessment, and 3. educational policy. These changes, spurred by the standards-based movement and federal legislation, directly impact English language learners in elementary and secondary schools throughout the United States. States and school districts, now required to implement English language proficiency standards, are responding to this mandate.

The notion of how we, as bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) educators, envision language proficiency as a vehicle for instruction has changed quite drastically over the past decade. In K–12 classrooms with English language learners, subject-matter content has become infused into language learning as an instructional approach (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; Snow & Brinton, 1997). As a result, our vision of language proficiency has expanded to encompass both social contexts associated with language acquisition and academic contexts tied to schooling, in general, and standards, curriculum, and instruction, in particular. Standards-based instruction that integrates language and content represents a refinement of the seminal work by Cummins (1980, 1981), in which he first poses the constructs of basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency (Gottlieb, 2003).

English language proficiency standards need to capture the full range and complexities of methodologies that blend language and content learning. To this end, we must expand the coverage of current English language proficiency or development standards to bring them into alignment with practice. In addition, we must ensure that English language proficiency standards dovetail academic content standards to create a seamless pathway to academic success for our English language learners.

Language proficiency assessment, in large part, has not remained abreast with changing teaching practices for our English language learners. We need to retool existing language proficiency assessment measures to match the pedagogical shift to content-based instruction. English language proficiency standards guide the development of test blueprints, task specifications, and English language proficiency measures. Thus, language proficiency standards are the first step in the construction of reliable and valid assessment tools. We must create rigorous language proficiency standards as the anchor of a sound assessment system for English language learners.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 has given us the impetus to embark on this journey of redefining assessment for English language learners. Specific tenets within the Act make it crystal clear that states are to create English language proficiency standards, tied to their academic content standards, as the basis for the development of English language proficiency measures. In addition, English language learners, in grade levels K–12, must be assessed annually on their English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and English as a Second Language (ESL) benchmarks for the annual measurable achievement objectives are to be based on state English language

proficiency standards. Educational policy regarding English language learners in our schools reiterates the need of states, school districts, and schools to comply with the requirements of this federal legislation.

Designing an Assessment System: The Process of Developing English Language Proficiency Standards

The K-12 English language proficiency standards represent an amalgam of the thinking of educators of English language learners participating in the WIDA consortium. More than 50 teachers, administrators, and researchers at the classroom, district, state, university, and national levels, all closely or directly involved with creating and implementing programs for English language learners, have provided invaluable input and feedback to the process. The result is a useful product, unique to the field of language testing, that will not only ground both large-scale and classroom assessment, but will stimulate and guide curriculum and instruction. The development of the English language proficiency standards has been a four-phase undertaking.

Phase I: Setting the parameters for the English language proficiency standards

The theoretical and research base for the standards stems from a model that envisions academic language proficiency as a three-dimensional figure that addresses language complexity, cognitive engagement, and context while interacting with the domains of language (Gottlieb, 2003). The notion of academic language proficiency, the language used in the classroom, or other academic settings, directly tied to learning (Bailey & Butler, 2002; Stevens, Butler, & Castellon-Wellington, 2001) has gained acceptance as content-based instruction has emerged as a favored methodology in second language classrooms. Thus, English language proficiency standards have come to represent both the social and academic contexts that students encounter in school.

Given this backdrop, several steps were taken to convert theory to practice. Because TESOL's (1997) *ESL standards for preK-12 students* serve as the national template, this document was used as a starting point for analysis. First, descriptors and sample progress indicators for each grade level cluster (preK-3, 4-8, 9-12) were classified as being amenable to large-scale or classroom assessment. Next, the descriptors and sample progress indicators applicable to large-scale assessment were sorted and color-coded according to domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Then a matrix was created of 5 language proficiency levels (as used by the lead states in the Consortium) for the 4 language domains-listening, speaking, reading, writing and relevant progress indicators from TESOL and other states' English language proficiency standards were inserted.

Fifty national and local educational experts (see participant list) convened in Madison, Wisconsin, in May 2003. The goal of the two-day meeting was to determine the breadth and depth of the English language proficiency standards and the role of the standards in the enhanced assessment system for English language learners. The first day was devoted

to inspecting and augmenting existing English language proficiency and English language development standards from TESOL and around the country. Groups applied specific criteria for the selection of progress indicators or student achievement standards for determining their relevance and potential adoption by the Consortium. Next, the groups augmented the progress indicators, taking into account the following considerations:

- The language complexity required of the standard
- The level of cognitive engagement for the student
- The presence of a developmental progression in relation to the other standards and
- An equal representation of standards across language domains...listening, speaking, reading, & writing...for a given grade level cluster

At the close of the first day, the entire group agreed on the core English language proficiency standards and progress indicators (later to be named performance indicators) to be represented by current English language proficiency frameworks.

On the second day, individual states examined their academic content standards and, based on a set of criteria derived from linguistic theory (Bachman, 1990; Halliday, 1973, 1976) and agreement was reached on a common set of language functions to be used across content areas for the various levels of cognitive engagement. Groups worked with their individual state academic content standards in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies to extract the language functions to be applied to the English language proficiency standards.

From the two-day discussion emerged a consensus among the nine participating states on key decision points. It was agreed upon that there would be four standards (to represent the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to be defined by progress indicators, six areas of language proficiency confined to the school setting (to represent social language, academic language and the language of the content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies), five levels of language proficiency, four grade level clusters, and two applications (large-scale and classroom). In regard to the coverage of specific content areas, *No Child Left Behind* minimally requires the assessment of language arts/reading, mathematics, and science for academic achievement. However, the members of the consortium strongly felt that the English language proficiency standards, as well as the English language proficiency test, should also address the content area of social studies as well.

Phase II: Creating and reviewing the K-12 English language proficiency standards

The work of the eight groups of participants generated over the two-day meeting was synthesized. The synthesis involved a systematic review of all materials (disks and paper copies). Model performance indicators for each English language proficiency standard, derived from English language proficiency frameworks and state academic content standards, were then plotted onto a map by grade level cluster and language proficiency level. Additional documents from the states (see references) provided full sets of academic content standards that helped supplement the model performance indicators. The WIDA team decided on the most appropriate format to display the performance indicators. The initial K-12 English language proficiency standards were drafted in July 2003.

WIDA's K-12 English language proficiency standards underwent formal review at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC in August. Eighteen representatives from consortium states and outside experts participated in the vetting process (see participant list). The purpose of the review was to elicit specific, useful feedback on the standards prior to undergoing final revision and refinement. This step was critical as the standards are to serve as anchors for task specifications that, in turn, will impact item writing for the language proficiency test.

Each component of the language proficiency standards was meticulously examined, through a set of guiding questions, in small groups divided by grade level clusters. From the whole group debriefing, a set of decisions emerged: 1. the standards should be reorganized (the areas of language proficiency were to become the standards and the current standards were to become the domains); 2. the progress indicators should be renamed model performance indicators; 3. for the large-scale framework, the model performance indicators should largely represent declarative knowledge (with procedural knowledge being captured by the classroom framework); and 4. the model performance indicators should maintain a uniform level of specificity.

Based on the recommendations and the materials from the initial development phase, the K-12 English language proficiency standards were revised during August and edited in early September 2003. The names of the proficiency levels were finalized and draft performance definitions were proposed for each level. The introduction was amplified to include a rationale and a more thorough description of the process and products of standards development.

Phase III: Enhancing the large-scale framework

The third phase of the development of the English language proficiency standards is actually two pronged, involving the addition of a classroom framework and potential enhancement by member states in the consortium. The classroom framework, like the large-scale assessment prototype, is to include model performance indicators that represent procedural knowledge, involving the use of learning strategies, self-assessment,

process writing, technology, and classroom-based projects. At the same time, member states of the Consortium are to be invited to enhance the model performance indicators of the frameworks by adding others specific to their state academic standards.

Uses of the English Language Proficiency Standards

The primary use of the English language proficiency standards is to guide and align curriculum, instruction, and assessment for English Language Learners. In doing so, the English language proficiency standards, by incorporating the language of state academic content standards, create a bridge for English Language Learners on their pathway to academic success.

The large-scale assessment framework provides a skeleton and the parameters for the creation of the specifications for English language proficiency assessment, alternate assessment of academic achievement, and English language proficiency assessment. The English language proficiency standards developed by the WIDA Consortium meet compliance with the requirements of Titles I and III of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001.

The model performance indicators are sample kernel ideas or concepts to be used for instruction and assessment. There are three components of a performance indicator: 1. the function (how the students use language), the content, and the context of delivery. The focus of the model performance indicators is on the language needed to communicate an idea or concept. The model performance indicators may be used according to grade level cluster, domains, or levels of language proficiency.

The model performance indicators for Standard 1, communicating in English for social and instructional purposes, may apply across all grade level clusters, given developmentally appropriate tasks. Those of the four content-specific standards, Standards 2-5, (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) are grade cluster specific.

The WIDA K-12 English language proficiency standards represent the work and commitment of professionals dedicated to the education of English language learners.

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Glossary of Terms Associated with WIDA’s English Language Proficiency Standards

Academic content standards: statements that define what students are expected to know and be able to do in order to attain competency in challenging subject matter associated with schooling

Academic success: demonstrated knowledge needed to meet state academic content standards

Commands: imperative statements

Communicate: express understanding and use of language through listening, speaking, reading, or writing

Descriptions: a cohesive series of sentences that include explanations with details (more than three but less than discourse level)

Directions: two or three sentences of explanation

Discourse: extended, connected language that may include explanations, descriptions, and propositions

English language learners: linguistically and culturally diverse students who have been identified through reliable and valid assessment as having levels of English language proficiency that preclude them from accessing, processing, and acquiring unmodified grade level content in English and thereby, qualifying for support services

Framework for classroom assessment: English language proficiency standards that include model performance indicators that represent procedural knowledge, involving the process of learning.

Framework for large-scale assessment: English language proficiency standards that include model performance indicators that represent declarative knowledge, involving the products of learning.

Functions: descriptions of how language is used or definitions of the intent of the communication

Instructional purposes: related to learning in the classroom and school environments

Language domains: the areas of language proficiency; namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing

Language proficiency levels: the demarcations along the second language acquisition continuum that are defined by a series of model performance indicators

Language proficiency standards: statements that define the language necessary for English language learners to attain social and academic competencies associated with schooling

Model performance indicators: sample kernel ideas or concepts composed of language functions, content, and contexts that exemplify the language proficiency levels of the language proficiency standards

Performance standards: statements that define the extent to which students are meeting the stated standards; in the instance of English language proficiency standards, performance definitions correspond to descriptions of what students can do at each language proficiency level

Social purposes: related to the basic fluency needed to communicate effectively in a variety of situations in school

Statements: declarative sentences of fact

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