The English Language Learner
CAN DO Booklet

Grades 9-12

INCLUDES:
Performance Definitions
CAN DO Descriptors

For use in conjunction with the
WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards
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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>
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</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 <strong>proficiency standard</strong>, <strong>language domain</strong>, and language proficiency <strong>level</strong> by grade level cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Definitions</strong></td>
<td>Outline how English language learners process and use language for each <strong>level</strong> of language proficiency in grades K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAN DO Descriptors</strong></td>
<td>Describe how English language learners process and use language for each <strong>language domain</strong> and level of language proficiency by grade level cluster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking and Writing Rubrics</td>
<td>Document how English language learners process and use language in the domain of <strong>speaking</strong> or <strong>writing</strong> for each <strong>level</strong> 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>Performance Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6** Reaching | • specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas 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 English-proficient peers |
| **5** Bridging | • specialized or 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 |
| **4** Expanding | • specific and some technical language of the content areas  
• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or 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 sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| **3** Developing | • 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 sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| **2** Beginning | • 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 sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| **1** Entering | • 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-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support  
• 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 |
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 9-12**

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>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>
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<tr>
<td>• Point to or show basic parts, components, features, characteristics, and properties of objects, organisms, or persons named orally</td>
<td>• Match or classify oral descriptions to real-life experiences or visually-represented, content-related examples</td>
<td>• Evaluate information in social and academic conversations</td>
<td>• Distinguish between multiple meanings of oral words or phrases in social and academic contexts</td>
<td>• Interpret cause and effect scenarios from oral discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Match everyday oral information to pictures, diagrams, or photographs</td>
<td>• Sort oral language statements according to time frames</td>
<td>• Distinguish main ideas from supporting points in oral, content-related discourse</td>
<td>• Analyze content-related tasks or assignments based on oral discourse</td>
<td>• Make inferences from oral discourse containing satire, sarcasm, or humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group visuals by common traits named orally (e.g., “These are polygons.”)</td>
<td>• Sequence visuals according to oral directions</td>
<td>• Use learning strategies described orally</td>
<td>• Categorize examples of genres read aloud</td>
<td>• Identify and react to subtle differences in speech and register (e.g., hyperbole, satire, comedy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify resources, places, products, figures from oral statements, and visuals</td>
<td>• Identify resources, places, products, figures from oral statements, and visuals</td>
<td>• Categorize content-based examples described orally</td>
<td>• Compare traits based on visuals and oral descriptions using specific and some technical language</td>
<td>• Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPEAKING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Answer yes/no or choice questions within context of lessons or personal experiences</td>
<td>• Describe persons, places, events, or objects</td>
<td>• Suggest ways to resolve issues or pose solutions</td>
<td>• Take a stance and use evidence to defend it</td>
<td>• Give multimedia oral presentations on grade-level material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide identifying information about self</td>
<td>• Ask WH- questions to clarify meaning</td>
<td>• Compare/contrast features, traits, characteristics using general and some specific language</td>
<td>• Explain content-related issues and concepts</td>
<td>• Engage in debates on content-related issues using technical language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name everyday objects and pre-taught vocabulary</td>
<td>• Give features of content-based material (e.g., time periods)</td>
<td>• Sequence processes, cycles, procedures, or events</td>
<td>• Compare and contrast points of view</td>
<td>• Explain metacognitive strategies for solving problems (e.g., “Tell me how you know it.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks of language</td>
<td>• Characterize issues, situations, regions shown in illustrations</td>
<td>• Conduct interviews or gather information through oral interaction</td>
<td>• Analyze and share pros and cons of choices</td>
<td>• Negotiate meaning in pairs or group discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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 9-12

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>Level 6 - Reaching</th>
<th>Level 5 Bridging</th>
<th>Level 4 Expanding</th>
<th>Level 3 Developing</th>
<th>Level 2 Beginning</th>
<th>Level 1 Entering</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Match visual representations to words/phrases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read everyday signs, symbols, schedules, and school-related words/phrases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Respond to WH- questions related to illustrated text</td>
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<td>Use references (e.g., picture dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, technology)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Match visual representations to words/phrases</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Respond to WH- questions related to illustrated text</td>
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<td>• Match data or information with its source or genre (e.g., description of element to its symbol on periodic table)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Apply multiple meanings of words/phrases to social and academic contexts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identify topic sentences or main ideas and details in paragraphs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Answer questions about explicit information in texts</td>
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<td>• Differentiate between fact and opinion in text</td>
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<td>• Order paragraphs or sequence information within paragraphs</td>
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<td>• Interpret grade-level literature</td>
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<td>• Synthesize grade-level expository text</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Draw conclusions from different sources of informational text</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Infer significance of data or information in grade-level material</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify evidence of bias and credibility of source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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.