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Foreword: The WIDA English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet

The WIDA Consortium, from its conception, envisioned a system of standards and assessments that would assist schools in teaching academic language to English Language Learners (ELLs). This dream, now a reality, includes the development of practical tools to guide teachers when designing and implementing lessons, monitoring student progress, determining student language proficiency levels, collaborating across programs, and conveying results to ELLs and their parents.

The WIDA English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet is a very important contribution to meeting these goals. The booklet complements the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards and provides a valuable set of resources aligned to the Performance Definitions for the levels of English language proficiency. WIDA’s professional development program works with these resources to assist teachers in embedding academic English into content lessons and working school-wide to ensure the academic success of our culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

The WIDA Consortium recognizes that as a teacher of ELLs, you have a challenging but crucial job within your school. We sincerely hope that this booklet and other WIDA resources help to make your work more effective and your students more successful both in learning English and mastering challenging academic content.

Timothy Boals, Ph.D.
Executive Director
WIDA Consortium
Introduction

The resources contained in this booklet are intended to support classroom instruction. As with all WIDA products and services, they address language proficiency in relation to five English language proficiency (ELP) standards:

- Social and Instructional Language
- The Language of Language Arts
- The Language of Mathematics
- The Language of Science
- The Language of Social Studies

The following table displays the major components of WIDA’s standards-based system. The bold-faced components are included in this booklet and listed in the order in which they appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards-based Component</th>
<th>Distinguishing Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strands of Model Performance Indicators as representative of the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards</td>
<td>Illustrate how English language learners process and use language for each English language proficiency standard, language domain, and language proficiency level by grade level cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Definitions</td>
<td>Outline how English language learners process and use language for each level of language proficiency in grades K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN DO Descriptors</td>
<td>Describe how English language learners process and use language for each language domain and level of language proficiency by grade level cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking and Writing Rubrics</td>
<td>Document how English language learners process and use language in the domain of speaking or writing for each level of language proficiency based on three criteria: linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control in grades K-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The resources contained in this booklet are intended to support classroom instruction. The **Performance Definitions** (see page 4) provide criteria that shape each of the six levels of English language proficiency. The three bullets within each proficiency level in the Performance Definitions represent:

- **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
- **Language Control**—the comprehensibility of the communication based on the amount and types of errors

The Performance Definitions provide a concise, global overview of language expectations for each level of English language proficiency. They span the spectrum of grade levels which means that educators must interpret the meaning of the Definitions according to students’ cognitive development due to age, their grade level, their diversity of educational experiences, and any diagnosed learning disabilities (if applicable). For example, in level 5, “extended oral or written discourse” would probably be indicated by a 1st grade student’s ability to orally retell a story in a series of sentences using simple transition words. However, a middle school student might be expected to exhibit linguistic complexity at level 5 by incorporating a variety of sentence structures in an essay several paragraphs in length. It is important to recognize that the Performance Definitions are the basis for use of other standards-based resources such as the CAN DO Descriptors.

The **CAN DO Descriptors** (see pages 6-7) are the centerpiece of this booklet, designed to support teachers by providing them with information on the language students are able to understand and produce in the classroom. What is unique about the CAN DO Descriptors is that they apply to all five English language proficiency standards, which means they provide an opportunity to link language development across all academic content areas. The Descriptors are intended to be used in tandem with the Performance Definitions. This is because the quantity and quality of language expected at a particular level of language proficiency may not be fully indicated within the CAN DO Descriptor for each language domain and proficiency level.

For example, the CAN DO Descriptors show that students may be able to “identify” at various levels of language proficiency, but the language (linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control) they use will vary tremendously. At one end of the spectrum, beginning English language learners may identify by pointing or using short words or phrases, whereas at the end of the language development continuum, students will begin to identify complex themes and ideas described in detailed technical language.
Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency in Grades K-12

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Language Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• specialized or technical language of the content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• specific and some technical language of the content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• general and some specific language of the content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• general language related to the content areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• phrases or short sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Entering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Grade Level Cluster
CAN DO Descriptors

The grade level cluster CAN DO Descriptors have been created by teachers, primarily for teachers, who work with English language learners throughout the consortium. During 2007-08, over 900 teachers and administrators participated in refining and validating five grade level clusters of Descriptors from the original document spanning the K-12 spectrum. These Descriptors for the four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and five levels of English language proficiency are based on the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards.

Interpretation of the CAN DO Descriptors
To maintain the succinctness of the individual statements, some basic assumptions need to be made in interpreting the CAN DO Descriptors.

1. Sensory, graphic, or interactive support are present through language proficiency level 4, Expanding.
2. English language learners can process or produce the language associated with the stated language functions.
3. Linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control increase incrementally as students move from one English language proficiency level to the next.

The CAN DO Descriptors are a sampling of the language expectations of English language learners as they travel along the continuum of English language development. Unlike the strands of model performance indicators that scaffold across levels of language proficiency, the CAN DO Descriptors function independently within a given level of language proficiency.

Uses for the CAN DO Descriptors

The CAN DO Descriptors are a resource, in addition to the English language proficiency standards, to use in classrooms with English language learners. As an instructional assessment tool, language teachers may:

- Share the Descriptors with classroom teachers and administrators to describe the second language acquisition process around the levels of English language proficiency
- Provide resource teachers, such as Title I or literacy coaches, additional information about English language learners
- Use to plan with tutors or mentors who work with English language learners
- Develop or co-develop lessons and units of study with differentiated language objectives
- Set language goals with their English language learners
- Explain to parents students’ progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Suggest language goals to be incorporated into Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for English language learners with diagnosed disabilities
- Translate English language proficiency test scores (i.e., ACCESS for ELLs®, W-APT™, and WIDA MODEL™) into classroom practice
- Observe and note levels of student performance as a precursor to using WIDA Speaking and Writing Rubrics for formative assessment
- Use the Descriptors to advocate on behalf of English language learners
# CAN DO Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 6-8

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAN DO Descriptors</th>
<th>Level 1 Entering</th>
<th>Level 2 Beginning</th>
<th>Level 3 Developing</th>
<th>Level 4 Expanding</th>
<th>Level 5 Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow one-step oral commands/instructions</td>
<td>• Follow multi-step oral commands/instructions</td>
<td>• Categorize content-based examples from oral directions</td>
<td>• Identify main ideas and details of oral discourse</td>
<td>• Use oral information to accomplish grade-level tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Match social language to visual/graphic displays</td>
<td>• Classify/sort content-related visuals per oral descriptions</td>
<td>• Match main ideas of familiar text read aloud to visuals</td>
<td>• Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly</td>
<td>• Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify objects, people, or places from oral statements/questions using gestures (e.g., pointing)</td>
<td>• Sequence visuals per oral directions</td>
<td>• Use learning strategies described orally</td>
<td>• Make inferences from grade-level text read aloud</td>
<td>• Discriminate among multiple genres read orally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Match instructional language with visual representation (e.g., “Use a sharpened pencil.”)</td>
<td>• Identify information on charts or tables based on oral statements</td>
<td>• Identify everyday examples of content-based concepts described orally</td>
<td>• Role play, dramatize, or re-enact scenarios from oral reading</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPEAKiNG</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Answer yes/no and choice questions</td>
<td>• Convey content through high frequency words/phrases</td>
<td>• Begin to express time through multiple tenses</td>
<td>• Paraphrase and summarize ideas presented orally</td>
<td>• Defend a point of view and give reasons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begin to use general and high frequency vocabulary</td>
<td>• State big/main ideas of classroom conversation</td>
<td>• Retell/rewrite ideas from speech</td>
<td>• Defend a point of view</td>
<td>• Use and explain metaphors and similes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks</td>
<td>• Describe situations from modeled sentences</td>
<td>• Give brief oral content-based presentations</td>
<td>• Explain outcomes</td>
<td>• Communicate with fluency in social and academic contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Answer select WH-questions (e.g., “who,” “what,” “when,” “where”) within context of lessons or personal experiences</td>
<td>• Describe routines and everyday events</td>
<td>• State opinions</td>
<td>• Explain and compare content-based concepts</td>
<td>• Negotiate meaning in group discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Express everyday needs and wants</td>
<td>• Express everyday needs and wants</td>
<td>• Connect ideas in discourse using transitions (e.g., “but,” “then”)</td>
<td>• Connect ideas with supporting details/evidence</td>
<td>• Discuss and give examples of abstract, content-based ideas (e.g., democracy, justice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicate in social situations</td>
<td>• Make requests</td>
<td>• Use different registers inside and outside of class</td>
<td>• Substantiate opinions with reasons and evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 6 - Reading</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• State big/main ideas with some supporting details</td>
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</table>

The CAN DO Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students’ language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.
## CAN DO Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 6-8

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

### Level 1 Entering
- Associate letters with sounds and objects
- Match content–related objects/pictures to words
- Identify common symbols, signs, and words
- Recognize concepts of print
- Find single word responses to WH- questions (e.g., “who,” “what,” “when,” “where”) related to illustrated text
- Use picture dictionaries/illustrated glossaries

### Level 2 Beginning
- Sequence illustrated text of fictional and non-fictional events
- Locate main ideas in a series of simple sentences
- Find information from text structure (e.g., titles, graphs, glossary)
- Follow text read aloud (e.g., tapes, teacher, paired-readings)
- Sort/group pre-taught words/phrases
- Use pre-taught vocabulary (e.g., word banks) to complete simple sentences
- Use L1 to support L2 (e.g., cognates)
- Use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries

### Level 3 Developing
- Identify topic sentences, main ideas, and details in paragraphs
- Identify multiple meanings of words in context (e.g., “cell,” “table”)
- Use context clues
- Make predictions based on illustrated text
- Identify frequently used affixes and root words to make/extract meaning (e.g., “un-,” “re-,” “-ed”)
- Differentiate between fact and opinion
- Answer questions about explicit information in texts
- Use English dictionaries and glossaries

### Level 4 Expanding
- Order paragraphs
- Identify summaries of passages
- Identify figurative language (e.g., “dark as night”)
- Interpret adapted classics or modified text
- Match cause to effect
- Identify specific language of different genres and informational texts
- Use an array of strategies (e.g., skim and scan for information)
- Differentiate and apply multiple meanings of words/phrases
- Apply strategies to new situations
- Infer meaning from modified grade-level text
- Critique material and support argument
- Sort grade-level text by genre

### Level 5 Bridging
- Draw content-related pictures
- Produce high frequency words
- Label pictures and graphs
- Create vocabulary/concept cards
- Generate lists from pre-taught words/phrases and word banks (e.g., create menu from list of food groups)

### Level 6 Reaching
- Complete pattern sentences
- Extend “sentence starters” with original ideas
- Connect simple sentences
- Complete graphic organizers/forms with personal information
- Respond to yes/no, choice, and some WH- questions
- Produce short paragraphs with main ideas and some details (e.g., column notes)
- Create compound sentences (e.g., with conjunctions)
- Explain steps in problem-solving
- Compare/contrast information, events, characters
- Give opinions, preferences, and reactions along with reasons
- Create multiple-paragraph essays
- Justify ideas
- Produce content-related reports
- Use details/examples to support ideas
- Use transition words to create cohesive passages
- Compose intro/body/conclusion
- Paraphrase or summarize text
- Take notes (e.g., for research)
- Create expository text to explain graphs/charts
- Produce research reports using multiple sources/citations
- Begin using analogies
- Critique literary essays or articles

The CAN DO Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students’ language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.